



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 114th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 161

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2015

No. 143

Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 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.

Almighty God, as bombs fall in Syria and refugees seek safety, may all who are oppressed look to You. In spite of our world's turbulence, we continue to proclaim Your greatness for Your sovereignty will prevail. Free us from fear. Answer when we call. Shelter us from disappointment.

Bless our Senators. Lord, fill them with the Spirit of Your wisdom, making them equal to challenges of this difficult season of our national and world history. Open their minds to comprehend Your wisdom, their ears to hear Your guidance, and their hearts to obey Your biddings.

Lift the light of Your countenance upon all who seek You and give them Your peace.

We pray in Your mighty 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. HELLER). The majority leader is recognized.

FOREIGN POLICY AND SUPPORTING OUR TROOPS AND VETERANS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, with each passing day, the American

people are reminded of the peril attached to the Obama administration's inflexible determination to conduct foreign policy based on campaign promises made in 2008. These goals—unilaterally withdrawing from Iraq and Afghanistan based on fixed deadlines, ending the war on terror and some of the critical tools used to pursue Al Qaeda, closing the secure detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, withdrawing from our deployed forward presence, slashing investment in our conventional armed services, and pursuing nuclear agreements with Russia and Iran at any cost—have remained constant, although the world has changed right in front of our Commander in Chief.

Yesterday we saw the Obama administration threaten to veto the national Defense authorization bill, which recently passed the Senate by a large bipartisan majority of 71 to 25. It passed the House by a big bipartisan margin as well.

This is the legislation that sets out military policy and authorizes funds for our military each year. It is always one of the most important bills we consider every year, but it is especially important right now.

The number of threats currently facing us is truly staggering. The last month and week have brought glaring reminders. We are now seeing Russian forces deploy to Syria to preserve the Assad regime. Although Moscow may try to call this some kind of counterterrorism campaign, let's be perfectly clear: Russia's offensive is designed to protect Assad's Alawite stronghold and Russian military installations, while driving out the moderate opposition and compelling coordination of Syrian airspace with the coalition. Russia aims to forcefully insert itself into the middle of coalition operations to gain insights into the plans of the United States and, of course, to secure a seat at the table. Meanwhile, our moderate Syrian allies stand appalled that the

United States has ceded its leadership position in the broader Middle East.

Of all the promises made by this administration, withdrawing from Afghanistan by a date certain seems to ignore the attack upon Kunduz by the Taliban and the efforts of President Ghani to secure the gains of the coalition and his country's future. How can the administration be pondering a withdrawal of the force when the Taliban's offensive persists and the campaign against Al Qaeda has not yet achieved its defeat?

So many threats face us—from Russia, Iran, Syria, ISIL, and even China—as do so many different means of attack: conventional, cyber, or terror. And now the Obama administration is talking about vetoing America's national defense bill. They are talking about vetoing the national defense bill in the wake of all of this.

I will have more to say about the national defense bill in the coming days. But this is about more than one bill; it is the latest in an increasingly worrying pattern. Just last week, Democrats voted again to block funding for our military. Democrats had voted for that military funding bill in committee. They issued press releases praising the bill they had supported in the Appropriations Committee, but then they blocked the Senate from even debating it. Now they appear ready to give the same treatment to our veterans. Democrats voted for the veterans funding bill in committee. They issued press releases praising the bill. But now they seem prepared to block the Senate from even debating this bill too. It is all part of some half-baked Democratic scheme to get more money for the IRS and for Washington bureaucracies. It makes no sense, it is extreme, and it needs to stop.

The veterans funding bill before us would do right by the men and women who have given everything to protect us and who have suffered so much

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



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under the failings of this administration. This is the bill that supports veterans by funding the health care and the benefits they rely on. This is the bill. This is the bill that supports military families by funding the housing, schools, and health facilities that serve them.

The veterans legislation before us provides support for women's health, for medical research, and for veterans suffering from traumatic brain injury. It provides funding for design work at a new VA medical center in Louisville, for educational facilities at Fort Knox, and for a special operations headquarters at Fort Campbell, all in my State.

The bill contains important reforms aimed at supporting veterans in the wake of a true national disgrace—the VA scandal. The reforms funded in this bill will allow for greater national and regional progress in reducing VA claim backlogs, and they will deploy important protections for whistleblowers too.

Look, we need to remember that we have an all-volunteer force in this country. The young men and women who sign up to defend our Nation don't ask for a lot, but our Nation certainly asks a lot of them. These heroes shouldn't have to worry that their benefits or health care or the housing and support their families need might not be there.

There is a long tradition in the Senate of bipartisan support for our troops, our veterans, and their families. We saw that bipartisan tradition on full display just a few months ago when Republicans and Democrats came together in the Appropriations Committee to pass bipartisan legislation to fund our troops and support our veterans.

We ask a lot of the men and women who serve. They don't need a bigger IRS or political games like the Democrats' self-described filibuster summer; they need our care and our support. It is our turn to give back to them. Why don't we get back to the bipartisan tradition of supporting these bills so we can do what we need to do for our veterans.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

FOREIGN POLICY, BENGHAZI SELECT COMMITTEE, AND THE NEED FOR BIPARTISAN NEGOTIATIONS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it is hard for me, when I come here every day, to be patient and listen to my friend the Republican leader talk because he is talking about something that is not real. He is not talking about reality. He wants to get back to the bipartisan way we used to do things. I certainly agree with him, but having looked at

some 600 filibusters during the last few years conducted by my Republican friends, I think that speaks volumes.

To have the Republican leader come to the floor and criticize Obama about what is going on in the Middle East—that takes a lot of gall. We all know what happened in the Middle East a number of years ago that created all these problems. It was the worst foreign policy mistake in the history of our country—invading Iraq. For what? Look what we have now in Iraq. Look what we have in the entire Middle East. So it takes a lot of rearranging facts for the Republican leader to come to the floor every day—most days I just sit here, listen, and go on about my business, but I can't do that. It is just unfair. Everyone knows we need to look no further than President Bush's invasion of Iraq to find out what the real problem is in the Middle East.

He talks about the Defense authorization bill. If it is such a great piece of legislative action, why does all of our military think it is a bad deal? This would be as if you decided one day you are going to make your house payment and your car payment with money that doesn't exist. That is what they have done. That is what the Republicans have done. They have \$39 billion in the Defense authorization bill that doesn't exist. It is just on paper. It is a gimmick for short-term funding. And to have the audacity to come here and talk about—look at all the threats we are having with cyber security, cyber threats. We have a cyber bill we have tried to get on this floor. The Republicans blocked it when they were in the minority. Now when they are in the majority, they won't do a bill, period.

We have an order that is before this body now that allows us to go forward on cyber security. We already have a list of amendments to agree on. But the Republican leader won't bring it to the floor. To have him come to this floor and complain of Obama not doing anything about cyber—I would suggest my friend, every morning when he gets up, walk into the bathroom, put a little water on his face, wake up, and look in the mirror.

I will talk about this a little more in a minute, but I want to start what I have to say right now by reading a direct quote from the current House majority leader, and we are told he is going to be the next Speaker of the House of Representatives. Listen to this one, speaking about the Benghazi committee. This is what Congressman MCCARTHY told FOX News:

Everybody thought Hillary Clinton was unbeatable, right? But we put together a Benghazi select committee, a select committee. What are her numbers today? Her numbers are dropping.

I might add, the person doing the interviewing—good job.

But there you have it. According to the odds-on favorite future Speaker of the House, the Benghazi select committee was put together to hurt Hillary Clinton politically, to make her

poll numbers drop. We have been saying this all along, but we have now had a gaffe. But it wasn't a slipup; he just told the truth. This is evidence of what we have been saying. The Benghazi committee is a political stunt meant to influence Presidential elections that will be coming up in about a year. It is no surprise that Congressman MCCARTHY's own colleagues are now backpedaling on his comments as fast as they possibly can. Their elections will be in 1 week. They better take a look at whom they are going to put in as Speaker. The Republicans have taken a national tragedy—four Americans were killed—and turned it into the cheapest political farce imaginable. This is a shame. The very notion that an official House committee was used as a political tool is appalling. Even more disgraceful is the fact that they spent almost \$5 million on this select committee—dollars spent on this rightwing political hatchet job.

That is not all. In addition to this select committee, they have had six other committees investigating this. There are untold millions of dollars spent on this. Whose money are they spending? They are spending taxpayer dollars.

We hear my friend make references to how bad it is that we are concerned about nondefense stuff. Yes, we are. We are concerned about nondefense stuff. We think the nondefense part of this budget should also get some recognition. We are concerned about the FBI and the Federal court system. We are concerned about the Drug Enforcement Administration and all the immigration officials who need help. We are concerned about our forests that are burning down. We are concerned about the situation we have where we don't have enough money to build our highways or to repair our highways. Yes, we are concerned about that and rightfully so. To have a secure nation is more than having a lot of bombs and bullets and airplanes and tanks and ships. It is also having a population that is educated.

We sent a letter to Speaker BOEHNER asking that the Benghazi Select Committee be disbanded. Get rid of it. It is a disgrace. Do the right thing; get rid of this.

Senate Republicans are stuck in a deep rut. They have dug this hole. They are in it, and they don't know how to get out of it. The Republican leader continues bringing bills to the Senate floor that have no chance of passing. We have things out there we could be doing.

Four months ago we said to the Republican leader: Why don't we sit down and try to work something out on this budget for the long term. We have been ignored. They have ignored the need for a consensus budget framework and instead are trying to move a flawed appropriations bill based on the Republicans' partisan budget. The Senate spoke and, of course, the bill didn't advance.

The Republican leader tried to move the same measure again last week, even though the Senate already rejected it. And to no one's surprise, it failed.

How about this one? This year—this year—we have already had eight votes on the health of American women—eight votes. Everyone knows how those votes are going to turn out, but you can't satisfy this voracious appetite the Republicans have to bash women. Yet the Republican leader continues to schedule votes on legislation that can't pass the Senate.

I think C-SPAN will have to have a disclaimer each time that flips up there that says: This is not a rerun. This is the Republican Senate doing it again. We have already done it seven times. Once more won't matter that much.

Today the Republican leader wants to rerun the same show again, this time with another bill—military construction. This appropriations bill is still based on the Republican's faulty budget. The senior Senator from Montana, the ranking member of that subcommittee, said yesterday this bill "is shackled to an unwise and unrealistic budget that locks in destructive sequestration cuts and vastly underfunds programs vital to this nation's security and prosperity."

That is what Senator TESTER said yesterday.

It has no chance of getting 60 votes—none. I know that, and my friend the Republican leader knows that. So why are we wasting time on another vote that is destined to fail? Because they do not want to bring real legislation to the floor. Why aren't we spending our time coming to a real bipartisan solution that helps our veterans and helps the nondefense part of our country, which is so important?

The time to sit down and to begin real budget negotiations was a long time ago, but we will take it now. I am happy to learn the Republican leader said he wants negotiations—he said this a couple days ago—he wants negotiations to begin very soon. Well, isn't that nice. Democrats have been waiting for 4 months. So let's get to it.

Just imagine what we could have accomplished if the Republican leader had taken us up on our offer 4 months ago. The U.S. Government wouldn't have come within hours of a shutdown, hundreds of government agencies would not have had to spend time and effort preparing for a shutdown, diverting them from their main jobs.

If you want to see how close we were to a government shutdown take a look at what took place in the House of Representatives yesterday. We passed over here in the Senate a short-term continuing resolution to fund the government until December 11. It went to the House, and they voted on it yesterday. Three-fifths of House Republicans—151—voted for a shutdown. They voted against the continuing resolution. That says it all.

I have reminded people before, and I will do it again. The government was shut down here a couple of years ago for 17 days. We finally got it open. We passed something over here, and it went to the House. Two-thirds of the House of Representatives—Republicans in the House—voted to keep the government closed.

There are so many programs that are just not being taken care of. I will talk about a couple of them right now. There is something I have worked on since I came here—the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The Presiding Officer is from Nevada. He has represented the northern part of the State for many years in different elective jobs. He understands and knows Lake Tahoe very well. It is a beautiful lake that we share with California. Well, the Land and Water Conservation Fund helps us greatly because we were able to take some money out of that program and purchase land that was going to be used for subdivision that would have allowed more filth to go into Lake Tahoe. We were able to stop that with money from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The money hasn't been coming in as we have wanted in the past, so we beefed it up and were able to do a lot of things.

Now, for the first time in 50 years, this program has been allowed to expire. It is gone. This program has been supported by Democrats and Republicans and by rural and urban communities. But on the Republicans' watch, one of the most important programs and one of the best programs for our Nation's parks—and one of the most broadly supported programs in the country—has been allowed to lapse. It is gone.

The program is funded by a portion of fees collected by offshore oil and gas drilling. Every day that it is not authorized, we lose out on collecting \$2.4 million of offshore oil and gas so it can be used for our beautiful natural resources that are in a state of disrepair. This Land and Water Conservation Fund has supported projects in every State, from protecting the rim of the Grand Canyon to securing access to the Appalachian Trail, and from Lake Tahoe to building neighborhood playgrounds in urban areas across the country.

In a last-ditch effort to sway their own leadership, several Republicans came to the floor yesterday and tried to pass a stand-alone extension of the program that would be dead on arrival in the House. The Republican leaders refused to extend the program in the continuing resolution, despite many Democrats and Republicans asking for it to be included.

One other program. The good Senator from Illinois—the senior Senator from Illinois, the assistant Democratic leader, served in the House of Representatives, as I did, with a man named Claude Perkins. He was a wonderful House Member. When we came to the House in 1982, he was a very senior per-

son. He was responsible for something called the Federal Perkins Loan Program. It wasn't reauthorized in the continuing resolution. What does that mean? As a result of that, the Nation's oldest student aid program has expired, leaving up to 150,000 students who are coming into college in the lurch.

The Perkins Loan Program offers low-interest, federally subsidized student loans for students with exceptional financial needs and also offers a variety of forgiveness options for those who choose to pursue public service professions. Last year, more than \$1.2 billion in new Perkins loans were made to about 540,000 new and returning college students around the country, including 500 low-income students from Nevada.

It is hard to believe the tea party-dominated House—and obviously the Republican Caucus here is heavily influenced by the tea party—has turned a blind eye to this. It is hard to believe the tea party-dominated House of Representatives passed an extension of Perkins unanimously, but Senate Republicans would not agree to do the same. Yesterday, Senate Republicans even blocked a bid to extend the program.

These are just two of the programs that expired at midnight last night. There are many more. It is a shame because they wouldn't have expired at all if we had sat down and negotiated a few months ago. So I say to my friend the Republican leader: Let's not waste another minute on politically motivated votes that are doomed to fail. Instead, let's focus the Senate's energy and attention on bipartisan negotiations to get our country on the right track.

Mr. President, would the Chair announce the business of the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak therein, with the time equally divided, with the majority controlling the first half and the Democrats controlling the final half.

The Senator from Louisiana.

MILCON-VA APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, I wish to speak on the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs appropriations bill that is now being considered. I will start by saying that this is 3601 Gerstner Memorial Parkway, Lake Charles, LA. This is the location for the new Lake Charles VA clinic—a clinic that has taken 13 years to get

approved, a clinic that has seen delay after delay, costing veterans access to quality health care, a clinic still waiting to be built.

This is a picture of the current facility in Lake Charles, where veterans have to go for their health care while they have waited for over 13 years to have the new facility built. This RV and this small building are why Congress must advance this MILCON-VA appropriations bill and why the President should sign it into law.

This mobile clinic in Lake Charles—you almost laugh—is the clinic for our veterans. It is one of many such clinics in our country and is unacceptable. This is something one might see in a documentary about developing nations, not the United States of America. This RV, where our veterans are treated for serious medical conditions, is connected to a waiting room that is triple the size of the square footage of the mobile home. That is because the demand for care so greatly exceeds this subpar facility's ability to deliver health care to our veterans.

In the waiting room there is a television set, but it is not plugged in and it doesn't have a remote. That is because VA rules say you must have a TV in the waiting room, but the rules don't stipulate that it must function. It sounds like a joke. We have to have a television, but we don't say it has to be plugged in.

This is the current state of the VA, and this is what Congress is allowing when we fail to pass this needed legislation.

I would like to say this is an isolated problem but there are veterans all over the country receiving health care under similar circumstances. For more than 10 years, our young men and women have returned from war in the Middle East. These young veterans are joining men and women who have served this Nation in uniform, defending our freedom in every corner of the globe. They deserve better than a mobile home. They deserve action, and they deserve it now. If we don't pass this bill, there will be consequences for people—America's heroes—who need help now.

This is the VA portion, but it is also the military VA construction budget. If we fail to act, it will not just be our veterans who are hurt; it will also affect our Active-Duty military and our national security.

We know there is a portion of the budget which goes for actually protecting our military construction, but what sometimes people forget is there is a human face to our military. Gen. Robert Rand recently took control of Global Strike, a position that is charged with maintaining our nuclear triad and first strike capabilities, but there are those in the Air Force who serve under General Rand. He needs the resources to maintain our nuclear ability, but without this legislation we cannot maintain his combat readiness, which includes basic needs such as

housing for our soldiers and educating their children.

I urge my fellow Senators to consider what is included in this legislation: family housing, schools, medical facilities for Active-Duty personnel and their families, and funding for the care of 6.9 million veterans.

Let me add something to this. As a doctor, I am glad we also specifically provide for groundbreaking hepatitis C treatments and for modernizing the VA electronic medical records system.

The Senate Appropriations Committee passed the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs appropriations bill by a bipartisan vote of 12 to 9, with all Republicans and 5 Democrats voting in favor.

This is common sense. Congress has the duty to pass this legislation now, and the President has an obligation to sign it. We must honor our commitment to our military and to our veterans.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROUNDS). The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise today to urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs appropriations bill.

Yesterday, Congress sent the President a continuing resolution, a bill to prevent a government shutdown. This was necessary to ensure that vital resources and services the American people depend on do not lapse and in order to avoid harm to jobs and our economy. But as my colleagues fully realize, simply putting government on autopilot through a continuing resolution is not the responsible way to fund government. It locks in last year's priorities, delays the start of vital new programs, and allows unneeded programs to continue to be funded. We must pass the 12 annual appropriations bills.

In July of this year, the Senate Appropriations Committee, on which I am privileged to serve, reported the last of the 12 bills. This was the first time that all 12 of the appropriations bills have been approved by the committee, in plenty of time for the Senate to act, since 2009. It is past time for the Senate to take up and pass these funding bills so that we can go to conference with our House colleagues and send to the President annual funding bills that reflect our current priorities that benefit the American people.

In May of this year—in May—the Senate Appropriations Committee reported the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs funding bill by a strong, bipartisan vote of 21 to 9. As a member of the subcommittee with jurisdiction over this bill, I know this represented bipartisan consensus and hard work. It reflected the leadership of Chairman KIRK and Ranking Member TESTER.

This bill provides vital resources for our veterans and our servicemembers. We are operating under very challenging budget constraints, and I sup-

port the negotiations that are going on now. But it is long past time for the Senate to take up, debate, amend, and pass each of these appropriations bills. We have the opportunity to do that just now, and I do not understand those who argue that we should not proceed with the normal appropriations process.

Those who disagree with provisions in this bill will have the opportunity to offer amendments to change the bill. But to not even allow this vital funding bill for our military and for our veterans to come to the Senate floor is an argument that I do not accept nor understand.

We owe it to our Nation's veterans, 127,000 of whom reside in the great State of Maine. There are more than 21 million nationwide. We owe it to them to move forward with this important bill. These veterans answered the call to duty. They shouldered the hardships and sacrifices of military service. They have done their jobs. It is time for the Senate to do its job. We must fulfill our obligations and affirm a larger commitment made long ago to take care of those who have so proudly served our Nation—the patriots who have worn our Nation's uniform.

To highlight a few examples of why this bill is so important, let me mention that it ensures our veterans have access to critical mental health care services. It aims to reduce veteran homelessness—a very important issue to me that I have worked on with Senator JACK REED as a member of the HUD and transportation appropriations subcommittee—another bill that we need to bring to the Senate floor. This bill provides funding to pay veterans benefits and includes \$270 million for the Office of Rural Health, important to the Presiding Officer as well as to my State. This office has established the program called the ARCH Program, or Access Received Closer to Home. ARCH ensures that rural veterans in the pilot States, who often have a difficult time accessing the regular VA health system, can receive care closer to where they live. This has been a tremendous success in northern Maine, which has one of the pilot programs in Caribou, ME, in conjunction with Cary Memorial Hospital. This has made such a difference to our veterans.

I remember one of our veterans telling me about breaking his hip last winter in the height of a terrible winter storm. Instead of enduring a painful and bumpy ride for more than 4 hours to get to the VA hospital in Augusta, he was able, through the ARCH Program, to receive care at his local hospital, Cary Memorial in Caribou, ME. He also had the benefit of being able to receive care closer to where his family and friends were.

The programs that I just mentioned, like so many that are contained within the Military Construction-VA appropriations bill, are essential to ensuring that veterans who have placed their lives on the line for our continued safety receive the benefits they have

earned. This bill is essential to providing updated military housing and other construction upon which those who are serving today depend.

It is simply irresponsible for us not to proceed with consideration of this and every other appropriations bill. They are ready. They have been reported by committee. Let's do our job. We must do our best to honor those who serve, and who have served, and who have sacrificed so much for our country. Surely—surely—the Senate should do its part. We should do our part by promptly passing this important bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I wish to commend the distinguished Senator from Maine. She has articulately explained why we need to move forward, and I want to underscore something that she said.

For 6 years now, the Senate has abdicated its responsibility to appropriate. We have left the prioritization of spending to faceless bureaucrats and faceless buildings in Washington, DC. The needs of our veterans and soldiers and our country have gone unheeded, while we in here have argued about things that are superfluous and actually unimportant.

I came into this Chamber today and listened to the distinguished Senator from Nevada, the minority leader, make the following statement: He can't understand why the leader would bring forward a "can't-pass" piece of legislation and not go to something more important.

I want the Senator from Nevada to go out to Walter Reed Hospital or to go to the hospital in Maine or the hospital in Arkansas and tell those soldiers, who sacrificed and risked their lives for us, that their needs for health care are not more important, or to tell Jim Webb, who was a Member of this Senate and passed the GI bill expansion a few years ago, that the educational benefits for dependents, children, wives, and others are not that important. Tell the people of the United States of America that those who protect us, those who have sacrificed, those at risk are not more important.

There is nothing more important than our veterans and our military. There is nothing more important in our constitutional responsibility as Senators than to appropriate the money of the American people. We are abdicating our responsibility. It is professional and political malpractice, and it is time it stopped. I get sick and tired of the political bantering back and forth when there are things come before us that must be done.

As chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, last Thursday night in this Senate we passed unanimously—and it has now passed the House—a total reform of VA construction, and we fixed the Denver hospital problem that has been going on for 6 years in the VA. The Denver hospital has had a 428.3

percent cost overrun. That is unconscionable and that is wrong. But we finally are fixing it.

With this bill—if the distinguished minority leader will let us take up this important bill, rather than something that is not as important—we are going to fix VA construction forever because what this does is to say that the VA no longer is in charge of construction of hospitals and clinics. The Corps of Engineers is. It is about time we had construction management by people who know what they are doing. Doctors are good at fixing people, but they are not very good at bricks and mortar. We need the bricks and mortar people doing it.

Secondly, this bill funds mandatory veterans' benefits through 2017. We had a threat of a government shutdown yesterday. Fortunately, we avoided it, but we have had it in the past, and we could have it again. Veterans health care should never be shut down, and we need to continue to forward-fund medical benefits so our veterans know—whether or not we are foolish and shut down the government—that their health care is going to be met.

As the Presiding Officer knows, in the great State of South Dakota—and Senator COLLINS knows from Maine—the biggest complaint we get is about the lack of timely responsibility in determining disability claims in the VA; right? We have veterans waiting 478 days to get a disability claim on an injury they suffered fighting a war for us—478 days, almost 2 years. That is terribly wrong. This bill fixes that. It provides the money for the personnel necessary to expedite disability claims so veterans get a timely judgment.

Now you tell me this, Senator from Nevada: What is more important, taking care of these guys taking care of us or just debating on the Senate floor a bunch of hot air that means no difference to the American people?

It is time we fished or cut bait. It is time we did what we were elected to. It is time we set the priorities. It is time we honored our commitment to those who honored their commitment to us, the veterans of the United States of America.

So as chairman of the most bipartisan committee in the Senate, the Veterans' Affairs Committee—of which the Presiding Officer is a member—we don't have Democratic spats and Republican spats. We talk about our veterans. Almost everything we pass out is unanimous. We do so because we all agree that—Republican or Democrat, black or white, rich or poor, whatever the case might be—we would not be where we are today nor would we be what we are today if it weren't for those who sacrificed, risked their lives, and, in some cases, died for the people of the United States of America while serving in the military.

So I don't know what the Senator from Nevada thinks is more important. But for me, these guys right here are the most important thing in the world.

And to vote against proceeding to debate this important appropriations bill is professional malpractice and wrong. I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will make a commitment to those who served us and vote to proceed to the VA-MILCON appropriations bill.

I yield back the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, yesterday Congress passed yet another short-term continuing resolution. While this avoids a shutdown, it is far from ideal. Certainly a shutdown is not good governing. I think all of us can agree on that much. I wish to remind my colleagues, though—particularly those on the other side of the aisle—that continuing resolutions are hardly better. While the American people demand that we get our financial house in order, Washington continues to pass stopgap after stopgap funding bills. Instead of tackling this challenge head-on, these short-term extensions continue current funding levels and prevent us from stopping waste, fraud, and abuse of taxpayer dollars. Just like a shutdown, this, too, is no way to govern. There is another option. We don't have to choose between a continuing resolution and a shutdown. The third choice is the right choice, and that choice is for this Chamber to follow regular order and pass all 12 appropriations bills.

We have done our work at the Appropriations Committee. For the first time in 6 years, every spending bill has cleared committee—all 12—and most of them passed with strong bipartisan support. I commend the Appropriations Chairman COCHRAN and Leader MCCONNELL for their leadership to make that happen.

The full Senate has the responsibility to consider each of these bills as well. Leader MCCONNELL is committed to this approach. Our caucus is behind it 100 percent. The minority, on the other hand, is actively working against it. Committee passage of these 12 bills was no easy task. Both sides made compromises. These bills were the product of a great deal of give-and-take.

We worked very hard for months to ensure that these bills reflect the spending and policy priorities that are right for our Nation. These bills should not simply be left for dead. The President is encouraging the Senate Democrats to obstruct the appropriations process because he wants more domestic spending for agencies like the EPA and IRS. This is not the direction our country needs to go. I hope my colleagues on the other side of the aisle will reconsider this failed strategy.

The funding bills show the American people that we share their priorities. For instance, the bill before us takes care of our Active Military and our veterans when they return home. Clearly this is an area of bipartisan agreement. Yet talk of a filibuster remains.

Here is what the minority is considering filibustering: increases in funding for veterans services, military housing and family support, hospital and health facilities construction, just to name a few vital things in this bill. The bill increases funding in areas where our veterans need it most—health care, benefit claims processing, and medical research. It also includes funding for projects to ensure military readiness and improve the quality of life for military families. In light of the numerous scandals that have plagued the VA, it includes some strong policy reforms such as protection for whistleblowers.

These are funding and policy priorities for both sides of the aisle. That is why this bill passed out of the Appropriations Committee with strong bipartisan support. That is why it should move forward without resistance on the Senate floor. Yet the minority is threatening a filibuster for reasons that have nothing to do with this bill. This is all about protecting the President's agenda.

President Obama wants spending increases across the board. He has issued a blanket veto threat for any appropriations bill that does not meet his demands. Basically, the President's view is that if such agencies don't get more money, then neither should our veterans or military families. It is my hope my colleagues on the other side of the aisle recognize this is out of line with our Nation's priorities.

The right thing to do is reject the President's call to obstruct so we can continue to work together for the good of the country. Determining how we allocate taxpayer dollars is our responsibility, not the President's. Continuing resolutions have been all too common, while they should be a rare exception. We need to reestablish our priority of regular order and pass the individual funding bills that are needed to keep the government open. We can start that today and by moving the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill forward.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, we heard from many Members talking about the situation with the appropriations bill, and I would like to add my voice to the chorus. For too long uncertainty has hampered our Nation's ability to grow our economy and make necessary investments in our workforce, our infrastructure, and our technology. It was imperative that we avoided an unnecessary and reckless government shutdown this week, but that was a short-term patch. Now more than ever we need to take longer term actions to move our economy and our Nation forward.

As the Senator from Arkansas mentioned, earlier this year the Appropriations Committee, on which I sit, accomplished something that has not been done since 2009. We passed all 12 appropriations bills through the full

committee. We did so in a fiscally responsible way. We did so within the budget caps agreed to by the Congress. Many of us voted for those budget caps. We did so with broad-based bipartisan support; 9 of the 12 bills had broad-based bipartisan support. These bills touch every aspect of government and every facet of our economy. From transportation, medical research, energy investments to justice programs, these funding bills were robustly debated.

Knowing all this, why are the Democrats blocking the Senate from considering one of these single appropriations bills? Earlier this week it was the Defense appropriations. Today it is the MILCON-VA. Why? Why are they blocking these same bills that many of them have previously voted for in committee and touted to their constituents?

Last week I had the privilege of traveling across West Virginia with VA Secretary McDonald. We heard directly from veterans about their challenges and needs. One of the things we discussed was the Greenbrier County community-based outpatient clinic that had been closed. Secretary McDonald made a commitment, with over 200 veterans that we had in the room from that area, that that clinic would reopen quickly, but without the certainty of the funding that we have in these bills. Secretary McDonald cannot make those assertions across the country. We went to the Huntington VA Hospital, where we met with employees and veterans—committed individuals who want to see our veterans treated the way we want them to be treated, but the advances in medical technologies can't move forward without a certainty of what the funding levels are.

These men and women, our brave veterans, deserve our unified support and should not be subjected to the gridlock that has been so common in these past few years. The Military Construction and Veterans Affairs bill funds construction and care for facilities and services that assist our military veterans. It improves facilities for men and women who are willing to sacrifice for our freedoms. I will say, many of our VA facilities are challenged with approximately 20 percent of women veterans who are coming out. They don't have facilities to adequately treat our women veterans. This bill also includes funding for construction of State extended-care facilities, which helps construct, expand, and remodel nursing home facilities to care for our elderly veterans. We know many of our veterans are aging in larger and larger numbers.

Determining our Nation's spending priorities, especially when it comes to our veterans, is one of Congress's most important responsibilities. Our process can work and our government can function. We demonstrated that at the committee level. We need to demonstrate that as well today on the floor

of the Senate, but make no mistake about this, this is not just about process; it is also about progress. Funding bills are not just numbers on paper; they are people. They are our veterans. They are our friends and neighbors, our fathers and mothers, our sons and daughters. They represent the priorities of our Nation.

There are other things in the appropriations bills that are equally important. We passed out historic investments in NIH and community health centers. We passed out critical infrastructure improvements from expanding broadband access to trying to help with the drug epidemic. You cannot measure the impact of programs like the National Guard Counterdrug Program, which is helping to combat the spread of illegal drugs in our State, or the work of the Appalachian Regional Commission which helps to improve the lives of so many. Endless continuing resolutions are not the most effective ways to meet these needs and can be proved wasteful in both time and dollars. Our bills provide critical funding, but they also provide direction on significant policy matters that are facing this Nation.

When we operate from one short-term funding patch to the other, we as Members of Congress are forfeiting our responsibility to hold the executive branch accountable. Advancing appropriations bills through regular order is a vital check on wasteful spending and overreach in our government agencies.

We need to work together. We can start that today, and I hope we will later this afternoon. These are broad goals, and the goals are shown in those bills. As the Senate begins consideration of funding for Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, we should remember this: Governing is about setting priorities and bringing fiscal responsibility to the Federal Government, while ensuring that we provide for the necessary investments and services. Supporting our veterans is not only necessary, it is about the men and women who put their lives on the line for us so we can enjoy the freedoms we have here today. West Virginia is a very patriotic State, with one of the highest percentages of military veterans. I want to see that they are cared for properly. I am going to make that vote today. I hope my colleagues—the ones who are on the Appropriations Committee who have already voted in favor of this bill—will convince their colleagues on the other side that gridlock and obstructionism is not the way to go in the Senate. It is time to work across the aisle to pass this bill and support our veterans. Doing so will strengthen our Nation.

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

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

SENTENCING REFORM

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, there are many stories written in the last months about the dysfunction of Congress, why can't they get along, why can't they produce something, why can't they address the issues and challenges of our time. It is easy to get into that mindset and believe that something has happened on Capitol Hill that cannot be repaired. For those who are about to give up hope, I hope they are reflecting on what I left just a few moments ago. It was a press conference held up in the radio and TV Senate gallery.

Attending this press conference were Senator CHUCK GRASSLEY, who is the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee; Senator JOHN CORNYN, the Republican whip; Senator MIKE LEE of Utah; and Senator TIM SCOTT. On the Democratic side: Senator PATRICK LEAHY, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee; Senator COREY BOOKER of New Jersey, a relatively new Member of the Senate; Senator SHELDON WHITEHOUSE; and Senator CHUCK SCHUMER.

We were there to announce what we think is a historic achievement, a historic agreement. We have been working now for years, literally for years, on both sides of the aisle to make significant and meaningful criminal sentencing reform and reform to the corrections system of the United States of America. On that stage, from MIKE LEE to PAT LEAHY and DICK DURBIN, was the entire political spectrum of the Senate. Within that spectrum, there are a lot of differences of opinion. There were times a year ago that I did not think that meeting and that announcement would take place.

But today we came together, on a bipartisan basis, to announce that we had reached an agreement, a historic agreement, on the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act of 2015. We knew we had a problem in America, a problem of incarceration. A nation with 5 percent of the world's population has 25 percent of the world's prison population. What is going on in America? Why are so many people in prison, and has it made us any safer? We asked those hard questions and came up with what we think is a good response.

We took a category of crime, drug use, that does not involve violence or a gun or gang activity and said: We are going to give to the judge in that case, that category of cases, more flexibility when it comes to sentencing. The minimum mandatory requirements can be changed by the judge based on the defendant before him, the crime they committed, and what that judge believes to be the best for our society.

It is such a change. For the longest time, years and decades, our goal was to incarcerate as many as possible, and

we did, some of them for extraordinarily unfair and unjust periods of time. The worst vote—the worst vote I ever cast as a Member of Congress was in the House. It goes back more than 20 years ago. A basketball player at the University of Maryland named Len Bias died from a drug overdose. We were called on to stiffen the penalties for crack cocaine in America and we did, dramatically: 100 to 1 for crack cocaine versus sentencing for powdered cocaine—100 to 1. The net result of that in several decades of sentencing was to send away primarily African Americans for incredibly long sentences. Eugenia Jennings of Alton, IL, a teenage mother and a crack addict was selling crack cocaine, a handful of it, to buy clothes and food for her children. It was her third offense.

When she was convicted, the mandatory minimum sentencing guidelines gave Judge PATRICK MURPHY no choice but to hand down a sentence of 23 years in prison. Judge Murphy said at the time: This country, this government, has done nothing for you, Ms. Jennings, through your tortured life, and now at this moment in life we are going to kick you hard.

The judge knew it was the wrong sentence. Fortunately, Eugenia Jennings' sentence was commuted after a dozen years. She was released from prison to be with her children, only for a short time. She passed away from cancer. But that is just one statistic, one story, and it can be repeated thousands of times.

This bill tries to avoid that type of injustice. We were not going to be a safer State, a safer nation if she served 23 years instead of 12. It made no sense. So we address it with this bill. With this bill, we go after a new approach in sentencing on this narrow category of crimes, which we believe can result in many serving shorter sentences.

Secondly, for those who are still in prison subject to that 100-to-1 ratio on sentencing, we give 6,500 inmates in the Federal prison system a chance to petition for reconsideration of their sentence on an individual basis, so they can be judged by judges, prosecutors, and people in the community as to whether their sentence should be changed.

So this, in a way, is a sweeping bill when it comes to the population of our prisons. I believe—many agree—it would be far better to take the \$25,000, \$30,000, \$35,000 a year it costs to house an inmate and put it instead into community policing, making our neighborhoods safer, giving our prosecutors the resources they need to not only come down with the right sentences but variations in sentencing like drug courts, veterans courts, and things that are working around America which will make us safer at a lower cost. We will have more money available to the Department of Justice and across the board to go after the seriously threatening criminals we still have in America whom we can never ever ignore.

Senator CORNYN and Senator WHITEHOUSE took a look at those in prison to determine ways they could earn an earlier release or better terms of release. They did extraordinary work. Senator Corey Booker of New Jersey stepped in on an issue that all of us who serve with him know he feels so passionately about, the African-American incarceration rate and particularly the impact it has on young people in that part of our population. He made some valuable contributions to this bill.

It is our hope we can bring this bill to the Senate Judiciary Committee soon. Senator GRASSLEY gave his word that would happen, and then bring it to the floor and send it to the House.

For those who say, "What is going to happen over there, with all of the changes taking place?" I would make one observation: Our spectrum of political support for the bill we had at the press conference represents the spectrum in the House as well. All of us came together. All of them can come together too. They may not agree with every word in this bill. Having served in the House, I am sure they won't. But if they will make the same good-faith effort at finding reasonable compromise, then we can reach a historic achievement, a historic outcome in this process.

I wish to commend one member of my staff in particular who has devoted more hours than I could ever count to make this a reality. His name is Joe Zogby. He is my lead counsel on the Senate Judiciary Committee. Time and time again, Joe Zogby has performed so professionally and with such determination, from my point of view and I am sure from other Senators' points of view. We wouldn't be here today if we didn't have staffers like Joe who have given so much of their time and their heartfelt dedication to finding a solution to an American problem.

So before we walk away from the Congress and say there is no hope, take a look at this bill and this effort. This is how the Senate is supposed to work. This is how the House is supposed to work. It is how Congress is supposed to work. It is how America expects us to work.

The President is anxious for us to come up with this work product. Let's not disappoint him and the millions of Americans who count on us to solve the problems facing America.

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

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

9/11 HEALTH PROGRAM

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I rise today to mark a sad occasion. Yesterday, parts of the Zadroga 9/11 Health

and Compensation Act expired. Specifically, the authorization of the 9/11 health program—one of the two critical programs in the Zadroga act—came to an end last night and will have to start winding down. Thankfully, Dr. Howard and his team, who run the program, have responsibly managed their funding, so they can continue to support health services and benefits for several months on into the future, perhaps another year.

To be clear, our brave heroes are still able to get health care from this program today. That fact, however, should diminish in no way our responsibility in Congress to reauthorize the program as quickly as possible and permanently—forever. In truth, it is a black mark on a Congress that the program was ever allowed to expire, regardless of its ability to continue operations in the short term.

The firefighters, police men and women, construction workers, and first responders from 9/11—many of them injured, many of them sick—traveled to Washington a few weeks ago to lobby Congress, to petition their representatives and their government to continue supporting basic health services they need to treat cancers, respiratory ailments, and other illnesses directly linked to 9/11.

I wish to thank my colleague from New York, Senator GILLIBRAND, for her valued work on this issue. It has been a passion for her. She took the torch Hillary Clinton first lit when she was here as Senator and has run with it hard and well. I am proud to be her partner in trying to make sure that Zadroga, in both its parts, is extended permanently.

People would think it would be easy to get this done considering all the legislators who say they will never forget, who make promises each anniversary to honor the heroes of 9/11. We should not need them to walk the Halls of Congress to win support for basic services for those who walked undaunted through dust, fire, rubble, and ash, who risked their lives to save their fellow citizens. The first responders who ran to the smoldering towers on 9/11 are just like our veterans—they volunteered and risked their lives for our safety. These folks didn't have to do this. They volunteered. They knew the dangers, but they care about our safety. We should not forget them.

But their voices and the impassioned advocacy of folks like John Feal and Jon Stewart have had a real impact. On September 16, when these first responders visited Congress, the majority leader graciously said he would meet with them personally and said: "We do plan to extend the program and the committees . . . in the House and the Senate are actually working on the details now." It was a real breakthrough.

The first responders who pled their case, the advocates who supported them each step of the way, and champions in Congress such as Senator GILLIBRAND here and Representatives

NADLER and MALONEY in the House, who passionately led the fight for this bill for years now, deserve much of the credit. They are the reason we have so many cosponsors—56 here in the Senate, including 12 Republicans. I wish to thank the Presiding Officer for being one of those recent cosponsors.

That is why I was so troubled to hear earlier this week, when again asked if the Senate would consider the extension of the Zadroga act before the deadline, the majority leader said he would "have to check and get back on that."

When the towers were hit, the firefighters and the EMS workers and cops who rushed into those burning buildings did not stop and say "I have to check on that and get back to you." When the towers came down and there was a hellhole of twisted steel and smoldering plasterboard, with our brothers and sisters trapped within, the smell of burning flesh still in the air—I was there; I vividly remember it—and thousands with anguished faces holding signs that said "Did you see my mother, Mary? Have you seen my brother, Bob?" because people didn't know where people were—maybe they were still alive but trapped in the smoldering towers—the first responders so bravely rushed in to see if they could save any lives. They did not say "I have to check on that and get back to you." No, they rushed right to the towers. They rushed in even before they were asked. They did their duty. They did more than their duty. Many died. Many more are suffering. We don't need to check on things and get back to them. We need to write the check to fund their health care for the injuries they sustained in selfless service to their Nation when we were under attack by a foreign enemy. Period. End of story.

So what changed so much over the course of 2 weeks? When the first responders were here in DC, the majority leader committed to passing the legislation they need and so richly deserve for their heroism. A few weeks later, when the eyes of the world aren't watching quite so closely, he said: I will have to check and get back.

I would plead with the majority leader to help move this legislation forward and move it forward quickly. Let's not have to have these first responders, many of whom have all kinds of cancers they acquired on those fatal days after 9/11, come back here again and again. Let the doctors who are bravely working for the program not have to worry whether they will have a job. And let the program itself, which has been done without an iota of fraud—all the claims of "Let's do it for 5 years because we are not sure it will work"—those are the things we negotiated, Senator GILLIBRAND and I with Senator Coburn—those worries are gone. It is working exquisitely well, and there has not been an iota of fraud or misspent money.

So we shouldn't have to check on it; we should just move forward. I plead,

plead, plead with our majority leader, who was genuinely moved by the first responders when he met them, to make sure the bill moves forward. And let me say the same to the new leaders—whoever they may become—in the new House, in the new elections that are coming.

We cannot leave these heroes in limbo. We cannot leave them wondering if their health program, now expired, will be there for them if and when they get sick. As John Stewart said so well, cancer doesn't expire.

I only ask one thing this morning—one thing: that the majority leader and the Speaker honor their commitments to put this bill on the floor of both Houses. I implore them to move quickly to pass the Zadroga 9/11 health reauthorization act.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Madam 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.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2016—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 2029, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 98, H.R. 2029, a bill making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, I am here this morning to speak about the issue that is before this body, the motion to proceed to H.R. 2029, or what we refer to as the MILCON-VA appropriations bill.

I certainly intend to support closing off debate on this and moving to take up this important appropriations measure. This is important for a host of different reasons, not the least of which is that we need to get to the substance of this issue. We need to get back to a regular order process in order to advance the appropriations bills that we on the Appropriations Committee have spent a considerable amount of time and effort drafting.

Over these past many months, we have worked to make sure that the bills were ready for floor consideration. We didn't want to find ourselves in a situation where, at the end of this year, we scramble to piece together an omnibus measure that has not had the considered debate and opportunity for amendment that I believe we all seek as lawmakers. It is important that we consider the Military Construction-VA bill in regular order and do it now—not stick it on the back end of another measure, not incorporate it into an omnibus bill or into some fashion of a CR omnibus right before Christmas.

I serve on the Appropriations Committee. I had input into this bill at the subcommittee level and again at the full committee markup, which is a lot more than can be said of many of my colleagues in this body who don't have that opportunity since they are not on the Appropriations Committee. But even after having the input that I have had, it is extraordinarily important that I have another opportunity to influence the bill, and I will illustrate why.

I am going to speak about one very specific issue today that has garnered the attention, concern, and passion of Alaskans and veterans around the State, and that is the issue surrounding the Veterans Choice Card.

In the view of many Alaskans, the Veterans Choice Card is an unmitigated disaster in our State, and there are many reasons that is the case. We don't host a stand-alone VA hospital in Alaska. So the VA has issued a Choice Card to every veteran in the State who is enrolled for health care. In order to use the Choice Card, you have to identify a provider that is willing to accept the card, qualifies under the very onerous Choice Card standards, and is also willing to put up with the bureaucratic strings that are attached to determining which care is approved by the VA over what period of time and for what price.

In Alaska, we have a demand for health care providers that far outstrips the supply, and I have been on the floor many times speaking on that subject. We have many Alaskans that have private health insurance which pays the providers better, and it is certainly more efficient than the government-sponsored programs.

Structurally, the way the Veterans Choice Card Program is currently designed, it does not provide Alaska's veterans with the choices that it promises. It is just as simple as that, and those are just the structural problems we are talking about. Many of our colleagues know that TriWest has encountered difficulties with implementing the program, and the VA has had trouble coordinating TriWest's work with the work of the local VA facilities. Unfortunately, these problems have led to some dangerous near-misses.

We had one situation with a veteran who was scheduled for a fee-basis neurosurgery. He was going to receive this

care from a community provider in the State. Then he was told by the VA that the VA had changed its mind. They were not going to sign off on paying for the care. The vet was told to call TriWest. The TriWest call center operator gave the veteran a list of behavioral health providers who had signed up to accept the Choice Card. The call center operator didn't know that neurosurgery is not the same as behavioral health. By the time the VA had reversed itself, the neurosurgery that the veteran had initially scheduled was no longer available. The vet had to wait for one to become available.

What happened in the interim? They gave the veteran pain medicine.

In another case, we had a veteran sent to Seattle for a course of radiation therapy, and in the middle of this course of radiation therapy the vet was told to return home because his authorization had expired. He was told: The authorization has expired. Go home.

It is not as if he could just get in a car and drive 20 minutes back to his house. He had been sent to Seattle from a rural community in Southeast Alaska for the care—for the radiation therapy. They said: Go home. Your authorization has expired.

So there was a whole series of exchanges with TriWest and then with the VA itself. The vet began, basically, calling family members to tell them he was coming home to die and to start making funeral preparations. This is not how we treat our veterans.

Now the Veterans Choice legislation provided that the Choice Card program does not displace any of the existing VA purchased care programs. It explicitly supplemented those programs, which for us in Alaska would be a good thing. In Alaska, the VA—and this was under Secretary Shinseki's leadership—established two purchased care programs to address gaps in VA capacity in Alaska. One of the programs provided for partnerships with our tribal health system to care for our vets in more remote areas of the State where the VA simply doesn't have a presence. It was innovative. It was innovative at the time, and these partnerships worked. They really did help to facilitate the care. The other program called "Care Closer to Home" enabled the VA to purchase care from community providers in the State who performed medical services that the VA didn't offer—services such as neurosurgery and specialized forms of radiation therapy.

Before this program was implemented, the VA forced veterans to fly to Seattle or other parts of the country for services that we would consider pretty routine. You have a 1,000-mile-plus flight to Seattle for an orthopedic appointment or for a neurosurgery appointment. This is what we are putting our veterans through. Imagine you are 70 years old, 80 years old, and you are told to go take a flight for 3½ hours to Seattle—get yourself to the hospital just for an orthopedic appointment. By

the time the veteran is at this place and needs that appointment, you are not feeling well in the first place.

I have talked and written before about a veteran on the Kenai Peninsula who died while fighting with the VA over urology care. He couldn't travel to Anchorage, which is about a 3-hour drive, much less to Seattle where the VA wanted to send him because he was in very frail condition, but the VA refused to purchase his care on the Kenai Peninsula where there are facilities that could have helped him. I think we would all agree that when our elderly veterans are in perhaps their final months of life, they have got a lot better things to do than fight with the VA and the bureaucracy.

When the VA came to the hearings before the appropriations subcommittee, I asked them pointblank whether the implementation of the Veterans Choice Card would adversely affect the existing purchased care programs in Alaska, whether it is through IHS or further specialized care, and the answer was clear. There was no nuance; there was no doubt. The answer was no, it is not going to impact negatively the purchased care program. When the Senate Appropriations Committee marked up the MILCON-VA bill on May 21, the VA hadn't changed its answer. It is not going to negatively impact, they said.

Then a week later, on May 28, I happened to be visiting the VA facility in Anchorage, and I learned there that the VA had spent all of its fiscal year 2015 purchased care money and was planning to suspend its relationships with community providers and the Alaska tribal health system.

I had gone to the VA center to get an update, to check in with the new docs who were there and to see how things were going. It was basically a checkup with the folks at VA, and they laid this bombshell. They weren't trying to be coy with me or hide the ball. They had just learned themselves. I don't know who was in greater shock, me or the folks there at the VA and their military partners.

We were also in a situation where there were a lot of rumors that the VA was going to pull out of the Joint Venture Hospital that it shares with the Air Force on the Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. Again, this was a bombshell of news. Now we know that the VA was not just out of purchased care money, it was out of money to operate its health care system, and without the emergency infusion of money we provided from the Choice Act fund before August recess, the VA would have run out of money before we had come back from the August recess.

It was a situation that was a mess. We fixed the mess for 2015 but did nothing for 2016.

What does the VA's failure to properly project the cost of purchased care in 2015 mean for its fiscal year 2016 appropriations? After asking the VA on several occasions, I am left with the impression that the VA once again will

run out of money for purchased care and then will remedy this situation by shoving veterans who are seeking care under the Choice Card whether the care is meaningfully available or not. So we have been pushing the VA on this, and to Secretary McDonald's credit, he came to Alaska this summer. The Undersecretary for Health, Dr. Shulkin, visited Alaska. They weren't sheltered from the anger that our vets were feeling.

My colleague Senator SULLIVAN conducted an incredible field hearing to create a record of how the VA, TriWest, and the Choice Card Program were individually and collectively failing Alaska's veterans. But here's the problem. We don't have a fiscal year 2016 solution locked down, and we may not have an acceptable solution locked down by Veterans Day, either.

Without an opportunity to debate the fiscal year 2016 appropriations bill on the floor, I have limited opportunity to press this point, to demand that the GAO investigate what actually is going on and try to amend the bill to ensure that the VA has adequate purchased care money available so that it doesn't drop these veterans through the cracks when it can't serve their critical care issues, and neither can the Choice Card program. Without the opportunity to debate in regular order, I can't do what the people of Alaska have asked me to do in representing them the way I know that we need to in order to deal with this.

I hear what the Democratic leader is saying, that the Budget Control Act needs to be addressed, but I don't agree with the tradeoff that we cannot consider appropriations bills in regular order while conversations are ongoing to address the bigger, broader question. Failing to consider these bills in regular order corrodes the influence of this body; it corrodes the ability of Members to fulfill the responsibilities that we have to the people that we work for. These are issues.

Again, I chose to focus my comments this morning on one area within the MILCON-VA, on that implementation of the Choice Card in Alaska, and how it has so basically failed our veterans. But there is so much more. Again, if we don't have that opportunity to bring it up, to offer our amendments, to do our best to serve the needs of our veterans, we fail them. We fail the system.

I do hope we will have the opportunity this afternoon to advance to these important measures. Remember, this is just the first of 12. It is very important work that we have in front of us.

Madam President, I know my colleague from Connecticut has arrived on the floor, but before I yield the floor to him, I want to briefly mention a meeting that I had this morning in my office.

WELCOMING MEMBERS OF THE ANCHORAGE FIRE DEPARTMENT HONOR GUARD

Madam President, I was able to welcome members of the Anchorage Fire

Department Honor Guard to my office. They are making their way to Emmitsburg, MD, to be part of a ceremony at the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial, where they will pay tribute to and honor the firefighters who have given their lives in the line of duty during the year 2014.

REMEMBERING JEFF BAYLESS

The firefighter whom Alaska is recognizing and honoring is a gentleman by the name of Jeff Bayless. He died at the age of 51 on March 7, 2014, during a strenuous training exercise in Anchorage.

How Jeff Bayless lived his life as a fourth-generation Alaskan, and as one who had not only a love for the outdoors but a love and care for people, is something that we want to pay tribute to, and we want to honor and recognize him.

This weekend, on the campus of the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, MD, the name of fallen Anchorage firefighter Jeffery Edward Bayless will be inscribed on the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial. A total of 87 firefighters will be honored, and 84 of those firefighters, including Jeff, gave their lives in the line of duty during 2014. Three died in previous years. This week, I welcome members of the Anchorage Fire Department Honor Guard to my office, as they make their way to Emmitsburg to celebrate Jeff's life and his contributions to the fire service.

I wanted to reflect for a moment on the life of fire hero Jeff Bayless. Jeff died at age 51 on March 7, 2014, during a strenuous training exercise in Anchorage. Heroes are remembered for the way they lived their lives and this is how we should remember Jeff Bayless.

Jeff was a fourth generation Alaskan. He grew up in Copper Center, attended Alaska Bible College in Glennallen, and then became a paramedic through the Oregon Health Sciences University training program. Jeff was also trained as a Registered Nurse. After serving as a paramedic in Oregon, he returned to Alaska to work as a first responder in Matanuska-Susitna Borough. Ultimately he found his home at the Anchorage Fire Department, first as a paramedic and then as a firefighter. He excelled in both roles. Working his way up the ranks, Jeff was a Senior Captain at the time of his passing.

As would be expected of a fourth generation Alaskan, Jeff had a love for the outdoors. From an early age, Jeff put his mastery of the outdoors to work in the service of lifesaving. As an older teenager, Jeff and his buddy happened upon a flash flood in the Yukon that swept vehicles off the road. Using their wilderness savvy, they roped up and rescued every person.

Later in life, as a member of the Anchorage Fire Department's whitewater rescue team, he plucked several victims from dangerous waters. One of these rescues was particularly memorable. On September 16, 2012, Jeff's Station 11 was called out to rescue a

kayaker on the Eagle River who was lodged against a tree after his kayak overturned. The kayaker was in the water for about 90 minutes when a bystander called for emergency assistance. First the tree had to be cut, then the kayaker plucked from the water by his lifejacket. The kayaker was hypothermic by this point. While a number of units from the Anchorage Fire Department responded, Jeff was senior on the three-man jet boat team that plucked the victim out of the water. Jeff's team won the American Red Cross of Alaska Wilderness Rescue Heroes award. Jeff characterized the rescue as one of the most challenging successful rescues his team had ever been involved with. The team was well trained to perform the rescue and in spite of the dangers "everyone went home," including the victim.

I cannot characterize Jeff's life in words more touching than on his National Fallen Firefighters Foundation official biography. He spent his life simply doing what he loved, completely engaged, lost in the moment. Without any consciousness of the impact his own life was having, he left behind a great legacy of life, encouragement, accomplishments, and friendship.

That, my colleagues, is the definition of a fire hero.

He would say he was one of the guys who was just doing his job, but as one of those men who was just doing his job, he needs to know that we view him as one of our heroes.

Our thoughts and our prayers are with his family and all of his brother and sister firefighters as they gather this weekend in Emmitsburg.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

ZADROGA 9/11 BILL

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, I thank my colleague from Alaska for yielding and giving me this opportunity to discuss two measures that ought to be beyond debate or discussion on this floor as well as in America—two issues where Americans ought to unite and be together without controversy or contention.

The first relates to the emergency responders who rushed to the rubble of the World Trade Center in New York in the wake of that horrific attack on America on September 11. I want to join and thank my colleague from New York, Senator SCHUMER, who just spoke on the floor, and associate myself completely with his very eloquent and powerful explanation for why this Nation must meet its obligation to provide critical health care for those emergency responders, firemen, police, and medical personnel who went to that site, even as it continued to smolder with poisonous chemicals and fumes, risking their lives in the face of peril that they little understood and could not know. They never asked whether that place was dangerous, but, in fact, as we now know, it has caused

countless cancers, blood diseases, and lung problems, which have manifested themselves in the years after.

Yet at midnight last night, the beginning of this day, the programs designed to provide critical medical care and compensation to the victims were permitted to expire. That is unacceptable and unacceptable.

I join my colleagues from New York and New Jersey as a leading cosponsor in urging this Congress to act—and to act immediately and urgently—to make sure that we do what is right for those emergency responders who served and sacrificed in the wake of 9/11. Failure to do so is absolutely outrageous. The fund still has some money, and it will continue to function. But this Congress should act to pass the Zadroga 9/11 bill immediately.

Madam President, the second area where I think we ought to be all agreeing relates to doing what is right for our veterans, and that means restoring the \$857 million that has been deleted from the President's request for veterans in the Military Construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2016. This bill essentially shortchanges our veterans and straitjackets the Veterans' Administration.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a letter from the American Legion.

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

THE AMERICAN LEGION,

OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL COMMANDER,

Washington, DC, September 30, 2015.

Hon. MITCH MCCONNELL,

Majority Leader, U.S. Senate,

The Capitol, Washington, DC.

DEAR MAJORITY LEADER MCCONNELL: Last May then-National Commander Michael D. Helm called on Congress to pass a budget for the Military Construction-Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill that won't shortchange the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). On April 30 the House of Representatives had passed a funding bill which unfortunately underfunds VA's medical care, major construction and Information Technology accounts by more than \$1.5 billion below the Administration's request.

We were pleased when the Senate Appropriations Committee remedied that shortfall somewhat, but because they were tasked with making an unworkable allocation workable, the Senate version of the bill still underfunds veterans by approximately \$857 million. This comes at a time when the VA is faced with an unprecedented demand for services, in terms of both numbers and complexity.

We need your help to ensure that VA is fully funded so it can provide the care and services veterans have earned and need. An inadequate VA budget will have a negative effect on the timeliness and quality of care that veterans will receive. Fully funding VA must be a very high priority for Congress.

The American Legion is the largest veteran service organization in the nation and we take our responsibility to analyze and evaluate veterans' healthcare options very seriously. As VA, Congress and The American Legion move forward together we must ensure that America's veterans are provided with the healthcare and services they have earned and were guaranteed.

Respectfully,

DALE BARNETT,
National Commander.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. This letter emphasizes the challenges that the VA faces in meeting the unprecedented and increasing demand for services that our veterans need and deserve. This obligation for our country is not a matter of discretion or convenience, it is a promise that we have made and we must fulfill to provide medical care, skills training, job opportunity, and, most especially, the mental health care that our veterans need so that we can stop the 22 suicides every day in this country—the greatest, strongest, country in history of our world, where 22 of our Nation's heroes commit suicide every day.

They suffer from the invisible wounds of war, post-traumatic stress and traumatic brain injury. Many of our veterans suffer the more visible wounds, and they need care as well. Many of our veterans in increasing numbers will be coming out of the service needing jobs and skills training, not only through the VA but the Department of Labor. Just yesterday, the nominee for the Veterans Employment and Training Services position in the Department of Labor testified before the Veterans' Affairs Committee as to the importance of services provided by the Department of Labor, and yet they too will be shortchanged by this budget.

So I urge my colleagues to provide sufficient funding to restore that \$857 million and to make sure that we meet those needs of our veterans. Failing to do so is as unacceptable as failing to meet the needs of the emergency responders who went to the 9/11 site. This bill underfunds the VA's medical facilities by \$100 million, reducing the VA's ability to keep pace with the need for critical facility maintenance. This is upkeep that is vital for basic repair and maintenance. Facilities will decay and downgrade without that funding. It is an investment in basic infrastructure.

We ought to be investing in the personnel of the VA—the doctors and nurses and other professionals—so that we recruit and retain the men and women who will really do the work on the ground in the trenches to make sure that the VA provides the best care possible—world-class care to our veterans. They deserve no less. Fully funding the VA honors the service and sacrifice of men and women who have risked their lives to keep our great Nation free. Freedom is never free, and this Nation ought to be keeping its promise to those veterans, which, unfortunately, sadly, reprehensibly, this measure fails to do.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. FLAKE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to enter into a colloquy with the Senator from Wisconsin.

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

BORDER JOBS FOR VETERANS ACT OF 2015

Mr. FLAKE. Madam President, we are here to discuss the process for the Border Jobs for Veterans Act that is going to pass shortly.

I yield to the Senator from Wisconsin.

Mr. JOHNSON. Madam President, first, I thank my colleague from Arizona for leading and also for his leadership for working, on a bipartisan basis, with Members from the other side of the aisle to really accomplish something to produce a result. What I have been trying to do as chairman of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs is that I have reached out to every Senator and asked them: If you have identified a problem, if you have a piece of legislation that solves that problem, bring it before our committee, and I will do everything in my power to mark it up, report it out of our committee, and then first work with you to first pass it through the Senate, then through the House, to get that piece of legislation on the President's desk, and to have it signed into law to actually solve that problem.

The Senator from Arizona has done a great job in this particular case because this is a piece of legislation that truly is a win-win. It is a win for our veterans, and it is a win for the border.

I am not going to steal the Senator's thunder in terms of describing all of the benefits of the bill, but I just want to mention a couple. We obviously have a huge problem at our border, and neither one of us would claim that this is going to solve all of our problems. But it identifies one—a staffing problem with our ports of entry. Also there is another problem in terms of our veterans who have served this Nation and are unable to find work. So that is the win-win. This is a perfect example of a piece of legislation now that solves that problem.

Coming from the manufacturing sector, I never did quite understand why our returning veterans—with their esprit de corps, with all their skills, all their dedication, their great attitude—are having a hard time finding work, because certainly in my manufacturing operation in Oshkosh, WI, boy, if I found a veteran, I hired that individual because they are great workers. Now, in my Senate office, we actually have seven veterans with a combined total of 115 years of service.

So I think what we are going to find now at Customs and Border Protection is that this bill will make it easier for veterans to connect with those particular jobs to help staff our ports of entry. Customs and Border Protection is going to find that value of being able to employ the finest among us because we have made that easier. Our veterans are going to have the ability to leave

service and have a very good job further serving the country and keeping our Nation safe.

I again thank the Senator from Arizona for his leadership on this and for working with me to get this passed through our committee, passed through the Senate, and put on the President's desk for his signature to have this bill signed into law so we can be helping our veterans and protect this Nation.

I thank the Senator from Arizona.

Mr. FLAKE. Thank you. I again thank the Senator from Wisconsin and others I will name later for working so hard on this bill.

The Senator made sure that it moved through his committee expeditiously, that we got it to the floor in the Senate and also through the House as well. It is an example of how the Senate and the House can work in a bipartisan way. I appreciate both the appeal that you have made to encourage us to come forward with problems that we have and to vote for ways that your committee can help solve them.

Thank you again.

Mr. JOHNSON. If I could just make one final point, this is a classic example of when we concentrate on the areas of agreement and find the areas of agreement that unite us, as opposed to exploiting the divisions.

Again, this is a perfect example of getting bipartisan support on a piece of legislation. It serves as a great example for everybody serving in Washington to see us concentrate on the areas of agreement that unify us rather than exploit those divisions.

Again, I thank the Senator very much for his leadership.

Mr. FLAKE. Thank you.

Madam President, I wish to talk about the problem that led to this bill. We have made significant investments along the border in terms of port facilities. More needs to be done, obviously, but we made significant investments to accommodate cross-border traffic.

There is a lot of good that goes on at the border. We often just focus on the bad—the illegal crossings, the drug trade, and whatnot—but there is a tremendous amount of good that happens on the border, particularly the border of Arizona and Mexico.

There is a lot of commerce that goes in. Arizona's ports of entry processed \$30.5 billion worth of goods in 2014. This is an increase up from \$18.5 billion in 2009. So there is a lot of good that goes on. We have needed more adequate staffing at these ports.

The Border Patrol officers with whom we often associate the border are in green uniforms. What we need more of are blue uniforms—people to actually facilitate this cross-border traffic and the flow of goods that benefits us, benefits Mexico and other countries to the south as well.

Secretary Johnson, when we asked why we were having difficulty filling these slots for staffing of these ports, said that—well, let me just say we au-

thorized—the Senate and the House authorized—2,000 new CPB officers. We authorized these positions, but as of earlier this year, only 800 of the 2,000 had been filled. So Secretary Johnson was explaining that the delays are associated with applicant background investigations, low polygraph clearance rates, and a shortage of Federal polygraph examiners combined with attrition.

So we thought: What group of people do we have who have gone through these security clearances already and who could clear this hurdle and expedite this? And it is, of course, our returning men and women from the military and those who are now out of service. They have, in many cases, already gone through the security clearances. They have passed the polygraph test and could move more expeditiously into these jobs. Obviously, we have concerns, and we have several other programs that deal with returning veterans to make sure that there are jobs awaiting them.

Let me say that this doesn't affect any of the preferences or other positions that are available for our veterans. This simply requires CPB and the Department of Homeland Security to coordinate or collaborate with our military to see what jobs are out there and see what positions can be filled.

It shouldn't take an act of Congress to get two agencies to work together like this, but sometimes it does. So that is what this legislation is doing, and it will require reporting to happen as well to make sure that this is being accomplished and the coordination is occurring.

Let me just talk about some of the endorsements for this legislation, some of those groups that have helped us in exploiting the need and coming to a solution.

The Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry said:

The Border Jobs for Veterans Act . . . helps advance two major national priorities: the facilitation of cross-border commerce and the future employment of the tens of thousands of men and women who separate from military service each year. Ensuring our ports of entry are properly staffed is critical to our nation's ability to compete on a global scale.

The president of the Fresh Produce Association of the Americas said:

The Border Jobs for Vets Legislation is crucial for continuing to grow the nation's economy. It is helping businesses across the country continue to prosper by facilitating trade while also using the skills and knowledge of an amazing asset we already have, our veterans, to do this important work.

The Greater Nogales-Santa Cruz Port Authority said:

Border communities like Nogales, Arizona, depend greatly on the ability of people and goods to cross the border effectively and efficiently. We have been pushing for many years for additional staff. . . . The Border Jobs for Veterans Act is one of the most significant steps taken on this issue in many years.

The president of the Tucson Hispanic Chamber of Commerce said:

We appreciate our Arizona Senators' innovative approach to a problem that is impacting our communities and our economy. Any impediments that increase wait times at our ports of entry such as a lack of adequate staffing impact our retail sales and ultimately the financial success of our business community in Arizona.

I would like to take a moment to thank my Senate colleagues—Senator RON JOHNSON, who already spoke here; Senator MCCAIN, who played a critical role in this; Senator SCHUMER, Senator BURR, Senator BALDWIN, Senator FEINSTEIN, Senator LANKFORD, Senator SULLIVAN, Senator TILLIS, Senator TOOMEY, and Senator DAVID VITTER—for cosponsoring this bipartisan legislation.

After being approved by the Senate, Arizona Congresswoman MARTHA MCSALLY has led the effort to get it passed in the House unanimously. She played a great role there, and I want to thank her for leading this effort in the House.

Thanks to everyone's support and the hard work of committee staff, including Brooke Ericson and Holly Idelson on the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee and Paul Anstine of the House Homeland Security Committee, we now have this bill ready to head to the President's desk.

In conclusion, let me just say that those leaving the military need jobs and CBP needs officers. This is a great bill that will require coordination between the two, and it will lead to greater staffing at less cost and certainly in less time. So I look forward to having the administration look at this and look forward to having the President sign this legislation.

With that, Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 2835, which was received from the House.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2835) to actively recruit members of the Armed Forces who are separating from military service to serve as Customs and Border Protection officers.

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

Mr. FLAKE. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and any statements related to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

The bill (H.R. 2835) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

Mr. FLAKE. Madam President, 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.

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

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

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2016—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 2101

Ms. AYOTTE. Madam President, I come to the floor today to ask for an extension of a very important program to my State—the Land and Water Conservation Fund—and because of that I ask unanimous consent that the Energy and Natural Resources Committee be discharged from and the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 2101; I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from New Hampshire.

Ms. AYOTTE. Madam President, I am very disappointed that last night the Land and Water Conservation Fund expired, and so it has lapsed. I just offered a unanimous consent request to extend this fund for 60 days to make sure there was not a lapse in this important program.

This is a fund that, in my home State of New Hampshire, has been used to ensure the public can enjoy our beautiful environment and our natural spaces, from my home city of Nashua, NH, and Mine Falls Park, which I love to run through every morning when I am in New Hampshire, to our beautiful White Mountain National Forest.

I had the opportunity to come to the floor yesterday with Senators from both sides of the aisle, including my colleague from Montana, Senator DAINES. The Senator from Montana had a wonderful picture of him and his wife in their public lands that have been preserved using the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The picture was of him and his wife hiking. We all understand that a big part of the beauty of this country is our natural beauty, and because of that, the Land and Water Conservation Fund was established in 1965. It was actually established to aid in the preservation of spaces for outdoor recreation across this Nation.

In New Hampshire we have a very strong tradition of the outdoors being such a part of who we are. In fact, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has led to more than 650 individual acquisition and development projects in our State. We very much support the public use of our lands in our State, enjoying their natural beauty, whether it is hiking, fishing, hunting or any number of other wonderful uses we can have of our public lands. So this fund has been very important, and I believe we should not let it lapse.

The law that created the Land and Water Conservation Fund in 1965 established that a portion of the revenues coming from oil and gas leasing would be designated for this purpose. So to not extend this fund really is another example, if you look at the fund itself, where portions of these dollars have actually been taken to spend for other purposes in the Treasury, not in accordance with the law. We see that happen too much in Washington. But to let this lapse is very unfortunate.

I am very disappointed my colleague has rendered an objection because this is such a bipartisan issue and something that has done so much for our country—this program—and for my home State of New Hampshire. So I hope in the coming days we will be able to work together to have the Land and Water Conservation Fund program extended and that we can get beyond the partisan objections and get it done so we can work together to preserve the beautiful spaces in this country. This program has done so much for my home State of New Hampshire and for many States across this country, and that is why it has such strong bipartisan support.

Madam President, I am very disappointed that my very reasonable request in asking for unanimous consent to extend this program for 60 days until we can get to the long-term permanent authorization—which I support and I have cosponsored, and I think that is what we need to do in the long term—has been objected to. To let this lapse is completely unacceptable when it has been such a strong program in allowing everyone in this country to enjoy our public lands, to enjoy the great outdoors in the greatest country on Earth.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, I want to talk for a few minutes about the discussion we are having about whether to have a discussion. The debate we are having about whether to have a debate is always amazing to me. How far we have moved in such a short period of time from the way the Congress always did its work. The way you set your priorities, both at home and in the government, is how you spend your money. You might think that is not the way you set your priorities, but if you think something is very important to you and your family and you find out you are not investing any money or time in it, it is probably not all that important. It is probably something you have decided is a good thing to say is very important.

This is the process we go through in the government to talk about what our

priorities are. What could be more significant in our priorities than the bill that I would like to see us take up today, the VA-Military Construction bill, the bill that determines lots of things about not only people who serve in the military but what is available for their families, and what kind of support structure there is, and then with the Veterans' Administration, what is there after they serve, how are we meeting that commitment we made to our veterans that if they serve for the government—and we are grateful, so we should then make sure we are always there to do what the American people have told veterans we would do if they served.

We have already had votes not to go to the Defense appropriations bill—a bill that is about the same amount of money the President asked for and what the President said was needed to defend the country, but apparently there is some balance somewhere in the world—that I am not aware of—that no matter how much it costs to defend the country, you have to spend that much money on other things that don't defend the country; that there is a balance between what is happening in Syria today and how many employees the EPA needs or how many employees the IRS needs. Obviously, that is something that doesn't make sense to people. It doesn't make sense to me, but we couldn't get the four additional votes we needed to go to the Defense appropriations bill. I guess in a world where the President said he is also going to veto the Defense authorization bill—not because of what it authorizes but because of the money that eventually the appropriators would have to spend—people have to wonder what is going on. The No. 1 priority of the Federal Government is to defend the country, and following that priority, our obligation is to those who serve in the military and their families. That is what the Military Construction bill would do. It actually spends a little more money than we spent this year. That appears to be everybody's complaint; that somehow the government is not spending enough money, but the Appropriations Committee took the amount of money that the law allows, and the Budget Control Act did a good thing in terms of keeping spending under control. That is one of the few things that has happened in Washington, DC, in a long time that actually did put a lid on spending because it actually put a lid on spending. It actually says in the law how much money we can spend this year on discretionary spending. The Appropriations Committee, with Republicans in charge for the first time in a long time, did the work for the first time in a long time. In fact, this is the first year in 6 years that the Appropriations Committee voted all the bills out of committee, marked up all of the bills, cut places where the committee thought should be cut, increased places where the committee thought should be increased, and this at a level that the law

allows, but apparently the law is not good enough for our friends who always want to spend more money. It is not even good enough to debate the bills that come out at the level of the law, to let those be amended, and to let that work be publicly done.

This worked pretty well for a long time. I think initially there was probably one spending bill, but I think in the tradition of Congress, that was the one bill that in both the House and the Senate we were able to debate as long as we wanted to, until everybody was worn out, offering their ideas as to how to spend the money better or not spend it at all. The House has continued to do this, except for a couple of years under Speaker PELOSI, on the half dozen big bills of the 12 spending bills we have now, and they traditionally have 200 or 300 amendments on each of those bills on how to spend the money. Some of those suggestions were not to spend it at all. What could be healthier than that? The Senate is not allowed to do that. At the end of the day, we are saying: Let's debate these bills. Let's, of course, debate the bill that defends the country. Let's debate the bill that takes care of those who do defend the country.

This bill includes \$5.5 billion more than was spent last year. I don't recall hearing a hark and cry—when this bill finally gets passed as part of one big not very appealing package—from anyone saying that we were not spending nearly enough on military construction or veterans programs last year, but even though we are spending \$5.5 billion more than we spent last year, some are saying it isn't nearly enough to spend this year. The committee thought it was enough.

In fact, this bill was voted out of committee—and remember this committee has Democrats and Republicans on it—with a vote of 27 to 3. Eleven Democrats and all the Republicans said: This is the best way to spend this amount of money—\$5.5 billion more for these purposes than we spent last year. Let's vote this bill out so it can be debated on the Senate floor. Here we are months later, still trying to get 60 Senators to agree to have that debate. Actually, I think we are trying to get five Senators to agree to have that debate because all of the Republicans, and one Democrat, appear to be willing to move forward on these defense funding bills, but there is not enough on the other side. If we could get half of the Democrats who voted for the bill in the committee, we would have the votes we need to have this debate and talk about spending money.

Eventually the government has to be funded, and we should all understand that if we don't do it this way, the alternative is that it will be funded in absolutely the worst possible way as one big bill with no debate and having to settle on some desperate decision at the end of the year in order to keep the government funded because we do have to defend the country.

I am not arguing with the decision that ultimately has to be made to defend the country. I am not arguing with the decision that ultimately has to be made to have the military installations that allow that to happen with military construction. I am not arguing with the decision that has to be made for the veterans affairs part of our government, including veterans' health—mental and physical—behavioral health, and other health, to be funded properly, but why aren't we debating on that today?

What would be wrong with debating this bill? If you were not one of the 27 Senators on that committee—so 27 percent of the Senate has already voted on this bill. Let's send it to the Senate floor and vote on it. If you are not one of the 27 Senators who voted for it or one of the 3 who voted against it, bring your ideas to the floor. That is how this process is supposed to work. Your ideas may be better than what is in the bill, but we will never find out if we are not allowed to debate it. This is regrettable for veterans and their families. We see a Veterans' Administration that is not doing what it ought to do.

A year ago, the President said the Veterans' Administration was the best funded part of "his government," but now there is not enough money. Suddenly there is not enough money. The President thought there was enough money a year ago, but apparently there is not enough money now. The real issue is that there is not enough commitment to veterans and the Veterans' Administration. We could have that debate here too.

Over the last year, we have moved a long way toward giving veterans more choices, more options, and more places to go to get their health care. That system is in its fledgling stages, and it ought to be debated as we talk about how to spend money that would be spent on the Veterans' Administration, but we can't debate and vote on it if people aren't willing to have the vote it takes to have that debate. We ought to be getting back to the way this process works transparently and the way it works constitutionally. We need to have this vote today. We need to get to the Defense appropriations bill.

Earlier this week, we had a vote—which I didn't support—to move forward for a few more weeks with last year's spending. Last year's priorities only work for so long. Just a couple of years ago, we had the situation where the Budget Control Act had to go into effect—and it went into effect because Congress didn't do its job and ended up appropriating more money than the law would allow—and that required line-by-line cutting, the sequester, which is not a necessary part of that law at all. It is only a part of the law if the Congress violates the law, and the Congress violated the law. The President signed the bill, and then we had to do the line-by-line cutting.

We brought the leaders of our military in to talk about this, and none of

them were for line-by-line cutting. Who would be? That is the worst possible way to reduce spending because you are not making any choices, you are just admitting that you can't make any choices, and so everything gets cut everywhere. Every one of them said this is a big problem, but an even bigger problem in almost every case is the sequester. In fact, Admiral McRaven of Special Ops said that an even bigger problem than the sequester is the continuing resolution because we were cutting lines of a budget that might have met the military needs 5 years before, but it hasn't been updated for 5 years.

Let's have this debate. Let's move beyond saying that we can't decide how to spend the money to debating how to spend the money. Let's have a defense structure that works for 2015 and 2016, not a defense structure that might have worked for 2010. One of the great frustrations the people we work for have with us today is they believe this is not all that complicated, and they are right. How complicated can it be? We were elected to the Senate so we could take positions and vote, so let's take positions and vote. The debate we should be having is about moving forward on these critical issues.

I hope our colleagues will join us today. I hope there are 60 Senators who will say: I am ready to have this debate. I am ready to defend the country. I am ready to take care of those who defend our country and their families and veterans and their survivors. And that is what this budget is all about.

How anyone can walk onto the floor and say they don't want to deal with this now and put it off a little while longer is disappointing to me and to lots of people.

Let's get our work done.

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

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

Mr. KIRK. Madam President, I come to the floor to urge my colleagues to pass the 2016 Military Construction appropriations bill. This bill has a \$4.2 billion increase over last year's level.

We passed the MILCON-VA bill out of the full Appropriations Committee by a vote of 21 to 9, with Democratic Senators Leahy, Feinstein, Udall, Schatz, and Baldwin all supporting that bill and with 16 Republicans backing it.

We now have record levels of funding to fix the backlog of disability claims at the VA. We took construction out of the hands of the VA and gave it to the Army Corps of Engineers so that we never have cost overruns like at the Denver hospital again. The bill also bans funding for Glenn Haggstrom, the bureaucrat responsible for spending

\$930 million over budget in Denver. The bill provides new protections for whistleblowers, especially for doctors and nurses not protected by the Whistleblower Protection Act.

By voting no on this bill, Members will be voting against a \$4.2 billion increase for our veterans.

Thank you, Madam President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP NEGOTIATIONS

Mr. TILLIS. Madam President, I rise today to speak about a subject matter I touched on about a month ago regarding current trade negotiations.

I don't blame elected officials for pushing legislation, policy proposals, or ideas that further their home State's interests. In fact, I think that is one of the first things we should do here, that is, to make sure the folks who elected us know we are standing up for them.

But I also think there comes a time when we need to recognize that the long-term interests of our collective constituents are at risk, even when we are doing short term things that put us at risk.

This is why I have decided that I wish to speak a little bit about the current status of the Trans-Pacific Partnership or TPP negotiations.

I learned overnight and this morning that the American team of the TPP negotiators has tabled language which would carve certain American-grown commodities out of the protections of the trade deal's investor-state dispute settlement—or ISDS—mechanism.

By carving out tobacco from the TPP, the President and his administration are discriminating against an entire agriculture commodity, setting a dangerous precedent for future trade agreements.

I rise today to defend the farmers, the manufacturers, and the exporters from the discriminatory treatment in this proposed trade agreement. What they have decided to do right now relates to tobacco. Today it happens to be about tobacco, but I will do this for any crop now and for any agriculture commodity for any State going forward in the future. This is not just about tobacco. This is about American values and fairness.

In July I stood on this same floor and I discussed this same issue. I went out of my way to emphasize that I believe free trade is good. That is why I voted for trade promotion authority. A balanced trade agreement will benefit all of us.

I also recognize that the United States over the years has tried to do more with these agreements than merely haggle for market access or tariff reductions. Over the past 30 years, the United States has consistently imported certain components of our American system into these agreements, including due process protections, dispute settlement procedures, and the protection of private property rights.

These are now standard terms that those who engage with the United States at the bargaining table know are not negotiable.

They never have been—that is, until yesterday.

Our negotiators have now concluded that while some investors are entitled to equal treatment under the law, others aren't. What our negotiators have proposed sets the stage for the remainder of this negotiation and for those deals which will be negotiated in the future, such as the agreement with Europe and future agreements with African nations.

Our trade agreements are now apparently nothing more than laboratories for setting partisan policies and picking winners and losers. If we condone this kind of behavior, how can we be assured it will ever end?

As I stated in July, once we allow an entire sector to be treated unfairly, the question is, who is next? Is it the beef industry in Nebraska? Is it the pork industry in States such as Iowa and North Carolina? Is it the poultry industry in Delaware, North Carolina, Arkansas, and Georgia?

We need not look far to find protracted, heated policy debates about any number of issues that affect trade—the consumption of coal, energy exploration practices, the use of pesticides, the use of biotechnology. The right place for those debates is in bodies like this one, not in trade agreements. The wrong place is what is going on right now with our trade negotiators and the members of the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

I hold a sincere belief that unfair treatment for one agricultural commodity significantly heightens the risk that more unfair treatment for another commodity lurks around the corner.

I have no choice but to use this forum to make two very important points and make it very clear to the negotiators as we reach the final stages of the Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations.

First, I would like to speak to process concerns. A failure to abide by the process and the terms governing the process as established by the TPA is unacceptable. When I state that I have no choice but to use the Senate floor to make these points, I mean it.

A full 8 weeks ago, I wrote to our Trade Ambassador cautioning him about this course of action and requesting that he consult with me as he was statutorily obligated in the TPA to do.

To explain to those in the Gallery, we passed a bill that said we wanted to provide the President with trade promotion authority. We wanted to empower representatives of the United States to negotiate with trading partners who are in the Trans-Pacific Partnership. We wanted to support that, over the objections of many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle.

We also set certain ground rules for being able to do that. They had to re-

view with Congress some of the proposed items of the agreement that may be the most contentious about intellectual property, about the carve-out. But to date I have had absolutely no additional communication from the Ambassador or his designees. In other words, it has been lights out.

In fact, I would ask any Member of the Senate whether they honestly know what currently is in the TPP agreement that is being, in my mind, pushed forward and pushed to a point where we will just have a simple up-or-down vote. I think this abuse of the process is in violation of the letter and the spirit of the TPA.

The last time anybody spoke to me regarding this particular provision that has to do with the carve-out, I was told it is something our partners were insisting on. The actions of the last 24 hours—namely, that the United States actually tabled the language in question—really raises serious doubts about that assertion.

Second, I want to speak to the growing view that the TPP is not being negotiated in accordance with the substance of the TPA. The failure to abide by the substance of the provisions of TPA puts the privileged status of the proposed treaty at risk, and it is something I am going to spend a lot of time focusing on.

I would remind this body that we have already, in a bipartisan fashion, disavowed language that treats some products differently. In the TPA, Congress said that opportunities for U.S. agriculture exports must be “substantially equivalent to opportunities afforded foreign exports in U.S. markets.” Congress has stated that dispute settlement mechanisms must be available across the board, not selectively.

I voted to give the President trade promotion authority to allow trade agreements such as the TPP to move through Congress in a quick, orderly, and responsible fashion. Congress granted the President trade promotion authority with the mutual understanding that his administration would negotiate deals in good faith. I did not vote to give the President and the administration the freedom to indiscriminately choose when fairness should be applied and when it should be ignored.

If the President chooses to arbitrarily ignore TPA provisions he doesn't like, then Congress is not obliged to honor the fast-track status. If any carve-out is ultimately included in the TPP, I will work hard to defeat it.

I might add that our own majority leader has expressed concerns over this and has expressed the same sentiment to the trade negotiation team.

In closing, I wish to offer this to anyone who believes my sticking up for tobacco or this particular provision or for equal treatment and American values is shortsighted: I want you to know that I would do it for beef in Nebraska,

for pork in Iowa, for poultry in Delaware, for any farmer who is being unfairly carved out as a result of the administration's desire to put provisions in a trade agreement that simply shouldn't be there, and which have not been there historically.

So to the Members of the Senate and to the American people and the farmers out there, I want you to know I am going to continue this fight. I am going to continue this fight not because it satisfies a home constituency, but because I intend to protect the free trade ideals that have made the United States the most desirable trading partner in the world.

Thank you, Madam President. I also want you to know that I think there is a growing sense of concern—whether it is Senator HATCH, Senator McCONNELL, or a number of other Senators—that regardless of how they feel about this particular issue with tobacco, the provision in such a trade agreement is unacceptable. I hope our trade negotiators recognize that we are focusing a lot of attention on this, and they risk putting together a good trade agreement that we would all like to get behind as a result.

Thank you, Madam President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TILLIS). The Senator from New Hampshire.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 2101

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, for 50 years the Land and Water Conservation Fund has done amazing work protecting our land, waterways, forests, State parks, and critical wildlife habitats. This is particularly true in New Hampshire, where since 1965 LWCF has funded more than 650 individual projects. Just this month, New Hampshire received eight new LWCF grants, which will allow New Hampshire communities to develop outdoor recreation facilities in Dover, which is close to where I live, to renovate Osgood Pond in Milford, and to do so many other projects.

In the last couple of months, I actually had a chance to go around New Hampshire and visit so many of these projects that were done because of LWCF grants. One of the things that really struck me about them is that they are not for big projects, although some have been used toward doing that. The Silvio Conte National Wildlife Preserve that crosses Vermont and New Hampshire is one of those that have been preserved, with the help of Judd Gregg, a former Republican Senator from New Hampshire. LWCF helped to preserve that.

So many of these grants have been used for small projects and communities, such as Meredith in the Lakes Region of New Hampshire on Lake Winnepesaukee, where I visited. They have been able to expand the park along the lake so that people not only from Meredith but from across the State and other parts of the country when they are visiting can come and sit and enjoy the water. With those

projects, they have been able to put in new docks so that people can get out on the lake on boats and enjoy the water. Without LWCF, those projects would not have been possible. It gets people out into the outdoors who otherwise wouldn't be able to do that.

Federal and State LWCF funds are also vital to the outdoor recreation industry in New Hampshire. That is one of our biggest industries. It accounts for \$4.2 billion in consumer spending, \$1.2 billion in wages and salaries, and nearly 50,000 jobs. The importance of these projects and the conservation efforts that are the result of LWCF to the tourism sector of our economy and to our outdoor industry cannot be overstated.

There has been bipartisan support for LWCF since its inception back in the 1960s. There is a bill which Senator BURR has introduced and which I am a cosponsor of that would extend LWCF for 60 days. Unfortunately, last night LWCF expired. Its authorization ended as of September 30.

The effort to reauthorize the program, to invoke Senator BURR's bipartisan legislation, was defeated. When they objected to a simple short-term extension of LWCF, our Republican friends indicated it was because they believed most LWCF funding goes to Federal land acquisition. Well, I would like the RECORD to reflect that is just not the case. I have seen it firsthand in New Hampshire in the projects I talked about. I would bet the Presiding Officer has seen in North Carolina the support LWCF has provided. In fact, during the last 10 years, LWCF funds have been split about 50-50 between Federal agencies and States. In New Hampshire, what these Federal grants do is to leverage State support and private support and local support.

Moreover, most Federal lands that are acquired with LWCF funds are within the existing boundaries of Federal parks, refuges, forests, and other recreation areas. Consolidating these lands helps to reduce Federal maintenance and management costs, saves taxpayer dollars, and enhances the experience visitors have to these areas. For example, in 2014, 39 of 40 LWCF national forest acquisitions expanded access to property already managed by the Federal Government that had been previously closed to the public. This is not about keeping the public off these lands, this is about helping to ensure that members of the public can get on these lands and benefit from them and enjoy them.

This Senator is very disappointed that we have seen a few people blocking the extension of this program in a way that affects every single State in this country. Our failure to act has significant consequences for each and every State.

The expiration of this program jeopardizes access to public land for hunting and fishing, which is one of the great benefits we have in New Hampshire that we use these lands for. It

prohibits access to other outdoor activities that are important and unique to our American heritage. This is going to adversely impact our Nation's outdoor, recreation, conservation, and preservation economy. In New Hampshire, our whole outdoor industry is affected. That outdoor industry contributes over \$1 trillion to our Nation each year, and it supports millions of American jobs.

I think it is critical that we pass a short-term extension to keep this program operating, but ultimately what we need to do is to pass a bill that permanently reauthorizes and fully funds LWCF—something a bipartisan majority of this body supports doing. I am going to continue working to pass a permanent authorization. I know that Senator BURR; my colleague from New Hampshire, Senator AYOTTE; and other people who are on this bill feel the same way.

In the meantime, we should not allow LWCF to lapse any longer. So this Senator is going to renew a unanimous consent request that was made last night by my colleague from New Mexico, Senator HEINRICH, to pass a 60-day extension.

I recognize that this request is going to be objected to by Senator LANKFORD, whom I see on the floor, but I just want to remind us all that less than 2 weeks ago, 53 Senators wrote the Senate majority leader urging action to reauthorize LWCF. To the 12 Republican Senators who signed that letter, I say this: I hope you will work with us to correct the misconceptions and the mischaracterizations that exist about this program. Let's work together so we can allow this short-term extension to pass. Let's work together to get a long-term reauthorization for the Land and Water Conservation Fund because LWCF has expanded outdoor opportunities in every single State in the country.

We should come together to support the Land and Water Conservation Fund, to protect one of America's most essential tools for conservation and economic growth.

With that, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Energy and Natural Resources Committee be discharged from and the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 2101; and I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I do object to this bill moving forward by unanimous consent today. The issue is that this bill needs reform. I enjoy our national parks. My children enjoy our national parks.

Twenty-nine percent of the United States is already under Federal ownership. Twenty-nine percent of all of the United States is under Federal ownership. A significant portion of this—in

fact, last year \$306 million was spent from the LWCF, and \$178 million of that was for new land acquisition.

So the bulk of what this program is used for is for new land acquisition. But the real issue to address here is not only what happens if we allow it to lapse but what happens with it day to day. The day-to-day operation of the LWCF is for new land acquisition or for putting money into a State grant to be able to have them buy new facilities, not to maintain them.

We are not setting aside the money to be able to maintain this. We have an \$11.5 billion deferred maintenance backlog at our national parks right now. The new additional dollars that are used for land acquisition are used to be able to pick up new properties and not to be able to maintain what we currently have. So the challenge that I have is this: Why don't we look at this fund in a new way? Why can't we take care of what we already have and not just focus on acquiring new properties?

To leave the LWCF as it currently is would be something akin to saying: I want to buy a new car, but I don't want to set aside money to actually put gas in it. I just want to have the new car.

Well, if we are going to have that property, we better take care of it. Currently, the Federal Government is a terrible steward of the land we have. Now, as far as this program and reauthorizing it right now, we checked with the Congressional Research Service. If this program is not reauthorized currently, the program continues. The program currently has \$20 billion in reserves right now—\$20 billion.

Last year, \$306 million was spent. The year before, \$306 million was spent in LWCF, meaning in current status, right now, if we do not put a single dime into LWCF for the next few years, we will only have 65 years of reserve left in this program. It is not a crisis that we need to fix immediately. This authorization does not keep the program going. This authorization means we are not adding new money to the \$20 billion already in reserve.

I think we have at least 64 years to be able to work this out and a 65-year reserve. I can't imagine it would take that long, but with the Senate, everything seems to take too long. What we are looking for is pretty straightforward and simple. Let's spend some of these dollars to be able to focus on not just buying new properties but on actually taking care of properties that the U.S. Government has the responsibility to actually be able to maintain. It is to reform this program in the days ahead and to make sure that we are managing land well, not just adding new land all the time.

So with that, I do object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I would be all for taking the backlog of funding and putting it into LWCF. I think my colleague raises some real re-

forms that could be made to LWCF. In fact, there is legislation in the comprehensive energy bill that Senators MURKOWSKI and CANTWELL have passed that would make some of those reforms. But if we can't get to that, if we can't extend this program in the short term, we are never going to get to that point.

The fact is that the backlog of maintenance needs should be addressed. But it does not make sense for us to suspend the program while we address those needs. LWCF was not established for maintenance purposes. It was established to protect natural areas and to provide recreation opportunities to the American public.

When I went to the city of Nashua, the second largest city in New Hampshire, and walked with the Republican mayor along the Riverwalk that they are trying to establish there, what I heard from her was what a critical difference LWCF made to the city and being able to leverage funds that the city put in and that the State could put in to help make sure that the people of Nashua, many of whom cannot get to national parks or to the White Mountains in New Hampshire but they could get to the Riverwalk through downtown Nashua.

Those are the kinds of projects that LWCF goes to help fund. Some 99 percent of what Federal agencies spend goes to acquire inholds, those pieces of land that are already within the boundaries of a national park, a national forest or a national wildlife refuge that if sold to a private developer would block public access. It would damage park resources. It would harm the visitor experience, and it would make it harder to maintain those very projects that my colleague was talking about wanting to maintain.

So I think, while it sounds simple to say there is a backlog and we should not reauthorize this program, that is only half the story. It is very disappointing that with the strong bipartisan support this legislation has, with the need to reauthorize it to continue to protect special places in the country, we are seeing opposition from a very few people in this body who are able to block our moving forward.

NOMINATION OF GAYLE SMITH

Mr. President, I would like to, if I could, move on to address a different issue, and hope we will see some cooperative agreement at some point in the future. I also want to urge the consideration of the nomination of Gayle Smith to serve as the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, also known as USAID. I am here with my colleague Senator COONS from the Foreign Relations Committee to talk about this nominee because this is a non-controversial nominee, a seasoned public servant for a position that should be above partisanship.

So it is really disappointing that, again, there is only one person in this body who is holding this up. This

comes at a particularly difficult time because we are witnessing a humanitarian crisis in Syria and across the Middle East. It is a crisis that grows worse every day. Our European allies are struggling to cope with a massive refugee and migration crisis without precedent since World War II.

The United States, with our unparalleled capacity to mobilize humanitarian support for humanitarian relief, has played a leading role, but there is more that we can do to assist both the Syrian refugees and the neighboring countries that are hosting them to help with that humanitarian crisis. But our ability to respond effectively to these challenges is hampered by the inability of the Senate to vote on Gayle Smith's nomination to lead USAID.

So, again, nearly 4 months have passed since she appeared before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The committee approved her nomination by a voice vote in July. But since then, there has been no attempt to bring her nomination to the Senate floor, even as these humanitarian crises have deepened and deteriorated. It is not only our operations in the Middle East that are being hampered, USAID currently operates in more than 60 countries and regional missions around the world.

Following the devastating earthquake in Nepal in April, USAID disaster response teams were among the first crisis personnel to deploy there to organize the humanitarian response. USAID personnel continue to support our development efforts in Afghanistan. Those efforts are critical to the long-term success in the country. Given the extraordinary humanitarian crises confronting the United States, confronting our allies in the world, we really need a leader in place at USAID. It is unconscionable that here we are 4 months later and she is still being stalled.

Gayle Smith is a superbly qualified nominee who will almost certainly be confirmed by an overwhelming bipartisan vote. The Senate deserves the chance to vote on this critical nomination. So, again, I urge the majority leader to bring her nomination to the floor. We discussed it again today in the Foreign Relations Committee. I know my colleague from Delaware can speak also to what we heard in the Foreign Relations Committee.

So I would yield to my colleague from Delaware to discuss what we have heard in the Foreign Relations Committee about Gayle Smith and the need to put her in place as leader of USAID.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, confirmation and expiration are issues before us today. As we have heard from the Member from New Hampshire, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, on which we both serve, months ago considered the nomination of Gayle Smith to be the next Administrator of USAID. Today, 60 million people

around the world are displaced, either within their countries or as refugees spreading throughout the world.

It is the single greatest refugee crisis since the end of the Second World War. Gayle Smith came before our committee and received commendations and plaudits from Republicans and Democrats for her long experience as a journalist, as a leader in humanitarian agencies, as a member of the National Security Council, as a cofounder of the Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network, and as a seasoned and senior leader who can help bring strong leadership to USAID at this difficult and important time.

Four months later, she has yet to be confirmed by this body. We have broad bipartisan support for this nominee yet fail to move her forward due to a hold by one Member. I think this points to a longer challenge that this body faces because you also heard from the Senator from New Hampshire of an attempt to move forward the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which yesterday expired.

**BULLETPROOF VEST PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM
AND CHILD ADVOCACY CENTERS**

Mr. President, I cannot yield without commenting on how hard I worked in the previous Congress to get reauthorized two critical programs, a bulletproof vest partnership program that for years provided tens of millions of dollars to State and local law enforcement for lifesaving bulletproof vests, and a reauthorization effort I led for years—both of these with bipartisan support—to restore authorization to child advocacy centers—centers that critically support families who have been harmed by child abuse and allow local law enforcement to pursue effective prosecutions.

It is unconscionable that this body yesterday, September 30, allowed the Land and Water Conservation Fund to expire, allowed a whole range of child nutrition and school lunch authorizing programs to expire, and allowed the James Zadroga 9/11 first responders act to expire. One of the very first bills I cosponsored and was proud to support as a new Senator 5 years ago was the James Zadroga 9/11 first responders act, which provides support for those who raced to the site of the 9/11 catastrophe, risked their lives, and today suffer lasting health effects from it.

The idea that this body allowed that funding to expire yesterday and that many of the folks who are the beneficiaries of that fund now face the extinction of their medical support is unacceptable to me. So before I yield the floor, I simply wanted to commend my colleague for raising the issue of Gayle Smith's nomination at this unique time of global humanitarian challenges.

USAID cannot effectively do its job without a confirmed leader. I remind everybody in this body that when we fail to work together, when bills expire, it has real consequences, not just for humanitarian issues overseas but

for our own first responders who we are pledged to support. I say it is a shame on this body that we allowed the 9/11 James Zadroga first responders act to expire, that we allowed the authorizing statutes for the summer lunch and school lunch programs to expire, and that we have allowed the Land and Water Conservation Fund to expire.

It is my hope that we will begin to work together in this place and to stop allowing nominations to rest for months and to stop allowing the expiration of valuable statutes that underlie our security at home and abroad.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 5 minutes, after which point I will be followed by the Senator from Montana.

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

RUSSIA

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, 3 years ago when President Obama's opponent said that Russia was our chief geopolitical rival, President Obama chuckled and said: "The 1980s called and they want their foreign policy back."

Well, now the 1930s are calling President Obama, and they want their foreign policy back. Yesterday was the anniversary of Munich. How fitting that Russia conducted its first major military operations outside of its near abroad since the end of the Cold War on that anniversary in Syria yesterday, because the President's foreign policy has invited exactly this kind of provocation all around the world. President Obama and Secretary Kerry keep saying that they don't know what Russian intentions are, that they don't know Russia's goals are in the region.

It is very simple. So let me lay it out clearly. Russia is an enemy. Vladimir Putin is a KGB spy who views the world as a zero-sum game. In the short term, he intends to prop up his tyrannical ally Bashar al-Assad, and he wants to preserve access to his expeditionary military bases outside of his country.

In the medium term, he wants to either preserve Assad or he wants to replace him with a like-minded ally. He wants to diminish the power and prestige of the United States in the region. He wants to establish Russia as the main Middle East power broker, and he wants to divert attention from his continued occupation of Ukraine.

In the long term, he sees an opportunity to divide EU and divide NATO at lower risk than it would take to conduct military operations such as Estonia or Latvia. If Europeans are going to be divided because of a refugee crisis of a few hundred thousand, imagine what could happen when Vladimir Putin turns up the heat in Syria and drives hundreds of thousands or more of those refugees into Europe.

How has this come to pass? Why would he think he could get away with all of this? Because of the unending se-

ries of concessions and appeasement of Barack Obama toward Vladimir Putin. Before he was even elected to office in 2008, when Vladimir Putin invaded Georgia, Barack Obama—then a candidate—called for Georgia to exercise restraint while they were under an invasion.

Just a couple of months later, he called for a reset in relations while there were still Russian troops on Georgian soil. A few months after that, he withdrew missile defense systems from the Czech Republic and Poland—on the 70th anniversary of Russia's invasion of Poland—without so much as a heads-up and without getting anything in return.

He entered into the New START treaty, which allows Russia to continue to grow their nuclear forces or requires the United States to reduce ours. In a "hot mic" moment, he was caught with Dmitry Medvedev, promising more flexibility toward Russia after the election of 2012. He fought tooth and nail against the Magnitsky human rights act, only accepting it once he realized it had overwhelming bipartisan support in Congress. He continues to look the other way as Russia violates the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. He jumped at the opportunity that Vladimir Putin provided him in 2013 to avoid carrying out his airstrikes in Syria and to enforce his own red line.

Just as in Georgia, when Vladimir Putin invaded Crimea, he demanded restraint from the government of Ukraine. When Vladimir Putin began to conduct operations in eastern Ukraine, he looked the other way, he imposed weak sanctions. To this day, he refuses to arm them in the ways they are desperately calling for.

So what should we do now? Again, I think it is very simple. Let me lay it out. We should make it clear that Vladimir Putin and Russia will not be a power in the Middle East. We should pressure our partners to do the same thing. We should establish no-fly zones in Syria and make it clear that any aircraft that enters those zones will be shot down. We should make it clear that we will fly where we want and when we want, that any aircraft in Syria—or, for that matter, in the vicinity of a NATO country—that turns on the transponder will be shot down as a menace to civil aviation and to our allies. We should ramp up our airstrikes in Syria against our enemies such as the Islamic State. We should threaten Iran with termination of the nuclear deal because they are continuing to provide support for Bashar al-Assad. We should make it clear that Israel retains the right to interdict missile shipments from Iran through Syria to the terrorist group Hezbollah.

Let's not forget about Ukraine and Europe. We should arm Ukrainian forces. We should give them the intelligence they need on Russian forces and rebels who are amassing on their border. We should enhance sanctions

by expanding them across all sectors. We should move troops to base them—at least temporarily, if not permanently—on our eastern NATO flank in places such as Estonia and Latvia.

Some say these responses will be provocative, but where will Putin's provocations end? What is really provocative is American weakness.

Putin is humiliating the United States. If we don't draw a line now and enforce it, it will not be a choice between humiliation or war; it will be a choice between humiliation and war.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I do wish to go back to the comments of the good Senator from New Hampshire on the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and I want to associate myself with those remarks.

I also wish to add for the record that there is a fair amount of this money that is spent for land acquisition from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. That is not a bad thing. Get some of the in-holdings out of being in-holdings. It helps with management, and it helps with management costs.

I will tell you, if you are a fisherman or a hunter in this country, access and habitat is a huge issue, and the Land and Water Conservation Fund is all about access for hunters, fishermen, bike riders, birdwatchers, and all those folks, and habitat for big game and fisheries.

For this fund to expire for the first time ever is a travesty. You are right. We spent \$306 million on it the last 2 years; we were supposed to have spent \$900 million in this fund, and that is why there is the reserve there is. Quite frankly, if you take a look at the United States, you take a look at the in-holdings, and you take a look at the recreational opportunities out there—\$306 million isn't enough. Yet this fund has expired and is not authorized.

In Montana alone, just for the record, recreational opportunities add \$6 billion, with a "b," to our economy. We are a State of 1 million people—\$6 billion to our economy. It employs over 64,000 people, and that doesn't count the businesses that moved to Montana for the recreational opportunities nor the people who come to work for those businesses for the recreational opportunities. I just wanted to get that into the RECORD.

Mr. President, I wish to talk about the bill under consideration, the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill, and I express my opposition to that bill.

Why? We just heard a presentation on the floor a minute ago from the Senator who talked about shooting down planes and potentially going to war. The amount that it costs to take care of our veterans is a cost of war, and we are underfunding the VA today by over \$800 million. I express my deep disappointment in the majority's in-

ability to recognize the true cost of sending this Nation, young men and women, into harm's way.

Veterans Day is 6 weeks from now. Many of the folks in this Chamber will go back to their home States where they will be attending ceremonies and taking photos of men and women who are in uniform. We will give speeches and talk about our profound gratitude to the veterans and their families who have sacrificed so much for their country.

In the meantime, you will see a flurry of press statements from Senators, oftentimes patting themselves on their backs for extending benefits to veterans or enhancing the quality and timeliness of their care, or you will hear Senators and Congressmen lamenting on the lack of leadership within the VA and taking the VA to task for not performing up to their expectations. But there is one thing many of those Members of Congress will not do, and that is give the VA the resources it needs to serve the men and women who have served this country and the military.

Right now, the VA is under greater demand for services and subject to a higher degree of accountability than any other time in this Department's history. After a decade of war in the Middle East, that demand should be expected to be high. After recent allegations of mismanagement and wrongdoing, that accountability is absolutely warranted, but the standard we are holding the VA to should be the standard we hold ourselves to.

Is Congress doing the very best that it can do to ensure our Nation's veterans can access the health care and the benefits they have earned? Given the appropriations bill before us, the answer to that question is: No, we are not.

Our job is to make sure the VA is working for all veterans and to make sure it can work for all veterans. That means holding the VA accountable and ensuring it operates in full transparency, but that also means the VA has to have the capacity to meet the current needs of the demand for its services and to meet those demands into the future.

It requires rigorous oversight. Today's President understands that. There is no doubt about that, but it also requires giving the VA the tools and the resources it needs to get the job done.

Let's be clear. I believe this bill sets the VA up for failure. There are folks on the other side who are demanding that the VA fix itself, but in order to fix itself, we have to give it the tools it needs to do that. We are refusing to do that in this bill. We are setting up the VA for failure, and that failure will result in failing our veterans.

If this bill is enacted, it could mean that 68,500 fewer veterans are receiving the VA medical care they need, including veterans such as a constituent of mine from Reed Point, MT. This man

had an eye exam in early February and received a prescription for a new pair of glasses. He was told he would receive them in 4 to 6 weeks, but due to a large backlog, he did not receive them until July. It took 5 months to get this man glasses.

How are we going to improve the quality of care for veterans if the VA budget isn't where it needs to be?

Take the story of Perry, who is 67 years old. He has a 100-percent service disability due to Agent Orange exposure in Vietnam. He relies on the VA for lifesaving cancer treatment. Without chemotherapy and specialty care, Perry's prognosis is not good. To make matters worse, the VA can approve only six appointments at a time, which is a real challenge for Perry because he is receiving treatment 5 days a week. So every week he has to fill out another round of paperwork to qualify for medical care.

These are real folks who served their country. They are veterans who have real issues with the VA today at current funding levels.

Do we think these problems are going to be easier to solve if we give them an underfunded budget? They won't be.

Over the last 14 years, we fought 2 wars in the Middle East. Almost 10,000 Americans are still involved in a fight in Afghanistan at this very moment. For them, this war is far from over, and for many people in this Chamber—some who led us into the war in Iraq—they refuse to admit these are also the true costs of war, taking care of our veterans.

When we send young men and women over there and we put these wars on America's credit card as we did—financed by China, Japan, and others—we do not bother to factor in what it would cost to meet their health care and educational requirements when they come back home. Honoring our commitment to veterans is a cost of war and one that we should never forget about. Those who came home are now suffering from physical wounds but also wounds we cannot see. As I said yesterday, at least 22 veterans are taking their own lives every single day, and \$1 billion less won't help the VA get these men and women back on their feet and give them the mental health care that they need.

The VA also faces unprecedented demand for new treatments of diseases such as hepatitis C, which are shorter in duration, with fewer side effects, and that have cure rates—and this is very good news—approaching 100 percent, but they cost money. As Vietnam veterans reach retirement age, that means that nearly half of this Nation's veteran population will be 65 years of age or older. They are entitled to their VA care. After all, they have earned it, and they are going to need more and more of that care in the years ahead.

My home State of Montana has the second highest per capita veterans population in this country. It is a rural State where distance poses a major obstacle to care. The Choice Act that we

passed and enacted last year was designed to address many of those obstacles that rural veterans face.

The VA is also working to establish residency programs in rural States to encourage rural medical providers to locate in those rural States. We need to build off of these efforts and work to ensure they are carried out as we intended and as the veterans deserve.

Will cutting pay for VA providers help bring more medical professionals to Montana or Alaska or Oklahoma or North Carolina? The answer is no.

I go home nearly every weekend, and when I travel around the State, I talk to veterans. They tell me that getting in the door of that VA can be very frustrating. Shortchanging the VA's medical facilities doesn't solve that problem. Not allowing the VA to hire more doctors and nurses doesn't solve that problem.

So today we need to fix this bill because the folks who sacrificed so much for this country deserve nothing less.

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

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

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I yield back all time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, all time is yielded back.

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

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 motion to proceed to calendar No. 98, H.R. 2029, an act making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

Mitch McConnell, Orrin G. Hatch, Thom Tillis, Tom Cotton, James Lankford, Shelley Moore Capito, Deb Fischer, Thad Cochran, John Barrasso, John Cornyn, Richard C. Shelby, Cory Gardner, Richard Burr, Jerry Moran, Jeff Flake, Steve Daines.

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 motion to proceed to H.R. 2029, an act making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN), the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO), and the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER) is necessarily absent.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 50, nays 44, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 273 Leg.]

YEAS—50

Alexander	Enzi	Murkowski
Ayotte	Ernst	Paul
Barrasso	Fischer	Perdue
Blunt	Flake	Portman
Boozman	Gardner	Risch
Burr	Grassley	Roberts
Capito	Hatch	Rounds
Cassidy	Heller	Sasse
Coats	Hoeven	Scott
Cochran	Inhofe	Sessions
Collins	Isakson	Shelby
Corker	Johnson	Sullivan
Cornyn	Kirk	Thune
Cotton	Lankford	Tillis
Crapo	Lee	Toomey
Daines	McConnell	Wicker
Donnelly	Moran	

NAYS—44

Baldwin	Heitkamp	Peters
Bennet	Hirono	Reed
Blumenthal	Kaine	Reid
Booker	King	Sanders
Brown	Klobuchar	Schatz
Cantwell	Leahy	Schumer
Cardin	Manchin	Shaheen
Carper	Markey	Stabenow
Casey	McCaskey	Tester
Coons	Menendez	Udall
Durbin	Merkley	Warner
Feinstein	Mikulski	Warren
Franken	Murphy	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Murray	Wyden
Heinrich	Nelson	

NOT VOTING—6

Boxer	Graham	Rubio
Crux	McCaIn	Vitter

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 50, the nays are 44.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn not having voted in the affirmative, the motion is rejected.

The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. PERDUE. Mr. President, I rise to speak about the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs and related agencies appropriations bill. I am very encouraged that has finally come before the U.S. Senate. I also wish to remind my colleagues that the Senate Appropriations Committee has put forward 12 appropriations bills that reflect the priorities of the American people and the budget we passed in April.

Let me remind my colleagues that budget took \$7 trillion out of the President's proposed budget over the next 10 years. Yet here we are today, in October, facing the reality that since April we have not been able to debate on this floor those 12 appropriations bills. You have heard all year that we need to get back to regular order, and that means the Senate needs to bring up and debate each of these 12 bills individually.

However, due to Democratic obstructionism, the Federal Government is operating under a short-term funding measure, and the Senate has not been able to debate any of these 12 funding bills.

It is time for the political posturing to stop. People back home don't understand. I don't either. Senate Democrats are again acting as a roadblock in preventing progress. The American people sent us to govern responsibly, and it is time for Senate Democrats to start living up to this expectation, particularly when it comes to funding our government.

In this vote today, Senate Democrats are blocking us from moving forward with a bill to fund military construction projects that help our troops and support key veterans programs, many of which need reform after being plagued by backlogs and scandals for years.

We must make good on our Nation's promise to our veterans and provide our troops with the facilities they need to work, train, and fulfill the mission of the U.S. Armed Forces. Senate Democrats just voted against improvements to the VA electronic health records system so that veterans' records are safely and seamlessly accessed among agencies and the private sector. They just voted against increased transparency for the VA disability claims system to reduce the backlog for those veterans who need help the most. They just voted against much needed oversight of VA construction projects, like the VA hospital in Denver, CO, that is over \$1 billion over budget. Additionally, they just voted against construction of the second missile defense site in Poland, a project that is an important deterrent against Russian aggression in Eastern Europe and had been previously scrapped by President Obama.

Our Nation is currently dealing with a global security crisis. We must take recent Russian aggressions and the rise of great power traditional rivals very seriously. Yesterday Russia launched airstrikes in Syria to prop up President Bashar Al Assad in a strategy Defense Secretary Ash Carter described as counterproductive and equated to "pouring gasoline on the fire." Clearly, we must make sure our troops have the resources they need to protect our country. Because of that, I am shocked that my colleagues across the aisle today just voted to delay construction for our military facilities—facilities our troops depend on to train for current conflicts and to prepare for whatever the future holds.

Most appalling of all, Senate Democrats voted today to block this bill even after we learned that tens of thousands of our veterans have died while waiting for care they need and deserve. This is unconscionable, and the brinkmanship we are seeing from Senate Democrats across the aisle is totally unacceptable.

Our veterans sacrificed so much for our freedom, and our service men and

women are currently putting their lives in jeopardy every day for us and our families. We cannot fail them. This bipartisan Federal funding bill does a lot of important things for our Nation, but most importantly it supports our American heroes. Like most of my colleagues, I have traveled this year and met with our fighting women and men on frontlines. The very best of Americans are in uniform today, and they deserve our full support.

Today I call on my colleagues across the aisle to stop blocking these important bills. Let's get them on the floor and negotiate—compromise if we have to but get to a conclusion where we can fund the men and women defending our freedom. We now have 72 days to return to regular order and debate these important appropriations bills so the priorities of our veterans, our military, and the American people can once and for all be restored. I sincerely hope that all the colleagues in this body will not disappoint the American people yet again.

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. 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.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2016—CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask the Chair to lay before the Senate the conference report to accompany H.R. 1735.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The report will be stated by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 1735), to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2016 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes, having met, have agreed that the House recede from its disagreement to the amendment of the Senate and agree to the same with an amendment and the Senate agree to the same, signed by a majority of the conferees on the part of both Houses.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the conference report.

(The conference report is printed in the House proceedings of the RECORD of September 29, 2015.)

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 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 conference report to accompany H.R. 1735, a bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2016 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

John McCain, Bob Corker, John Hoeven, Ron Johnson, Dan Sullivan, Steve Daines, Richard Burr, Joni Ernst, Deb Fischer, Tim Scott, Orrin G. Hatch, Shelley Moore Capito, Mike Crapo, Tom Cotton, Cory Gardner, Kelly Ayotte, Mitch McConnell.

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

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

SHOOTING AT UMPQUA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, before I proceed to the consideration of a colloquy with my colleague from Wisconsin, I just wanted to take a moment. My colleague from Wisconsin brought to my attention that there are news reports that have just come out of a tragic mass shooting at a community college in Oregon. I believe it is called Umpqua Community College.

I just wanted to ask all who might be watching or are with us in the Chamber to keep in your thoughts and prayers the families of the victims, which number somewhere around 10, and of the wounded, somewhere around 20, and to also keep the first responders and students and faculty and our colleagues who represent the State of Oregon and all who have been affected by this tragedy in Oregon in your thoughts and prayers. It is just now being reported.

I appreciate the forbearance of my colleague and the Chair and the other Members present for my taking a moment just to bring that to everyone's attention.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I might enter into a colloquy with my colleague from Wisconsin.

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

NATIONAL MANUFACTURING DAY

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I rise today to join my colleagues in marking National Manufacturing Day, which will be celebrated across the country tomorrow.

The simple fact is that manufacturing has been and continues to be a vital part of our economy. But coming from the State of Delaware, I know firsthand the challenges manufacturing has faced in the 20th century and the challenges it continues to face today.

Almost every day I ride the Amtrak train from Wilmington, DE, to Wash-

ington, DC, and as I look out the window as we pass through the city of Newark, DE, I see the site of the old Chrysler assembly plant. Each time I see it, I think about what it was like going to the plant gates and visiting with friends and family and the thousands of men and women who worked shifts for decades at this tremendous automobile manufacturing plant that made the Durango and, for decades before that, other models.

Every time I see that site, which has now been leveled and is now being rebuilt, I am reminded that for decades there were men and women there who had one thing in common—good-paying, steady, high-quality manufacturing jobs. Chrysler, General Motors, and other manufacturers, which used to be at the center of my State's economy, each employing thousands of Delawareans, are today gone, and many families and many of our communities still feel the impact of those losses. But for the thousands of Delawareans who grew up with friends and family working every day at GM, Chrysler, the steel mill, the Avon plant or other now-gone manufacturing sites across our State, it is easy to be skeptical about the prospects for a revival of American manufacturing.

I am here today with my colleague from the State of Wisconsin to tell our fellow Americans that despite those harsh realities, there are real reasons for hope. Manufacturing still supports 25,000 jobs in my State. Since 2010, our economy, the growing American manufacturing sector, has created 870,000 new jobs. As production costs have gone up in our competitors—countries such as China—and as the key input cost of energy has steadily come down, businesses have seen over the last decade that more reliable financial, legal, and engineering structures and resources, and cheaper energy here in the United States have made American manufacturing more competitive than it has been in decades.

Just as important as the number of jobs created in the manufacturing sector is the quality and compensation for those jobs. American manufacturing is also responsible today for three-quarters of all private sector research and development, just illustrating once again how innovative this sector has always been. To stay ahead and to thrive in the modern-world economy, manufacturing has to be on the cutting edge.

While American manufacturing is resurgent today, there is much more we can do together to build on this momentum. That is why Senator BALDWIN and I are leading a campaign called Manufacturing Jobs for America, to focus on four key areas where we together can strengthen American manufacturing—first by investing in America's workforce; second, by expanding access to capital; third, by opening up markets abroad; and fourth, by creating the conditions necessary for growth.

In the last Congress, the Manufacturing Jobs for America Initiative brought together 27 Senators to introduce 36 different manufacturing bills, half of which were bipartisan. Provisions from eight of those bills are now law, including our bill to create a national manufacturing strategy that will, for the first time, lay out a proactive, comprehensive long-term policy for investing and strengthening American manufacturing, something that all of our major competitors have long had.

The administration has also come forward with strong ideas and initiatives from their investment in nine new manufacturing hubs, innovation institutes around the country, to new Department of Labor jobs skills programs that would strengthen apprenticeships and job training. It is our hope that Manufacturing Jobs for America can continue to play an important role in investing and scaling up these ideas so they have national impact.

We are optimistic that we can continue together to build on the progress we made and pass more of these bills in this Congress. Already, for example, the Career Ready Act has passed the Senate and is waiting to be taken up by the House. This bill would help prepare students for advanced manufacturing jobs by strengthening school counseling programs and educator professional development. Another important bill is the Innovators Job Creation Act, which recently passed the Senate Finance Committee, and if passed into law, would help small manufacturers to invest in and scale up their R&D.

Still, as we know all too well, passing legislation is never easy, and it could take months or even years to get these commonsense bipartisan bills passed into law. But there is something Congress can do right now to help support our manufacturing sector.

Just last week I stood on this floor and urged my colleagues to reauthorize the Export-Import Bank that was allowed to expire earlier this year. The Ex-Im Bank has helped American companies, many of them manufacturers, to sell their goods around the world for more than 80 years, supporting 150,000 American jobs in just this past year. Each day we fail to reauthorize this critical tool for American manufacturers who are exporters, we put more and more American jobs at risk.

Manufacturers, such as Boeing and GE, are already moving good American jobs overseas. GE's announcement that it is moving 350 jobs from Wisconsin to Canada is a stark example of this new reality, and the reason is simple. GE, and similar companies, can't risk staying in a country that doesn't have a reliable export credit agency, a tool all of our competitors provide, often with much more robust resources than Ex-Im used to enjoy. Without the backing of such an agency, other countries won't even consider accepting project bids from GE, Boeing or others. I think

that is unacceptable, and it should be unacceptable to all of our colleagues. It is time for Congress to recognize what is at stake for our economy, our manufacturing sector, and American workers if we continue to fail to step up and reauthorize the Ex-Im Bank.

Finally, I wish to briefly address a broader issue we face with American manufacturing, and that is its reputation and its public relations image.

While the changing face of manufacturing is a great thing, it is also a challenge because too often perceptions about manufacturing are stuck in the past. I have personally heard from parents and guidance counselors who tell me that they are reluctant to encourage their kids and their best students to pursue a career in manufacturing. Why? Because to them, folks from an older generation, manufacturing brings to mind dirty factory floors, dangerous work environments, and lower wages. Understandably, they don't see these as the viable, promising career paths that today's advanced manufacturing truly offers.

Their worries don't match up with today's reality, where manufacturing jobs require higher skills than ever before, from hard math and engineering skills to the ability to think critically and work as part of a team. Most modern manufacturing jobs require a 2-year college degree, and many require more.

In my 5 years as a Senator, I have had the opportunity to visit dozens of manufacturers up and down my State of Delaware that are creating new high-quality, high-paying jobs, and I am certain my colleague from Wisconsin has had the same insight.

In Delaware, one of those manufacturers is M. Davis, a woman-run, family owned manufacturer that has been around for over 140 years. They produce sophisticated equipment for industrial companies, such as Philips 66, Air Liquide, and DuPont. Jobs at that manufacturing plant require high-skilled workers.

Another advanced manufacturer in my State is Accudyne, which is far more than a typical company. They produce products, not for average consumers, but they solve highly complex engineering and design problems for some of the world's most prominent firms, from Boeing to Airbus to Rolls Royce.

Both of these companies understand that the only way to remain successful is to develop a highly skilled workforce by encouraging and supporting professional development and recruiting graduates from schools such as Delaware Technical Community College and the University of Delaware.

Unfortunately, it is not just public perception that hasn't kept up with manufacturing's transformation. Job training programs have also lagged behind in preparing people with the skills they need to succeed in the advanced manufacturing jobs of today.

While I have more I would like to say on that topic, at this moment I would

like to invite my colleague from the State of Wisconsin to add her views and comments to this important conversation about manufacturing in America.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, I thank my good friend from Delaware. As did he, I wish to start my remarks by taking a moment to say that my thoughts and prayers are with the community of Roseburg, OR, as we heard word of yet another senseless act of gun violence. I hope all who are listening join us in our thoughts and prayers.

I rise today to join my good friend from Delaware and to lend my voice in calling attention to an important day in America. Tomorrow, across the country, the hard-working Americans who get up every day to move our economy forward will create a collective chorus in celebration of National Manufacturing Day.

At thousands of events in villages, towns, and cities throughout our Nation, manufacturers will open their doors Friday and show, in a coordinated effort, what manufacturing is today and what it isn't. I am so proud to join this effort because by working together during and after National Manufacturing Day, we can shine a spotlight on the need for America to address workforce readiness issues, connect with future generations, and recognize the important role manufacturing plays in creating an economy that works for everyone.

In Wisconsin, we have a long and proud tradition of making things—paper, engines, tools, ships, and, yes, cheese, brauts, and beer. We possess one of the largest manufacturing sectors in the Nation, supporting a very significant share of our workforce and exporting products and goods all over America and, in fact, the world. Manufacturing has long been the backbone of our “made in Wisconsin” economy—so much so that we actually celebrate October as Manufacturing Month in Wisconsin. In my State and across our country, manufacturing is increasingly an engine of economic growth and innovation and a source of good-paying jobs with high wages and solid benefits. That is why I strongly believe middle-class families and small businesses and manufacturers who are working so hard to move our economy forward deserve to have both parties in Washington working together to grow our manufacturing economy and create jobs.

I am so proud to join my colleague Senator COONS on the floor today to highlight National Manufacturing Day. I thank him for his leadership and his partnership on our Manufacturing Jobs for America Initiative. Our effort aims to build bipartisan support for legislation that will modernize America's manufacturing sector and help American manufacturers grow and create jobs and assist American workers in getting the skills they need to succeed

in the next generation of manufacturing jobs.

Working together, we are trying to do our part to get Washington to focus on manufacturing jobs. This shouldn't be a difficult task, but unfortunately Congress has shown itself better at manufacturing one crisis after another instead of working across party lines to strengthen American manufacturing. The fact is, governing by crisis has distracted us from the important work of moving our manufacturing economy forward.

Before we all pat ourselves on the back for simply doing our job and keeping the government open for business, let's address one crisis that has not been addressed.

Two months ago the Senate did its job and passed a long-term transportation bill with bipartisan support. That legislation sought to end this constant cycle of short-term measures. It put people to work rebuilding our roads and bridges and ports and creates jobs and will boost our economy. It is also important to manufacturers because it makes an investment in a 21st-century American infrastructure that provides businesses with the quality transportation system they need to move their goods to market.

This legislation also includes another measure that is vital to manufacturers and businesses in Wisconsin and across America. We reauthorized the Export-Import Bank, which is an important tool that helps us create that level playing field, bringing fairness to global trade and giving American manufacturers the resources they need to fight and win against their global competition. However, after we included that in our long-term transportation and infrastructure package in the Senate, the House adjourned for the August recess without passing that legislation to reauthorize the Export-Import Bank and has failed to take action on it for 2 full months. Just this week, Republicans on the House Financial Services Committee voted in lockstep to block an amendment to reauthorize the Bank. These actions and inactions have real impacts on workers, and they are being felt by Wisconsin workers and families right now.

GE Power & Water announced this week that it plans to stop manufacturing gas engines in Waukesha, WI, and blamed the closure on the House of Representatives for not reauthorizing the Export-Import Bank. It is a stark reminder that when Congress fails to do its job, hard-working people can lose their jobs as a result. It is my hope that this reminder will be heard by Congress. It is also my hope that National Manufacturing Day will provide an opportunity for my colleagues to rally around on the need for us to come together and address the challenges we face to grow our manufacturing economy.

The Wisconsin families for whom I work depend on our manufacturing jobs, and I believe that if we work to

give our workers a fair shot, we can compete against anyone. But one of the challenges we must meet is making sure our workers have the skills they need for the manufacturing jobs of the future. We are fortunate to have a very strong technical college system that is working to provide Wisconsin businesses a skilled workforce so they can compete and grow.

American manufacturing took a huge hit as a result of the 2008 financial collapse and ensuing recession, but through sheer grit and determination, we are coming back. U.S. manufacturing added 876,000 jobs over the past 66 months. Over the past 12 months, manufacturing has added 124,000 jobs. But despite this positive trend, we need to do more. The sector needs to add 1.7 million jobs overall just to return to pre-recession levels.

In Wisconsin, our economy isn't growing as strong as we need to create true shared prosperity. In fact, it is lagging behind national growth. The manufacturing sector that sustained our economy in Wisconsin for generations must move forward at a stronger pace if middle-class families are going to get ahead.

One of the most important things we can do is to put a stronger focus on investing in STEM programs and career and technical education. I am proud to have cofounded the Career and Technical Education Caucus—otherwise known as the CTE Caucus—and worked with cochairs Senators Kaine and Portman to advocate for career and technical education. I believe CTE is one of the most effective vehicles for responding to labor market changes and the workforce readiness needs of businesses, particularly our manufacturers.

We need to do more to ensure that students are better trained and better equipped for the highly skilled jobs of the future, especially in advanced manufacturing. Our business communities have been clear on the need for a highly trained workforce for in-demand fields, and CTE provides the knowledge and skills that can help drive stronger economic growth for our "made in America" manufacturing economy.

In closing, I would like to urge my colleagues to join us tomorrow by visiting a local manufacturer in their State.

National Manufacturing Day provides our Nation with an important opportunity for us to show our commitment to the idea that manufacturing does not represent the jobs of yesterday. Senator Coons was talking about the branding issues. Well, today's manufacturing economy isn't your father's manufacturing economy, and today's factory isn't your grandfather's factory. It is a growing industry that has changed from the assembly lines of the past to high-tech innovation that will drive our future. Today, American manufacturing represents the jobs of tomorrow, providing a range of job opportunities in the area of skilled pro-

duction, information technology, design, engineering, and science. Our next generation of manufacturers need more skilled workers, and it is our job to work together to make sure our economy has them.

Let's join together and celebrate National Manufacturing Day and show that our commitment is a celebration of American manufacturing, and let's inspire the next generation of manufacturers.

Again, I thank my colleague from Delaware and my colleague from Minnesota for their dedication to this vital issue.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. Coons. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Wisconsin, Senator Baldwin, for her hard work on manufacturing and for her deep and broad experience in what it takes for manufacturing to continue to grow in the State of Wisconsin, in the State of Delaware, and across our country.

Let me pick up on a theme through both of our previous comments, which is that skills are a key challenge for us. If we are going to take advantage of the enormous opportunities, the hundreds of thousands of unfilled jobs in this sector, one of the key issues is a mismatch in skills.

One other theme across both of our comments was how we can't work together across the aisle. Bad things happen, such as the Export-Import Bank going unauthorized, but when we can team up and work together, we can make remarkable progress.

Let me briefly reference two of the bills we have worked on in the past which enjoy strong bipartisan support and which I hope can move forward in this Congress.

One is the Manufacturing Skills Act, and the lead sponsor is Senator Ayotte of New Hampshire. It would help cities and States to modernize their job-training programs and equip workers with the skills they need.

Another bill, the Manufacturing Universities Act of 2015, of which Senator Lindsey Graham is the lead cosponsor, would designate 25 manufacturing universities across the country and invest up to \$5 million per year, per school to redesign their engineering programs so they are focused on the needs of modern manufacturing.

Many of the other ideas that have been brought to the floor by colleagues also focus on skills, and let me briefly reference two.

Senator Merkley has drafted and introduced the BUILD Career and Technical Education Act to focus on some of the issues the Senator from Wisconsin was just speaking to—finding innovative ways to improve CTE education in our K-12 system to draw more talented students into the pipeline for these unfilled but lucrative manufacturing careers.

Last but certainly not least, Senator Franken of Minnesota has tirelessly worked to promote greater cooperation

between community colleges and their local manufacturing partners. I know in a moment he will share with us his vision for how we can improve skills training in manufacturing.

Let me close by simply saying that tomorrow, as we celebrate National Manufacturing Day, I will be honored to welcome U.S. Commerce Secretary Penny Pritzker to Delaware to look at and visit several of the manufacturers I mentioned—Accudyne and M. Davis—and to talk about how, working together at the State and the Federal level, private sector and public sector, we can create and maintain strong 21st-century manufacturing jobs.

We see the revitalization that is going on in American manufacturing, and we see the opportunity we have in front of us and we want to seize it. By enacting bipartisan bills that tackle the challenges I have discussed, we hope to have the opportunity to make the very difference our Nation requires.

With that, I yield the floor to the Senator from Minnesota for his remarks on National Manufacturing Day.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, I thank the good Senator from Delaware and the Senator from Wisconsin for organizing today's celebration of manufacturing.

As my colleague from Delaware mentioned and as I think the Presiding Officer knows, I have talked a lot about the role of community and technical colleges and training for students for highly skilled jobs in manufacturing, and I will talk about that role in these remarks.

SHOOTING AT UMPQUA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

But first, I heard a few minutes ago about a shooting at a college in Oregon. I just want to say something about that.

First, all of our hearts in the Senate go out to the victims of that shooting at Umpqua Community College in Oregon and to their families, their friends, and loved ones.

Students at community colleges are often young people who are getting education to prepare them for the future. Very often they are people midcareer who are going back for training to get the kind of skills Senator COONS talked about in a new career. The resurgence of manufacturing in the United States and my State of Minnesota should inspire us to invest more in training more Americans for these good manufacturing jobs.

I don't know what the focus of Umpqua is, but again I believe I speak for everyone in this body that our hearts go out to all the victims and their loved ones. I don't know whether they are like some community and technical colleges in Minnesota preparing individuals for jobs in manufacturing.

NATIONAL MANUFACTURING DAY

Manufacturing jobs—we have heard my other colleagues talk about how these are not the old manufacturing jobs. I have heard a manufacturer refer

to it as dark, dirty, and dangerous, and it is what a lot of people think of.

I go to junior highs and high schools with manufacturers to talk about the high skills and the high-paying jobs that go with today's manufacturing. The most recent data available as of 2010, the average annual wage for a manufacturing job in the United States was over \$56,000—about 22 percent higher than the average wage for all industries. In Minnesota, manufacturing supports jobs for more than 300,000 Minnesotans. That is about 13 percent of the jobs in our State, and manufacturing is responsible for 14 percent of the GDP. Manufacturing is a huge driver in our economy. We manufacture great things. We did the HVAC system for the new World Trade Center Freedom Tower.

This is why I want to talk about one of the greatest problems our manufacturing States have today; that is, the skills gap. Manufacturers cannot find enough skilled workers to help them compete in a global economy. According to Enterprise Minnesota, an organization that supports manufacturers in my State, there are over 6,500 open manufacturing jobs in Minnesota waiting to be filled. My experience talking with manufacturers confirms that they are desperate to hire good people with the right skills for jobs that can support a middle-class life for workers and their families.

In the words of just one manufacturer, Kimberly Arrigoni of Haberman Machine in Oakdale, MN:

We are still suffering from a skills gap. . . . For my company specifically, it no longer is a capacity issue because of equipment, but one with people. We are limited in what we can produce and ship out the door because we don't have enough master level machinists. . . . Imagine what this very ripple effect is causing my State and our country as a whole.

So how can we help our manufacturing industry meet this challenge? Well, we took a good first step last year when we passed the bipartisan Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, WIOA. It was the first reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act in over a decade—almost two. It modernized our workforce development system and improved coordination between workforce boards, education, training programs, and local businesses. I think we need to do more to go further, and that is why I will be reintroducing legislation very soon to increase Federal investment in workforce training partnerships between employers and community and technical colleges.

I call it the Community College to Career Fund Act. It would create grants that help businesses and community colleges train workers for high-skill, good-paying jobs. Businesses and community and tech colleges across my State support the Community College to Career Fund Act because they know firsthand—and I have seen firsthand the differences that these programs can make. Under this program,

community colleges and businesses together would apply for grants based on how many jobs their partnership would create, what the value of those jobs would be to the community and, very importantly, how much skin in the game the State, the community or the businesses have.

I hope my colleagues will take this up and pass it this year. This is a great way to address a number of things such as the cost of college. I have talked to so many manufacturers who have hired someone who has just a credential from a community technological college, hires them and then pays them to go back to school while they are working, and pays for their tuition to finish their associate's degree. They bring them back and say: Go get your bachelor's degree. Go get your 4-year college degree while you are working, and I will pay for it. These are—time and time again, I have seen people, workers who have had their education paid for, no debt, a couple degrees, and a good job—a very good job.

I would like to close with the words of John Johnston from States Manufacturing in Golden Valley, CO. He writes:

When my son was young he used to say, "My daddy works with big machines that go boom, boom, boom." My son is now 17 years old and planning a career in manufacturing. He grew up around those machines that go boom.

Unfortunately, most students these days think manufacturing is not for them. If they could only get in to see how remarkable it is to see how things are really made, they would change their perspective.

He goes on:

Each night at dinner we talk about his "high of the school day" and he is so excited to tell me about the new equipment or his next project in manufacturing class. Now it is time to light that fire inside of other students and show them today's manufacturing companies are a great place to have a career.

A great place to have a career. This story illustrates perfectly why promoting manufacturing careers with young people is so important. We have a lot of advantages in this country because of natural gas. We have cheap energy relative to the rest of the world. Because of the nature of manufacturing, the main cost now is the technology, and low-skilled wages are a much smaller piece. What this country needs are high-skilled wages. We need more people, more young people especially, to take advantage of the opportunities available in manufacturing so we will continue to compete globally and expand as we compete globally.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASIDY). The majority whip.

OBSTRUCTION

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I continue to read in the newspaper and the press—particularly that which covers our activities in Congress—talk about the shutdown that was averted because we were able to pass a continuing resolution before the midnight end of the

fiscal year on Wednesday night. I would like to reflect just a few minutes on what the cause of this drama is and where the responsibility actually lies for all of this shutdown drama, which would be completely unnecessary if the Senate and the Congress were permitted to basically do our job.

For example, just this afternoon our Democratic friends decided to filibuster legislation that would help our veterans and our men and women in uniform because it would fund the full range of services to veterans and the construction of military facilities. If you think about that for a moment, it becomes even more outrageous because the idea that in order to force this side of the aisle to the table, in order to spend more money and raise taxes, that you would hold our veterans and our military hostage is really remarkable, certainly nothing to be proud of, and something that needs to be called out and identified for what it is.

The only reason we have had to go through this process on a continuing resolution—and, by the way, for those who are not familiar with the continuing resolution, what that means is we are continuing for a period of time now—until December 11—the current spending policies of the Federal Government. That means we are side-stepping the Appropriations Committee, where outdated or obsolete programs are discarded or if there are multiple government programs that could be consolidated that could be made more effective or efficient, or if, heaven forbid, we could actually save some money and apply it to priorities or maybe help reduce our deficit—that is where that should be happening, but the obstruction of our friends across the aisle who are dead set on forcing us to the negotiating table so they can force the Federal Government to spend more money is outrageous.

We have had two previous votes on the Defense appropriations bill, which is even more immediately directed to help support our families and the men and women in uniform, many of whom are serving in harm's way. It is amazing to me how many people will come to the Senate floor or in the other body, the House of Representatives, and talk about their devotion and dedication to our military and our veterans—and they should. Our military and our veterans deserve our devotion and appreciation and every honor we can bestow on them. But the idea that you would on one hand talk like that and then come to the floor and block legislation that funds their paycheck or pays for their benefits if they are a veteran and keeps the commitment we have made to them—it really is outrageous and is just another reason why the American people—everybody outside of the beltway—hold Congress and Washington in such low regard. We are, after all, a self-governing people, and when people hold their government in low regard and lose confidence in their government, basically they lose con-

fidence in themselves and in our country and in our ability to control our destiny or at least try to point us in a better direction.

Earlier on, I believe it was the senior Senator from New York who gave an interview to the New York Times. He talked about the fact that the Democrats were going to have a “filibuster summer,” and now that has sort of slopped over into a filibuster fall, apparently. Why? For what reason? What is the good reason? Well, it is not for a good reason, but it is for this reason: so they can force Republicans, the majority, to the negotiating table to spend more money.

Then there is the White House. There is no leadership out of the White House on fiscal matters whatsoever. This morning the White House threatened to veto this very bill, assuming it would pass the Congress. Again, why? Well, because it complies with the current law and budgetary restrictions under the Budget Control Act. You might ask, well, why are they offended by that? Why is that a problem? Well, that is a good question, actually, because the President himself signed the Budget Control Act into law, and the very caps on spending that have kept discretionary spending at 2007 levels are caps he signed into law.

The idea that you would hold our troops and veterans hostage is incredible. Why? Because the President and the minority, the Democrats, refuse to adhere to budget spending caps the President signed into law.

You know, we hear a lot of discussion about these caps and sequestration. These are the automatic spending caps on discretionary spending. They were actually proposed by the President and his team at the White House in the first place. So it would require a certain degree of cognitive dissonance or maybe willing suspension of disbelief to read over the White House's veto threat on this particular bill and to take it seriously.

We are going to continue to press our Democratic colleagues to return this body to what we like to call regular order around here—in other words, doing our job, what we were elected to do.

This whole idea of holding our troops and veterans hostage in order to force more government spending is beyond outrageous. With everything happening in the world, I don't doubt it is hard for this message to penetrate, but the reason we continue to operate on continuing resolutions and temporary patches, such as the one that was just passed that goes to December 11, is because of the obstruction on the other side of the aisle, these filibusters.

We have a lot of work cut out for us by that December 11 deadline. Before that deadline, we have to deal with an expiring highway bill. We passed a multiyear highway bill here in the Senate and sent it to the House. My hope is that they will use this time up until October 29 to pass a highway bill and

that we can get to a conference and work out the differences and settle that one important piece of business. I come from a big State. We need those resources in order to maintain and build our highway system, for public safety, for the environment, and for the economy. So I hope we can get that done.

We are going to have another big drama here as a result of the Democrats filibustering these appropriations bills called an Omnibus appropriations bill. In other words, what is set up to happen as a result of the obstruction on the other side of the aisle by blocking all of these appropriations bills is we are going to have to consider all of the funding for the Federal Government for perhaps the next year. We are going to have to vote on that one big bill—probably \$1 trillion or more—in December. That is a horrible way to do business. First of all, it is not transparent. Our constituents cannot hope to read that legislation and understand all of the ramifications of it and what it might mean. It also, frankly, is susceptible to being larded with things that really aren't necessary, that would not pass under other circumstances but are put on a must-pass piece of legislation.

So you are going to hear more drumbeats—I will close with this—about shutdowns and cliffs and the irresponsibility of Congress in not meeting our basic obligations. There is one reason for that under the present circumstances; it is because our Democratic friends have chosen to filibuster and to stop the Senate from doing its business the way we should be doing our business in an orderly, transparent, responsible, and accountable sort of way. The way we do that is by taking up individual appropriations bills and passing them. If we did it that way, there would be no government shutdown drama if one or two appropriations bills did not get passed for some reason, if there was some delay. So this is really the source of all of this shutdown drama—the obstruction of our Democratic colleagues, preventing us from doing our basic business of governing and making sure we are doing what we promised to do when each of us stood for election in front of our voters.

I see the junior Senator from Montana is here. I know one of the things that motivated many of our new Senators is the desire to come here and put our fiscal house in order. We are not even talking about doing some of the things we should do, some of the things we need to do to reduce the deficit—the difference between what we spend and what comes in—much less the debt, which is in the \$18 trillion range, which is unbelievable.

So these young men and women who are serving as pages—we are leaving behind for them a financial burden which is simply immoral. It is just not right. The promises that were made back when Social Security and Medicare were passed—that they would be

there for you in your later years—I have not met a young person today who thinks Social Security or Medicare is going to be there for them because, frankly, they are going to run out of money on the current path they are on.

So we have a lot to do. Believe me, the country is upset. People are angry. They are scared. They are worried about their families and about their future. They are worried about their security. When they look at the TV set or read the newspaper and see how a willful minority can simply shut down our ability to do our job and conduct the Nation's business, their anger and their frustration and their fear are justified.

We can do better. I hope and pray we will.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

REMEMBERING JEAN TURNAGE

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, I rise today in recognition of Jean Turnage, the former Montana Supreme Court chief justice and a State senate president who passed away earlier this week.

Chief Justice Turnage was a true public servant who always put Montana and this Nation first. He is remembered as a fair and tolerant judge and a true gentleman legislator. As both a legislator and judge, he had a genius for solving conflicts and bridging differences—a quality that is far too rare in public service.

Chief Justice Turnage was part of a dying breed of the “greatest generation” and was a true statesman. As a World War II veteran, a State legislator, and chief justice of the Montana Supreme Court, Justice Turnage truly exemplified our State's strong legacy of service. His passing is a great loss for Montana.

On behalf of all Montanans, I wish to recognize Jean for his decades of service to Montana and to this Nation. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Turnage family during this time of loss.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

(The remarks of Mr. GRASSLEY pertaining to the introduction of S. 2123 are printed in today's RECORD under “Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.”)

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

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

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, last week I came to the floor to speak on the subject of religious liberty in America. I

explained why religious liberty matters, why it is important, and why it deserves special protection from government interference.

I also used my remarks to welcome Pope Francis to Washington and to recognize the historic nature of his visit. I was struck by the Pope's emphasis on religious liberty while he was here and by his concern for the state of religious liberty, not just around the world, but in the United States as well.

In his address at the White House, Pope Francis said that many American Catholics are “concerned that efforts to build a just and wisely ordered society respect . . . the right to religious liberty,” and he called on all Americans to “be vigilant . . . to preserve and defend [religious] freedom from everything that would threaten or compromise it.”

Before Congress, Pope Francis, spoke of the delicate balance required to combat violence and extremism while at the same time safeguarding religious liberty. And in Philadelphia, he declared that the right of religious exercise extends well beyond the church door. He said:

Religious freedom certainly means the right to worship God, individually and in community, as consciences dictate. But religious liberty, by its nature, transcends places of worship and the private sphere of individuals and families.

Like Pope Francis, I too am concerned about threats to religious freedom in the United States. Last week, I announced my intention to give a series of speeches on the subject of religious liberty, and I continue with that purpose today by speaking about the history of religious liberty in America.

As my remarks will show, concern for religious liberty has been a critical feature of our Nation from the beginning. The desire to enjoy the freedom to live one's faith was a motivating factor for many of our earliest settlers. Once here, they set about creating societies in which religion could have full room to flourish. At times they fell prey to the same sectarian narrowmindedness that bedeviled the nations of Europe, but on the whole our forebears enjoyed and permitted a broader range of religious freedom than could be found most anywhere in the world or the planet at that time.

As the heirs of their efforts, we have the obligation to continue their commitment to religious liberty. Freedom of religion is part of the very fabric of our Nation. It is not only enshrined in the text of our First Amendment, it also permeates our history, our very identity as a nation. Protecting and promoting freedom of religion is at the heart of the American project.

Let's begin at the beginning. The first permanent European settlers here in America were Pilgrims seeking to escape religious oppression. Leaders such as John Winthrop guided Puritans and other groups of Pilgrims from Europe to the New World in search of a place where they could practice their

religious beliefs according to their own conscience.

The Pilgrims' journey to Massachusetts Bay is considered such an important part of the American story that a mural depicting the embarkation of the Pilgrims hangs in the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol. This great painting stands as a symbol and constant reminder of America's place as a safe harbor for those seeking religious liberty.

Following the success of the Puritans, other religious minorities, including the Quakers, Congregationalists, Baptists, Jews, Methodists, Presbyterians, and a host of German and Dutch sects, came to the American Colonies to practice their faith in peace. Unfortunately, many of these minorities did not find the religious tolerance they had hoped for. The Massachusetts Bay Colony, for example, punished heretics and adopted the Old World view that nonadherence to the state religion was a crime against the state. True to the American ideal, however, these religious minorities did not give in. Instead, they pressed on in search of new locales where the promise of religious freedom could be found full bloom.

Roger Williams, the founder of the first Baptist church in America, was among the most notable dissenters from religious orthodoxy. Williams believed that the church in Massachusetts was not sufficiently separated from the church of England and openly questioned the legitimacy of the Colony's charter.

Forced to flee his home in Boston for fear of being arrested, Williams found refuge among the Natives. He went on to purchase land from the Massasoit tribe and established a new settlement that he gave the rather auspicious name “Providence.” A few years later, Providence and several other communities joined together to form the Rhode Island Colony—the first Colony in the New World—to offer religious liberty to all sects. Citizens in Rhode Island could attend the church of their choice without fear of government reprisal.

Mr. President, we see in the founding of Rhode Island the seed of the idea that all people should be free to practice their faith. If Massachusetts represented the flight of persecution, then Rhode Island constituted the next step in the path toward religious freedom—the extension of free exercise.

Rhode Island was not the only safe harbor in the New World for religious minorities. There was also Pennsylvania, which was named for William Penn, a Quaker. English authorities imprisoned Penn in the Tower of London for writing pamphlets critical of the Church of England. After he was released, Penn established the Pennsylvania Colony as a refuge for practitioners of his own Quaker faith.

Another example is the Dutch Colony of New Netherland, later known as New

Amsterdam and today known as New York. When New Amsterdam was founded in 1625, its Articles of Transfer assured New Netherlanders that they could “keep and enjoy the liberty of their consciences in religion.” No city better symbolizes the religious diversity of America than New York City, which should be unsurprising given that New York was one of America’s earliest havens of religious liberty and tolerance.

It bears mention that although many of the early American Colonies aspired to provide religious liberty to all citizens, colonial America often fell short of this ideal. In 1689, for example, England’s Parliament enacted the Act of Toleration, which granted freedom to non-Anglicans to hold their own religious services provided they properly registered their ministers and places of worship. However, the act did not extend the right to hold public office to nonconformists and explicitly excluded Catholics and Unitarians from all benefits provided by the act. Moreover, ministers of minority sects could be imprisoned for failing to apply for licenses or for preaching outside of authorized locations. In 1774, Virginia authorities imprisoned some 50 Baptist ministers for failing to heed the Toleration Act’s requirements.

That the trajectory of religious liberty in America has not always been a straight line, however, does not diminish the centrality of religious freedom to the American ideal or to the history and growth of our Nation. Looking back centuries later, we rightly criticize colonial leaders for failing to give full freedom to religious practitioners. But the initial failure of some colonial leaders to live up to the ideal was ultimately overwhelmed by the success of later colonists and by the significance of religious liberty through the entire American project.

As I said last week, our Nation exists because of religious liberty. The freedom to practice one’s faith was central to the founding and growth of the American Colonies. Furthermore, the guarantees of religious liberty found in the colonial charters, coupled with the breadth of religious diversity in pre-revolution America, are nothing short of remarkable. As Stanford professor Michael McConnell—one of the great constitutional experts in our country—has noted, in the years leading up to the Revolution, America had “already experienced 150 years of a higher degree of religious diversity than had existed anywhere else in the world.”

I come now to the American Revolution and subsequent ratification of the Constitution. It was through these crucial events that the ideal of religious liberty had so long motivated the colonists to become part of our fundamental charter of government.

George Washington, while leader of the Continental Army, issued a command concerning religious liberty to the revolutionary troops: “[A]s far as lies in your power, you are to protect

and support the free exercise of the religion of the Country, and the undisturbed enjoyment of the rights of conscience in religious matters, with your utmost influence and authority.”

That was George Washington.

Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence, likewise emphasized the centrality of religious freedom for our new Nation. In 1786, the Virginia Legislature adopted a statute on religious freedom written by none other than Thomas Jefferson. This law said that “all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matter of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge or affect their civil capacities.”

Jefferson’s words in the Statute for Religious Freedom had a profound influence on James Madison, whom we revere today as the father of the Constitution. Madison reflected Jefferson’s vision in his own writings, declaring that “[t]he religion of every man must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man to exercise it as these may dictate.”

The original Constitution, ratified in 1788, did not contain a bill of rights because the Framers believed the structure they had created would effectively guard against tyranny. They also worried that enumerating rights could lead to mischief, as officials might argue that any right not enumerated did not exist. But the Framers eventually reversed course, and a few years later Madison drafted and the States ratified the first 10 amendments to the Constitution.

The first of these amendments formalized the guarantee of religious liberty already found in many State constitutions and deeply embedded in the fabric of American society. The words are familiar to all Americans: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” The principle that had motivated the initial settlement of America and that had grown and matured in concert with the growth and maturation of the Colonies themselves had found expression in our fundamental charter.

Of course, ratification of the First Amendment is not the end of the story. From the founding generation down to the present day, the importance of religious liberty to the American ideal has continued to manifest itself in a variety of ways.

Consider the experience of the Ursuline nuns of New Orleans. These French sisters were the first congregation of Roman Catholic nuns in the United States. They came to America in the early 1700s and settled in New France, which later became Louisiana.

Following the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the sisters of the Ursuline Convent grew concerned that they would lose their rights to their property and mission now that their charter was under the jurisdiction of the United States.

The mother superior of the Ursulines petitioned President Thomas Jefferson to ask that the sisters be allowed to keep their property in New Orleans. President Jefferson responded powerfully, telling the Sisters: “The principles of the Constitution and government of the United States are a sure guarantee to you that [your property] will be preserved to you sacred and inviolate and that your institution will be permitted to govern itself according to its own rules, without interference from the civil authority.”

President Jefferson spoke the truth. Indeed, the Old Ursuline Convent and Mission survives to this day. It is located in New Orleans’ famous French Quarter and is the oldest building in the Mississippi River Valley. The Old Ursuline Convent is an emblem of the vitality and centrality of religious liberty in American life. A persecuted religious minority, unpopular in its day and even reviled in some backward segments of society, received a personal guarantee from the President of the United States that their rights and property would remain secure under the protection of the U.S. Government. Here we see religious liberty not only as ideal but as reality.

To return to my earlier formulation, Massachusetts represented the flight from religious persecution, Rhode Island and other Colonies the extension of free exercise. Now in the Constitution we have the guarantee of religious liberty to all people in all places within the jurisdiction of our great land.

The Constitution and its guarantee of free exercise is the culmination of the process that began when the Pilgrims first set foot on the Mayflower way back in 1620. But the Constitution is only as effective as we, through our fidelity, make it. Regrettably, the guarantee of free exercise has at times been undermined or even abridged by narrowminded sectarianism or fear of new creeds. Such divergence from the promise of religious liberty is not cause to question the continuing value of religion or to claim that the promise of religious freedom is a false promise. Rather, it is reason to dedicate ourselves to the ideal enshrined in our Constitution that all men and women have an inalienable right to choose for themselves what they believe and how they will practice their beliefs.

As many of my colleagues know, I am a descendent of the early Mormon pioneers who, much like the Pilgrims of the Mayflower, fled persecution and discrimination by abandoning their homes for a new place of refuge. In the case of the Mormon pioneers, they migrated, many by foot and in harsh conditions, in a mass exodus across the Great Plains over the Rocky Mountains, and, finally, into Salt Lake Valley and other settlements throughout the Intermountain West. Brigham Young was a great colonizer and sent people all over the West to settle the West. One of the attributes of the Mormon pioneers that I admire most is

that after having endured mob violence, the martyr of their prophet, the burning of their homes and places of worship, and their forced flight into the American wilderness, they never lost their deep love of the United States and our Constitution. I am very pleased the people of Utah remain a deeply patriotic people, with a profound respect and admiration for our Constitution.

In more recent years, our leaders have continued to reaffirm the importance of religious liberty in American life. In 1948, the United States was one of the original signers of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which proclaims that every person has the right to freedom of religion, including the right to “manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship or observance.”

Four decades later, in 1990, Congress passed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, or RFRA, a crucially important piece of legislation that prohibits government from substantially burdening a person’s exercise of religion unless doing so is necessary to further a “compelling government interest.” I was honored to be one of the principal authors of RFRA and count its passage as one of the greatest moments of our time in this body. The bill passed the Senate 97 to 3 and passed the House without recorded opposition. An enormous coalition of groups from across the ideological spectrum—including the ACLU, the American Muslim Council, the Anti-Defamation League, the Christian Legal Society, and the National Council of Churches—came together in support of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. The breadth and depth of support for RFRA was a sign of the enduring importance of religious liberty in American life. Indeed, RFRA demonstrated that religious liberty is the rare issue that unites Americans of all stripes.

One other recent marker of the continuing significance of religious freedom in America is found, interestingly enough, in a bill aimed at protecting religious freedom in other countries. In 1998, Congress unanimously passed the International Religious Freedom Act, which created an ambassador-at-large for International Religious Freedom within the State Department and a bipartisan U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. The very first words of the act proclaim that “[t]he right to freedom of religion undergirds the very origin and existence of the United States.”

This statement, approved by all 535 Members of Congress and signed into law by the President, encapsulates the overarching theme of my remarks today. Freedom of religion is central to the American ideal and to the history and development of our Nation. From the earliest settlers to the revolutionary generation, to the 19th century, to the modern day, religious freedom has been a driving force in American life. Without the quest for reli-

gious liberty, there would be no United States, and without the continued guarantee of religious freedom, there can be no American ideal. This is the fundamental rule in our society, a fundamental maxim, a fundamental part of the Constitution, a fundamental belief for virtually everyone in America who has any religious inclinations at all.

I am proud to be a citizen of this great Nation. I don’t want to see religious liberty infringed upon, abused, not tolerated or denigrated. We have to stand up for it. We have to make sure everybody knows we are not going to change one of the basic precepts of the American experience—one of the basic precepts, from the beginning of this country until today.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

REMEMBERING JAMES H. GILLIAM, SR.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, it is with a heavy heart that today I rise to honor a friend and a true force for good in my home State of Delaware who recently passed away but whose impact will be felt for many years to come. He was, first and foremost, a loving husband, father, and grandfather. He was married to his wife Louise for 68 years and had always been the rock of his family. He was incredibly proud of the many accomplishments of his son Jim, Jr., and his daughter Dr. Patrice Gilliam-Johnson, after instilling in them his own passion of service to others. This man stood as a great leader in the First State. He was a veteran, a trailblazer, a mentor, and to so many of us a trusted adviser and friend.

It was Mr. James H. Gilliam, Sr.—or Mr. G., as he was known to so many of us—who left our world early Wednesday morning on September 10, but before he left us, he made a profound impact on thousands of Delawareans from every walk of life, as a teacher, as a mentor, and a leader. His 95 years on this Earth marked a life well lived. Whether he was helping communities to heal and to grow together or helping to establish local and national organizations committed to social justice and equity, advising Governors, Members of Congress or even the Vice President, he never wasted an opportunity to make the case for our community.

Jim Gilliam, though, actually didn’t grow up in Delaware. He was originally raised in Baltimore and earned a bachelor’s degree in sociology from Morgan State and a master’s degree in social work from Howard University. From 1944 to 1948, he served his country with honor as a member of the Army’s 92nd Infantry Division, the famed Buffalo Soldiers, where he became a decorated

soldier during the Second World War and beyond. He was actually recalled to duty again as a captain during the Korean war, and for all his service, he received many awards, including two Bronze Star Medals and the Combat Infantryman Badge. I will never forget the opportunity I had last year when I was able to help him retrieve a number of his missing or, in several cases, never awarded medals, and to reissue them to him in a public ceremony. Hundreds of Delawareans from across our community came together at that event—hundreds whose lives he touched, and I don’t think there was a dry eye in the house.

Jim Gilliam didn’t come to Wilmington for good until 1965, when he was hired as director of neighborhood and housing services for the Greater Wilmington Development Council. Shortly after, in 1968, he was one of the few trusted to walk the Wilmington streets promoting reconciliation during the riots in our city and the National Guard occupation that lasted too long after the assassination of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Mr. G. went on to hold positions of leadership with private and public sector entities, including vice president of the development company Leon N. Weiner & Associates, working to build affordable, low-income housing; or as the director of New Castle County’s Department of Community Development and Housing, where he served for many years; or in 1970 when Governor Peterson asked him to overhaul a then-failing Delaware family court. He touched many lives through many institutions.

His constant involvement in the community led to many honors and accolades, but through it all he never rested on his laurels or slowed down in his efforts to serve others. In 1999, at an age when most others would have been beginning retirement, he spent 9 months raising \$1 million and securing hundreds of political, business, and community supporters to launch the Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League. The Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League quickly rose to prominence and 4 years later received the National Urban League’s highest honor. Since that time, as MWUL chairman, Jim led countless efforts in educational opportunity, economic development, supplier diversity, fighting racial profiling, and promoting equity in the arts. I was honored to be able to call him a mentor and an adviser.

Whether working with him 15 years ago when I was a newly elected county-wide official or in recent years as a U.S. Senator, I called on Mr. G. time and again when making tough decisions. His counsel was not always easy to receive. He pulled no punches, but he always gave advice keeping the best interests of our community in mind. I consider myself hugely blessed for the many opportunities when he shared his knowledge and perspective of what we needed to do. But I am far from the only person who long relied upon his advice.

Mr. G. mentored countless young men and women from throughout the State and throughout his life and truly fostered an entire generation of civic and community leaders. One of them is Paul Calistro, the executive director of the West End Neighborhood House, whose organization has supported thousands youth in our city. A sentiment he recently related to me was that "Mr. G. was a man who could command the entire room, but could also speak to you as if you were the only one in the room."

Another person whose career he helped launch was Jea Street. He is now a county councilman, and for decades he was executive director of Hilltop Lutheran—another important youth-serving organization in a tough neighborhood in our city. He was hired at the tender age of 22, some 40 years ago, by Mr. G. to help in preparation for school desegregation. Jea recently commented: He did not tell me it was a job for life, but he helped me to do it and to stay on the battlefield for justice these many years.

Any elected official or civic community leader who sat down with Mr. G. also knew that he meant business. He wasn't shy about telling you what you needed to do, what you needed to do better, what you needed to do to make an impact. Whether it was fighting crime or investing in education or a growing opportunity, he was better than anyone I have ever known at delivering hard and pointed messages with a smile but with an intensity that made you listen and made you want to be a better man. The News Journal, our home paper in Wilmington, recently said: "Mr. Gilliam's fight for racial justice, his efforts to correct the wrongs of our society and his willingness to mentor countless others, sent forth thousands of ripples of hope that have benefited us in the past and will serve us well in the future."

I think that is exactly right. No problem was too small or insignificant for him to embrace and to attend to and to set right. He was Wilmington's pied piper, leading all kinds of people into a better place. He was a natural leader, and everyone who knew him is better off for it.

My good friend Dr. Tony Allen counted Mr. G. as his best friend. Tony put it this way:

He was the conscience of our community. He often said to me that the great challenges of life are in the moments when it is our turn. When there is an opportunity for us to speak up or to be quiet, to rise up or to lie down, to take arms or to take cover, most of us take the path of least resistance and miss the moment to make a difference in our own lives and in the lives of others. He taught everyone to never, ever miss their moment to act, to do the right thing, and to make the world a better place.

For 95 years, Mr. G. never missed the moments that required him to act and to lead. He acted, he led, and his legacy lives on not only in his family but among so many other people and institutions throughout our State that he touched.

As for me, I will always remember Jim Gilliam as a man who challenged me to be better. He viewed himself as a servant to our community, but he knew that his service alone wasn't enough. That is why his lasting legacy will be in those whom he has inspired and whom he challenged to continue his work, to follow his example, to take our turn and our moment to fight for justice.

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

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

The Senator from Michigan wishes to be recognized, I presume.

Mr. PETERS. I do, indeed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized.

PIPELINE IMPROVEMENT AND PREVENTING SPILLS ACT

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about an issue that is of particular importance in my State of Michigan—preventing an oilspill in the Great Lakes. The Great Lakes are a part of our way of life in Michigan, supporting our multibillion dollar agricultural, shipping, and tourism industries. An oilspill on this precious resource would be catastrophic for Michigan and for all surrounding Great Lakes States. The Great Lakes are a critical drinking water source for 40 million people, and they contain 84 percent of North America's surface freshwater. Vessels moving through the Great Lakes carry goods and passengers across the region, and tourists in Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York take in their beautiful coastlines each year. Unfortunately, Michiganders know all too well the devastating consequences of a pipeline break and what it can do to an economy and to its natural resources.

Five years ago we experienced one of the largest inland oilspills in U.S. history with a 6-foot break in the Line 6-B pipeline in Marshall, MI. Oil flowed for nearly 17 hours before it was eventually shut off, spilling more than 800,000 gallons of heavy crude, contaminating 35 miles of the Kalamazoo River, and ultimately racking up a cleanup cost of \$1.2 billion. An independent investigation after the spill concluded that the pipeline operator's inadequate procedures, as well as "weak Federal regulations," all played a major role in this disastrous spill.

The Kalamazoo disaster, along with several other devastating pipeline explosions and spills, prompted a sweeping pipeline safety bill to be signed into law in early 2012. Unfortunately, many of those rules and regulations have yet to be finalized by the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, or PHMSA.

I am very concerned about the potential for future spills in Michigan, especially from a pair of 60-year old pipelines carrying oil and natural gas liquids through the Straits of Mackinac, the place where Lake Michigan and Lake Huron meet. The Straits of Mackinac have been called the "worst possible place" for an oilspill in the entire Great Lakes Basin. The strong currents in the straits tend to reverse direction every few days, and they move water at a rate at over 10 times greater than the flow over Niagara Falls. A professor at the University of Michigan used computer modeling to estimate that a worst case scenario oil slick moving east through the Straits could reach the shores of Mackinac City and Mackinac Island—our number one tourist attraction—in just 3 hours.

Even more troubling is the fact that Coast Guard officials have acknowledged that current oilspill response techniques are not adequate for open freshwater, let alone freshwater with heavy, thick ice—the ice we find every season in the Straits of Mackinac.

To make matters worse, response plan requirements for pipelines overseen by PHMSA at the Federal level are seriously lacking. The information related to safety procedures, inspection reports, and worst case scenarios are unavailable to the public. Even local emergency responders have been left in the dark. That is why I, along with my Michigan colleague and good friend DEBBIE STABENOW, introduced the Pipeline Improvement and Preventing Spills Act, which includes several commonsense provisions to prevent pipeline accidents and protect the Great Lakes from catastrophic crude oil spills. Our bill requires the U.S. Coast Guard and other agencies to independently assess oilspill response and cleanup activities and techniques for the Great Lakes, specifically taking into account the cleanup response of an oilspill under solid, thick ice or ice-choke waters.

My legislation requires the Department of Transportation and the National Academies to examine risks associated with pipelines in the Great Lakes and other waterways in the region, including an analysis of alternatives to the Straits oil pipeline. This bill would also increase transparency by ensuring residents are notified about pipelines near their property and compels operators and regulators to make information publicly available.

My legislation will also expand safety features to pipelines in high-consequence areas—creating jobs for pipefitters and other professions—while protecting dense population centers, drinking water, and environmentally sensitive areas. Finally, this bill will eliminate the future risk of a disastrous crude oil spill from tanker vessels on the Great Lakes.

Currently crude oil is not shipped by tankers on the Great Lakes. However, it is increasingly being looked at as an option. Given the difficulty of cleaning

up heavy oil in open freshwater, my bill will take that option off the table to ensure that we will not jeopardize our \$7 billion Great Lakes fishing industry. The Pipeline Improvement and Preventing Spills Act is endorsed and supported by a number of groups, including the Michigan League of Conservation Voters; the Pipefitters, Plumbers and HVAC Techs Local 111; Traverse City Tourism; the Great Lakes Fishing Commission; Michigan Steelhead and Salmon Fishermen's Association; National Wildlife Federation; and the Alliance for the Great Lakes—to name a few.

The Senate committee on commerce, which has jurisdiction over pipeline safety, will be considering pipeline legislation in the next few weeks. I look forward to building support for provisions in my bill. Our country continues to record record highs in domestic energy production, but we must remain vigilant when it comes to energy transportation. Through strong oversight, leadership from the industry, and technological innovation, I firmly believe that we can and we must continue to meet our energy needs in the safest way possible while preserving treasures such as the Great Lakes for future generations.

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. 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.

PROTECTING AFFORDABLE COVERAGE FOR EMPLOYEES ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the consideration of H.R. 1624, which is at the desk, and that the bill be read a third time and the Senate vote on passage of the bill with no intervening action or debate.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1624) to amend title I of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and title XXVII of the Public Health Service Act to revise the definition of small employer.

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate on the measure, the bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

The bill (H.R. 1624) was passed.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be made and laid upon the table.

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to say a few words about the Protecting Affordable Coverage For Employees—or PACE—Act.

The PACE Act is smart legislation from my colleague, Senator TIM SCOTT, and my Kentucky colleague over in the House, Congressman BRETT GUTHRIE, that will help protect small- and medium-sized businesses that provide health care to their employees. It would give States more flexibility to define what constitutes a small business for health insurance purposes so as to protect health benefits for workers, lower health premiums, and reduce costs for taxpayers.

So let me repeat that. The PACE Act is a smart health care bill aimed at protecting workers' benefits, lowering premiums, and reducing costs to taxpayers.

I hope colleagues will join me in applauding the bill's lead sponsors, our colleague, Senator TIM SCOTT, and his counterpart over in the House, Congressman BRETT GUTHRIE, for their hard work in developing this very important proposal.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I wish to join the majority leader in complimenting Senator SCOTT, a new Member of the Senate, on a significant accomplishment. It is not that easy to pass a bill in the House and in the Senate. It takes a lot of work, and there is good reason for that. We want to make sure that whatever passes in the Senate has a thorough amount of consideration.

Senator SCOTT has come to the Senate as a member of the HELP Committee. He is one of its most diligent members. I am chairman of that committee. He took this initiative on his own, working with Members of the House, where he formerly served, and he has brought the bill to the Senate, and within a few days he has gotten its unanimous approval. To me, that suggests the kind of U.S. Senator that we need more of—someone who is quiet, effective, scholarly, and gets results.

So TIM SCOTT today, on behalf of the people of South Carolina and this country, has helped workers, has improved benefits, and has lowered premiums. He deserves our thanks. He has certainly earned my respect and the respect of his colleagues on both sides of the aisle by this significant accomplishment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, I wish to thank my cosponsor, Senator SHAHEEN, for working with me on the PACE Act, without any question. I also would like to thank Senator ALEXANDER for his kind remarks and specifically thank our leader, Senator MCCONNELL, for making sure this bill had an expeditious path to the floor of the Senate.

So often we hear in America that we can't get things done in the Senate, and because of your leadership, Senator MCCONNELL, and because of the

good work of Congressman GUTHRIE on the House side, as well as Senator SHAHEEN, we see we are going to have an opportunity to make sure that small business owners all across America are not more negatively impacted by ObamaCare.

The decision we have made today to move this legislation forward actually will save, on average, about 18 percent—18 percent—of higher premiums that will not have to be paid by small businesses owners.

Senator MCCONNELL, thank you for your leadership. Senator ALEXANDER, thank you for working with us on this very interesting process to get it to the floor as expeditiously as we have been able to do.

With that, I thank both Senators for their hard work and dedication to this issue.

Mr. SASSE. Mr. President, I want to thank my friend and colleague Senator SCOTT for his leadership in protecting many Americans and small businesses from more needless suffering under ObamaCare. While I am glad for this outcome, a piecemeal approach to this terrible law is less valuable than a strategic approach. We must help the millions of other victims who are already suffering or will soon suffer from the law's flawed policies but lack an effective lobbying voice. In the future, we should set the stage for a serious repeal and replace debate by delaying Obamacare's onerous burdens, rather than merely working to make a terrible law 12 percent less bad.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2016—CONFERENCE REPORT—Continued

REMEMBERING OFFICER GREG ALIA

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, I rise to speak about one of South Carolina's most amazing heroes, Greg Alia. I am here today to recognize that this young man—32 years young—lost his life yesterday. Yesterday morning, Officer Greg Alia was killed in Columbia, SC.

I will tell my colleagues that Greg served his community with distinction. Yesterday afternoon, I had an opportunity to talk with Greg's wife, Kassy. Kassy's strength, as she spoke with someone she has never met about the love of her life—about her husband, the father of her little boy, Sal—was quite remarkable. Her thoughtfulness in this tragic time truly struck a chord with me and brought tears to my eyes as I listened to a wife describe the man she loves, a community leader, and someone who runs into danger when others are running away from danger.

Greg was born and raised in Columbia, SC. He was a Columbia native. He went to high school at Richland Northeast High School. He graduated from the University of South Carolina. If Greg were here, I would say "Go, Cocks" because we understand and appreciate the importance of the University of South Carolina, especially in the Columbia footprint.

More importantly, after high school, Greg wanted to find out what life was about. He had an opportunity to be a production assistant working on movies such as the latest version of "Indiana Jones," as well as one of my favorite movies, frankly, "Iron Man." Yes, "Iron Man."

Greg was offered a job with Marvel, the comic book folks. He had an opportunity to stay out of the State and do amazing things and have a lot of fun, but his heart was beating to come back home to South Carolina, to come back home to Columbia, so that he could serve the people of South Carolina. He wanted to be a police officer. He wanted to help people. Kassy told me that Greg would have had no regrets.

To think about those words from his wife on the day her husband was murdered, Greg would have no regrets because he was doing what he was made to do: Protect people, serve people, sacrifice on behalf of people.

Greg was the embodiment of bravery and heroism. Greg was doing what he was wired to do. His wife was so clear and so passionate about his desire to be the first on the scene, his desire to do everything possible to try to be helpful. Greg, like so many police officers across this Nation and, without question, across the great State of South Carolina, loved serving people. And he did so. He did so with great integrity, with amazing character. He knew his place in the world was making sure that his town, his city, our State, and our Nation are safer because he put on the uniform every single day.

Today, we all stand in salute to Greg and make a promise to his wife Kassy that we will be there with her as she raises her son Sal. Our prayers and our thoughts are with the family.

In closing, I would like to share a story that Kassy told me yesterday afternoon as I had the chance to speak with her. The story brought a tear to my eye, and I hope as my colleagues hear the story, it may even bring a smile to their faces. Greg worked the night shift, and when he would come home in the morning—Sal was around 6 months old and he was learning to sit up, and in the morning when Sal heard the police cruiser of his dad pull into the driveway, he would sit up and he would start smiling. He was feeding, and the milk, because of his big smile, would run down his face.

Think for just a moment of that young man, Sal. He should have the opportunity to walk when he hears the cruiser coming into the driveway. He should have the opportunity to yell "Daddy" when he hears that cruiser coming into the driveway. So for that little boy and his mama, Kassy, and for the Forest Acres community, I stand here today saying thank you for every single thing Greg has done to make our State and our Nation a better place to call home. I say thank you to Greg for making the ultimate sacrifice that will never be forgotten. And I say thank you to Kassy for being such a powerful

and strong woman in this amazing time of her need.

We should pray for Kassy and Sal.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I am glad I got to be here to hear Senator SCOTT talk about that family and that hero and those who protect and defend us. In Missouri we have had over the last year a number of challenges on this front. I was recently meeting with a group of African-American pastors, one of whom was a pastor in Ferguson, MO, and talking about the hard work of being in law enforcement. He said: People who protect us, just like me, want to go home at the end of the day. And more than most of us, people who protect us leave every day with them and their families having the No. 1 focus of getting home at the end of the day. Thank God they are willing to step forward and protect us, especially understanding that this is a challenging job at a challenging time.

VETERANS HEALTH CARE

I wish to speak for a little while about veterans health care, another challenge we face right now. We just, unfortunately, failed to move to debate on a bill that would fund these programs, a bill that would increase funding for our veterans in areas such as health care and benefit claims and processing claims, medical research, and technology upgrades. For whatever reason, we decided as a Senate—and I don't think for a good reason—that no, we are not going to debate that bill because all of these bills somehow collectively don't spend enough money. But we have talked about that, and I talked about it earlier in the day.

Right now I wish to speak for a few minutes about what we do need to be figuring out for our veterans.

We learned a year ago that Veterans' Administration wait times were unacceptable. We learned it was likely that a number of lives had been lost and deaths had been caused because our veterans didn't get to see the doctor they should have gotten to see; they didn't get the health care they earned as veterans and deserved. This summer, after a year of working to make this better, we found out that the wait list of people waiting more than 30 days at the VA system to see a doctor was now 50 percent longer than it was last year. I thought about that a little bit and I thought, well, maybe it was just 50 percent longer than it was last year, because one thing they found out was the wait-list wasn't really reflective of the real wait-list. The kind of progress we hoped to have made we don't appear to be making yet.

Last year the Congress passed a law to give veterans more choice. It was passed on a broad bipartisan basis. The Senate came together, the Congress came together to allow veterans to receive their health care in non-VA facilities if they couldn't get that first appointment within 30 days or if they

were more than 40 miles away from a facility. We tried this legislation this summer to put even more definition to that. Clearly, what the Congress means is 40 miles from a facility that can do what the patient needs to have done. If one needs to have a heart stint put in, just being 40 miles from a facility where they would take your blood pressure isn't good enough. We will continue to work to change veterans health care in a way that gives veterans more choices, I hope.

What we found out is that Alaskan care is just not acceptable. We have to continue to keep focused on this. The bill we provided will create more choices.

Last week I had one of the best conversations I have ever had with anybody at the Veterans Administration when I talked to the Under Secretary of Health—a new person in that job—Dr. Dave Shulkin, who spent his whole life in health care in the private sector managing hospitals outside of the Federal Government. Dr. Shulkin should know what he is doing, and it certainly sounded to me as if he knew what he was doing. He understood the kinds of things the Congress hopes to see for our veterans and the VA system that need to happen.

We talked about the fact that Congress intends for veterans' choice to mean exactly that—not ways for the Veterans Administration to find obstacles to choice but veterans' choice. If you are a Federal Government health care provider, if you take Medicare patients, you ought to be able to take veterans as patients. There shouldn't be some long second process you have to go through to become qualified so that the veteran can see a doctor the veteran wants to see, the veteran can go to a hospital the veteran wants to go to, particularly if the VA can't meet that need.

In fact, the conversation I had with Dr. Shulkin was so good that for a little while, I thought maybe I had gotten the wrong number, that possibly I actually had not called the Veterans Administration, because I have never had a conversation like that where somebody at the Veterans Administration not only knew what needed to be done but wasn't afraid to compete to get the health care needs of veterans met.

I talked to all our veterans groups in Missouri, or many of them—certainly the two big veterans groups—at their meeting this summer. I said: Many of you have had great experience with the VA.

There are a lot of people at the VA who want to do everything they can to serve veterans in the best possible way.

I said: But that is not good enough. All of you need to have had the best possible experience at the VA—not necessarily the best outcome but the best possible outcome.

You know, all of our health care outcomes aren't what we would want them to be, but they ought to be everything they possibly should be.

Veterans shouldn't have to drive past non-VA facilities that are equally capable of providing their health care or more capable of providing their health care, and we are going to continue to work to see that that happens. Competition is a good thing. The best possible place to go for your health care is a good thing.

I want to come back to that briefly in a moment, but before I get there, I received a report on Tuesday from the Veterans Administration's inspector general that frankly just said that the allegations about what was happening at the St. Louis facility, the John Cochran facility, were absolutely true, that a number of files had been changed to indicate that the consultation had been completed before it was ever had. I assume it does a lot for your performance numbers if you check the "completed" box before you see the patient, and that appears to be what was happening. We learned that there is not enough oversight there. We learned that at least one psychiatrist had received performance pay based on productivity data. The only thing wrong with the productivity data was that it wasn't correct. I guess it is easy to look good if you are not backing that up with real facts. It is not acceptable. It is inexcusable.

Then we have a problem with leadership at these facilities. At the John Cochran hospital in St. Louis—the biggest hospital we have in our State—we have had seven temporary directors in 2 years. No matter how good some of those may have been, having seven temporary directors is a lot like not having any director at all. If you know somebody is going to be there for 14 weeks, or however long they are going to be there, and you know somebody else is coming, that obviously is not going to produce a good result, but that is happening. There are 30 veterans centers that don't have permanent directors today. That is about 20 percent of all the facilities in the country. One in five of our VA medical centers doesn't have a permanent director, and we need to do better.

Supposedly the new Administrator of the Veterans Administration came in because he was a great manager. So far, I don't see the results. If he needs more help from the Congress to be a great manager, we ought to figure out a way to give him more help.

I believe competition is a good thing. The VA should be good and really better than anybody else at a few things. Nobody should be better than the VA in terms of dealing with post-traumatic stress. Nobody should be better than the Veterans Administration when it comes to dealing with the results of these IED attacks, the improvised explosive device attacks. Because of that, eye injuries should be something the VA deals with very well. And nobody should be better than the VA at dealing with prosthetics or spinal cord injuries.

Frankly, the Presiding Officer, as a doctor, would appreciate this. I don't

really know why we wouldn't assume the VA would be the best place to specialize in almost anything else. And if it is not the best place to go, it shouldn't be the only place to go.

The VA is probably not likely to be any better or as good as anyplace you would drive by to get your heart stent put in, to take care of your cancer problem, to work with your kidneys that are failing, to get even the basic health care of getting your blood pressure checked. Our veterans deserve more choices.

There are lots of reasons the Congress should be and is concerned about the way the Veterans Administration is working. It is clearly time for the Veterans Administration to get focused not on what is good for the Veterans Administration but on what is good for veterans. We owe it to our veterans.

The report I got this Tuesday unfortunately verifies almost every concern that people have had, and we need to insist that that be better.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

PROVIDING FOR OUR VETERANS

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I am pleased to follow my colleague and friend from Missouri. I just want to mention—although I didn't come to the floor to talk about what we are doing for veterans, let me take a minute or two to talk about what we are doing that we are actually proud of and then maybe touch on a couple of areas where we can do a better job.

I myself am a veteran, a Navy midshipman out of Ohio State who studied economics for 4 years and went on to become a naval flight officer. I served for 5 years in Southeast Asia as a naval flight officer and then as a P-3 aircraft mission commander for another 18 years until the end of the Cold War. I loved the Navy. I loved serving.

I got an education—undergraduate and graduate school—and feel very privileged. I had the opportunity at the end of my Active-Duty tour to use the VA hospital very close to Wilmington, DE, in northern Delaware. I remember the first time I went there. I was offered some dental benefits, and my dentist—a young dentist who was right out of dental school—told me the morale was pretty bad, and he said they didn't do very good work. It was place where they had 16-bed wards. They didn't do much in the way of outpatient surgery. The pharmacy was a mess.

I said: Wouldn't it be great to be in a position to do something about that and transform this place so it can be a health care delivery facility we can be proud of today?

Do they do everything perfectly? No, they don't.

We have two satellite operations in Delaware. We have one in the Dover area, in the middle of our State, and we have another one in the southern part of the State, in Sussex County, which is Georgetown. I am very proud of those health care facilities. We call them outpatient clinics, CBOCS.

The reason I mention that is because I was also eligible—coming out of the Vietnam war, along with other Vietnam veterans—to get an education, to go to college, and in my case graduate school on the GI bill. In my generation, we received about \$250 a month. At the time, I was happy to have every bit of it. I continued to fly with my Reserve squadron for another 18 years, and it was great to have that benefit.

A couple weeks ago, our congressional delegation—Senator COONS, Congressmen CARNEY, and Governor Jack Markell—sent 300 Delaware National Guard men and women off to Afghanistan. We had a big sendoff ceremony for them. Their families were there. We had about 1,000 people. It was a big sendoff.

As they left, I told them: When you come back, you are going to be eligible for a GI benefit that dwarfs what my generation received.

They won't get 250 bucks a month. If they serve a total of 3 years on Active Duty and serve in Afghanistan or Iraq for a period of time, here is what they will be eligible for: They can come back and go for free to the University of Delaware, Delaware City University, Wilmington University—pretty much any public college or university in America; tuition, books, and fees paid for; and if they need tutoring, that is paid for as well. On top of all that, they get a housing allowance of \$1,500 a month. We received a GI benefit of \$250.

Not surprisingly, at the end of World War II, when my dad and my uncle served—in the Korean war, when my uncle served, and at the end of the Vietnam war, scam artists emerged to take advantage of the GI and tried to separate the GI coming back from combat—tried to separate the GI cash value benefits from the GI and sometimes not to provide them with a very good education but to take advantage of the GI and the taxpayers.

In about 1952, something called the 85-15 rule was passed whereby at least 15 percent of the students enrolled in a for-profit college or university had to be there—their tuition paid for by some source other than the Federal Government. As it turns out, the 85-15 rule became the 90-10 rule, so that 90 percent of those who were enrolled were paid for by the Federal Government, but another 10 percent had to be paid for by someone else other than the Federal Government. Over time, that changed so that 90 percent of the revenues of a for-profit college or university could come from the Federal Government but not the other 10 percent—except for the money that came from the GI bill to a college or university or from tuition assistance for people on Active Duty. That didn't count against the 90 percent. At the end of the day, a for-profit college or university could get 100 percent of its revenues from the Federal Government. I don't think that is a good thing.

The system that was designed early on with the 85-15 rule and later the 90-

10 rule was designed to try to make sure there were market forces that ensured taxpayers and the GIs, the veterans would get a fair deal, get a good education, make sure they were treated the way we would want them to be treated.

There is a huge loophole in the 90-10 rule, and it is a loophole we need to fix. We need to fix it.

My colleagues who talked here earlier today—including my colleague from Missouri—about the quality of VA health care—I want to say that we are providing the best health care by far in the history of our country. For too long, a number of our for-profit colleges and universities and postsecondary-training programs have been taking advantage of GIs, taking advantage of the taxpayers, and it should stop. It should stop.

Having said that, there are a number of for-profit colleges and universities and training programs that do a great job. They are not all bad actors. Some of them wear white hats. For them, good for you, and for those who are not, you need to change your ways.

I didn't come here to talk about that, but in the spirit of making sure we look out for our veterans, I thought I would mention that.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

Let's take a look at some of the posters here this afternoon.

The first one looks like my State. It probably also looks like the Presiding Officer's State. It could look like any of the States our pages are from. But this is a traffic jam. It is a traffic jam that occurs almost every day, almost every business day, and frankly a lot of weekends on highways across America from coast to coast. We spend a lot of time sitting in traffic. It is actually quite a substantial cost that inures to our Nation's economy. The cost this year is believed to be about \$160 billion, a hit on our national economy. I will talk in just a second about what that includes.

Part of the waste that is reflected in our Nation's economy is—you see right here it says "82 hours wasted in big city traffic." That is per person, per driver, on average, across the country, big cities, people sitting—pretty much sitting in traffic. They could be in a minivan, they could be in a small car, a large car, they could be in a truck, but we are talking about 82 hours a year just pretty much sitting in traffic.

The average across the country, when you take in the more rural parts of the country and suburban areas, is about 42 hours. That is a whole lot of time. Time is money. So just think about that.

Here is one with a sense of humor. This is not Delaware. I am not sure where this is, but for those who can't read this, it says—the traffic sign that is up here says: "You'll never get to work on time. Haha." It is some kind of construction program. You see the orange cones out there. Someone had a good sense of humor there. My guess is,

the folks who maybe were working on the project had a good sense of humor. My guess is that for a moment it made the drivers smile but not for long, especially if they sat in traffic long enough. Eighty-two hours a year, that is long enough.

Not only is it expensive, a waste of time and money for us as individuals to sit in traffic for a long time, another part of the cost is caused by potholes and other problems with our roads. I think this is probably a bridge. It looks like it might be a bridge, but it is a construction project someplace. Here is a pothole. That is a bad pothole. In other parts—not too much in Delaware—I have seen in other States at least that bad and worse.

What is going to happen, vehicles will come along, they will hit that pothole, and may damage their tires, they may have to replace a tire or two, they may have to get their front end realigned. That costs money. How much? Actually, believe it or not, just like Texas A&M has actually figured out on average we waste 82 hours a year as drivers, somebody else actually spent the time to figure out how much we spend on our cars, trucks, and vans in order to fix them during the course of the year because of potholes like this and other problems, whether it is the surface of the roads we travel on or the surface of the bridges we travel on. It is over \$350. I have seen the range of anywhere from \$350 per year to \$500 per year. Let's say it is just \$350 a year. That is a lot of money. That is part of the cost of the damage to our economy.

The other thing I would say, our economy today, as we all know, is a "just in time" economy. I will give you a good example. We have a port in Wilmington that sits right on the Delaware River. As you come up the Delaware Bay, it becomes the Delaware River. The port that is closest to the Atlantic is the Port of Wilmington. Ships are coming in and out of there throughout the day, nights, and weekends. The ships don't come in and spend a week. Ships don't come into the Port of Wilmington and spend a day. They may come in for 4 hours, they may come in for 6 hours, but they are there and then they are gone, because when a ship is sitting in the Port of Wilmington or any other port, the shipper, whoever owns that boat, that ship cannot make any money. So they want to be in and they want to be out. That is the way they do their business.

It is important for whoever is coming in using a truck to bring goods to put on that ship to send around the world, there may be a very short window of time to get there. If you are stuck in traffic, the kind of traffic we saw early on, you may miss that window when the ship is in the port, whether it is Wilmington or some other port. That is another reason why, in a "just in time" economy, these kinds of delays mean time is money. Again, someone else with a sense of humor—if you cannot read this, it looks like a husband and

wife driving along in their car. His wife says: "Finally someone fixed that pothole." Here is the pothole. There is a car down there. The guy driving looks like he is having a bad day, not just a bad hair day, a very bad day.

A little humor there but not if you happen to be this guy, frankly—probably not if you happen to be this guy, because if you are running over somebody else's car in a pothole like this, the guy is going to spend a lot more than 350 bucks to repair his car and get it going again.

We are not making this stuff up. There is a national association, I think it is civil engineers, people who spend their life's work on transportation projects. Every year for years, they have given us a grade on what kind of shape our roads, highways, bridges, and transit systems are in. They could give an A, A-plus, A-minus, they could give a B, B-plus, B-minus, they could give a C, C-plus, C-minus or they could give a D-plus, D, D-minus. The last couple of years we have been right around D to D-plus. I think we are probably going down rather than going up. So what everybody knows—just about anybody who drives in our country these days knows we are not investing in our roads, highways, bridges, and transit systems the way we need to.

Look around the rest of the world, travel around the rest of the world. You can see in a lot of countries we compete with that they do. One of the components of certain investments we need to make in our country in order to strengthen our economy, to better ensure the jobs are going to be created or preserved—there a lot of things we can do to make sure businesses have access to capital, make sure the cost of energy is affordable, make sure the cost of health care is affordable, make sure we have public safety, make sure the people who are coming out of our schools can read, write, and have the skills that are needed in the workforce.

I know the big one is to make sure we have the ability to move people and goods where they need to go, when they need to go. Here is our current plan. It is pretty well summed up in this sign. It is meant to be funny. I suppose it is. But I like this part of the plan: "Good luck." That is not a plan. That is not a plan that is going to get us where we need to go as a nation.

For those who may be unable to read this, there is a big traffic jam. A lot of people are saying—you see those little bubbles there—"I'd pay to be anywhere but here."

I was Treasurer of Delaware. I studied economics, got an MBA, and was Treasurer of Delaware when I was 29. I had a chance to serve in the house for a while and then as Governor. I was very much involved in the National Governors Association in trying to make sure we invested in our transportation infrastructure across the country. In the Senate, I am on the Environment and Public Works Committee. The last time I was privileged to serve

as chair of the Senate Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

So I thought a fair amount about these issues. If you think about the way we pay for roads, highways, bridges, and transit, what we have used for years is a user pay system. The people, the businesses that use our roads, highways, bridges, and transit systems, we pay for them. In some places, we have sort of gotten away from that. There is an unwillingness to ask people to pay for what they want to use. Everybody wants to have better transportation systems. There seems to be a lot of reluctance to pay for that.

When I was Governor of Delaware, three times I asked for modest—very modest—increases, just a couple of cents in the fee for gas and diesel tax. I think out of three efforts, we succeeded one time. Not a whole lot was raised, but we cobbled together some other money from other user fees and we were able to continue to fund transportation funding.

For a number of years in the Nation, we have had a transportation trust fund. Most of the money for that transportation trust fund comes from user fees, and two primary user fees are a gas tax. It has been about 18.3, 18.4 cents since, I think, 1993. It has been a little bit over 18 cents since 1993. It has not changed. The cost of concrete has gone up. The cost of asphalt has gone up. The cost of steel has gone up. The cost of labor has gone up. What has not gone up is the user fee we are asking people to pay to have better roads, highways, bridges, and transit to get people off our roads, highways, and bridges. If we can do that, we can save a lot of money.

We have a tax on diesel—a Federal tax. It has been about 24 cents per gallon. It has been at that level since 1993—since 1993. Again, concrete, asphalt, steel, and labor have all gone up, but in 22 years we have not changed the user fee, if you will, on diesel.

The money we collect from the gas and diesel tax does not go to pay for health care, it does not go to pay for wars, it does not go to pay for agriculture and other things. The money we collect from these user fees goes to pay for roads, highways, bridges, and to some extent for transit systems, to get people off our roads, highways, and bridges so the rest of us will have some extra room to maneuver.

I will go back in time. Thomas Jefferson said a lot of things that are worth remembering. My favorite Jefferson quote is this: “If the people know the truth, they won’t make a mistake.”

If the people know the truth, they won’t make a mistake. The truth is, we are not investing in our transportation infrastructure in this country the way our competitors are and the way we ought to be.

To do so does not mean we have to raise—in some places they have gas taxes or diesel taxes that are \$4 or \$5 a gallon. We don’t have that. It is 18

cents, and 24 cents for gas and diesel combined. If we had increased them by the rate of inflation in the past, the gas tax would be not 18 cents; it may be even closer to twice that. The diesel tax would not be 24 cents; it might be closer to twice that. But we have not changed them.

Here is the way we pay for transportation improvements: We don’t pay for them. We don’t raise anything, in some cases. We just simply go out and borrow money for the transportation fund from the Federal general fund. When the general fund runs out of money, we borrow money from countries around the world like China and other places and replenish the general fund, and use that to replenish the transportation fund.

I think that is pretty foolish, especially to be beholden to the folks in China for our transportation system. It does not make a whole lot of sense to me, maybe it does not to you either. There are other things we do—we have these—I call them cats and dogs, sort of sleight of hand. One of the more recent examples, we do something called pension smoothing, where—I will not get into how that works, but it is just an awful idea to mess with, muck with people’s pensions in order to be able to provide funds for road improvements. That does not make much sense.

Another thing we do is we maybe raise the TSA fees when people want to fly. Instead of using that to make our friendly skies safer, we put a little of that money in roads, highways, and bridges or maybe we sell some of the oil we have in our Strategic Petroleum Reserve. We paid a lot of money several years ago to buy gas, to buy oil when it was expensive. People think it would be a smart thing to sell that oil out of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, when prices are low, to help pay for roads, highways, and bridges. Remember the old saying “buy low, sell high.” Well, this is really buy high and then put that oil in the Strategic Petroleum Reserve and then sell low. That is insanity.

We can do a lot better than this. For a number of years, some have encouraged us to do what we have been doing for years, to actually be honest and pay for improvements to our roads, highways, and bridges. And that is to raise the user fees—not all at once, not by \$1 or \$2 or anything like that, but by 4 cents a year starting next year for 4 years. Then after that index—then index the fees and the taxes on gas and diesel according to the rate of inflation.

If we did that, I think we would have a combined State and Federal user fee, if you will, for gas. I think it would be at that time 53 cents. It would be about 53 cents. Compared to what? Compared to pretty much any other developed nation in the world, we would have the lowest combined Federal, State, and local user fees on gas and diesel. It is the lowest as far as I can tell. We can actually double that. We are not going

to do that. We could actually double it again—we are not going to do that—from 53 cents to \$1.06 per gallon. Again, I don’t suggest we would do that, but if we did, we would still be among the lowest compared to the rest of the world.

Sometimes we say: Well, 16 cents—what could I buy with that? If I didn’t have to pay 4 years from now an extra 16 cents when I buy a gallon of gas, what would that add up to in a week for the average driver?

I will tell you this—maybe brings it home—basically the price of a cup of coffee a week is the cost that would be incurred by the average driver even after the full increase, the 4 cents times 4 years. That is what it is worth. That would be the out-of-pocket expense for the average driver, the price of a cup of coffee a week.

We saw earlier from some of these charts that, on average across the country, people are sitting in traffic for 42 hours per year. We saw some of the graphics with the pothole and were reminded that the cost of damage to our cars, trucks, and vans is anywhere from \$350 to some estimates as high as \$500. We are learning that for the price of a basic cup of coffee, if we invest that money instead—people can still drink coffee, but if we put that in our roads, highways, bridges, and transit systems, we can have a transportation system we can be proud of. Those four pennies add up over time, and they add up over the next 10 years to \$220 billion to have for investments. So instead of having roads or potholes that look like the one I saw and the kinds of traffic jams we see here from coast to coast, we can have a transportation system again in this country we can be proud of. We just have to have the will to do it.

Again, Thomas Jefferson reminded us that things that are worth having are worth paying for, and if people know the truth, they won’t make a mistake. Roads, highways, bridges, transit—that is what we are paying for. The truth is, it doesn’t have to break us. It doesn’t have to break our banks or our budgets. We can have those roads, highways, and bridges again that we can be proud of. I hope we will do that.

Senator DICK DURBIN of Illinois and I have introduced legislation to essentially do that, to raise the user fees by 4 cents a year for 4 years, at a time when the price of oil is as low as it has been for some time and is expected to stay low for the foreseeable future.

If the Iranians work with us and the other five nations that negotiated the Iranian agreement in order to gradually lift sanctions from their economy, they will be able to start producing oil and selling it across the world as long as they agree not to create that nuclear weapon. We are going to make sure they don’t.

But it turns out that Iran is the No. 4 nation in the world in oil reserves. Think about that. We live in a world that is awash in oil. Very soon, the Iranian oil will be added to the oil that is

available to consumers to use on this planet of ours. All that oil will not push up the price of oil or gasoline or diesel; it will push it down—supply and demand. Let's keep that in mind.

With that, I have spoken for long enough. I see one of my colleagues has been waiting patiently, and I will bid you all adieu. Have a good weekend. Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

MILCON-VA APPROPRIATIONS BILL

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I wish to say a few words about the bill that we voted on this afternoon and put it into a broader context. This was the bill to begin the vote and debate on the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill, which passed out of the Appropriations Committee in a strong bipartisan vote.

There has been a lot of talk and a lot of stories in the media over the last several weeks about the government running out of money, a government shutdown. In a lot of those stories, the narrative talked about the Republican Party being the one focused on a government shutdown. The media actually loves this narrative, but, like a lot of narratives in the media, they are not always so accurate. So I wanted to give what I think is the much more accurate story, what is really going on here in the Senate.

Many of us are new Senators—the Presiding Officer and myself included—13 of us, actually. A lot of us came to Washington and a lot of us actually ran for the Senate because we were fed up. We thought the American people were fed up; we knew they were fed up with the dysfunction of the Federal Government. There are a lot of examples of that. You know many of them.

In the last several years we have run the debt of our Nation from \$10 trillion to \$18 trillion. Think about that. Looking at these interns here on the floor, that is going to be their responsibility if we don't get ahold of that—\$18 trillion. An economy that can't grow is what we call the new normal here in Washington, 1.5 percent, 2 percent GDP growth. No budget. The previous Senate was not even passing a budget—the most basic function of government. Households do it, businesses do it, and States do it. The Federal Government was not even taking the time to pass a budget. There were no appropriations bills, no spending bills out of the Appropriations Committee. These were all signs of a Federal Government that was not working, that was dysfunctional.

So we came with the new majority, new leadership committed to change this. We meant to change this. We were very focused on changing this, and we have begun in a serious way to do that. What are we doing? First, we passed a budget. It hadn't happened in years, but we did that. It was a lot of hard work. My hat is off to the Budget Committee. We took what was the Presi-

dent's budget, 10-year budget, and slashed that by \$5 trillion to \$7 trillion in terms of spending. We didn't raise taxes.

Then the next step—what the government is supposed to do—we started to work on appropriations bills in the Appropriations Committee. Again, this was very hard work, very bipartisan work, and for the first time in years, the Appropriations Committee passed out 12 appropriations bills to fund our government.

Most of these were very bipartisan. Let me give you a few examples. The Agriculture appropriations bill passed out of the Appropriations Committee 28 to 2. It doesn't get much more bipartisan than that. The Commerce-Justice-Science appropriations bill passed 27 to 3; Energy and Water, 26 to 4. This is strong bipartisan work in the Appropriations Committee with our government getting back to work.

The dysfunction that had previously existed here for many years—none of this was happening—was going away, and we were working. Very importantly, in terms of appropriations bills, the Defense appropriations bill passed out of the committee 27 to 3, and the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs appropriations bill, 21 to 9.

So we passed a budget, passed appropriations bills—so far so good. The Senate is working again. We are back to regular order. We are moving forward in a bipartisan way—very bipartisan. We are doing the work of government. It is what the American people wanted, asked for, and we are starting to deliver on that as part of our promises last fall.

So what is the next step? The next step is to take these appropriations bills and bring them to the Senate floor for a vote. It shouldn't be a problem, particularly because the bills I am talking about are so bipartisan. They came out of committee with bipartisan numbers and support, so that is what we are doing. That is what we have done. That is what we are supposed to do. That is what the American people want us to do.

We started to prioritize. Where should we begin? Turn on the news. I think most people know where we should begin—funding our military, the men and women protecting us, the men and women risking their lives on a daily basis for our freedom.

So we brought the Defense appropriations bill to the Senate floor. Again, we certainly need that. One gets the sense that the world is careening into chaos. We need a strong military. We need to fund our military. It shouldn't be an issue. It passed out of committee with a strong bipartisan vote. Everybody likes to make sure we have a strong military.

So what happened? We brought it to the floor of the Senate and it was filibustered, not one but two times. That is irresponsible—filibustering the defense of our Nation, defunding the support for our troops.

So that brings us to what we did today. We turn to another appropriations bill—Military Construction and Veterans Affairs appropriations—again, a very bipartisan bill. It is very focused, building military infrastructure throughout our country, throughout the world. One of the most sacred responsibilities of this body, of our government is taking care of our veterans.

This is a huge issue for my State. Alaska boasts the highest number of veterans per capita of any State in the Nation, and we need to take care of our best. So what happened today? It seems pretty noncontroversial. The appropriations bill—a very nonpartisan bill—came to the floor, and it was filibustered again.

In the past few weeks, we have had critical votes to fund our military, to fund our troops, to fund our veterans, and we cannot move forward. What is going on here? I really don't know. It is hard to say. I sit on the Armed Services Committee. I sit on the Veterans' Affairs Committee. These are two of the most bipartisan committees in the Senate. I know all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle truly respect, truly support our troops and our veterans, and truly want what is best for them. I recognize that.

Then why is the other side filibustering the funding of these incredibly important bills, in essence defunding our troops and defunding our veterans? I think the American people deserve answers. I think our veterans deserve answers. I think our troops in harm's way deserve answers.

One thing for sure is the next time the media wants to write a story with a narrative about a government shutdown, they ought to ask those who voted against these bills—to even start debating them—why they are defunding these critical groups and veterans. They need to ask those who are voting against these bills, filibustering these bills, why they are leaving our troops and our veterans in the lurch.

Mr. President, we are doing our job—what the American people asked us to do, demanded from us last November. They wanted us to pass a budget like they do, even though we hadn't done that in years. We did. They wanted us to pass appropriations bills and to work in a bipartisan manner to get these bills through the committee—all 12 to fund the government. We did. And they wanted us to prioritize our spending, our activities, and our focus in terms of government funding on the things that matter most—our military and our veterans. And we did.

I have no idea why our colleagues on the other side of the aisle refuse to move with us in terms of the next step. The American people want the next step. They want the Senate to vote on these bipartisan bills that fund our military and fund our veterans. Today, once again, we are seeing that is not happening. I think the American people need answers, I think our troops

need answers, and I think our veterans need answers on why it is not happening.

Mr. President, 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. 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.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

NATIONAL KINSHIP CARE MONTH

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, last night, this body approved a resolution authored by Senator WYDEN and myself designating September 2015 as National Kinship Care Month.

While many may not be aware, there are approximately 2,700,000 children living in kinship care around this country. That means millions of grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other relatives are looking after children in every urban, rural, and suburban county of the United States.

These caregivers have stepped forward, often at great personal expense, out of love and loyalty to care for children during times in which biological parents are unable to do so. They provide safety, promote well-being, and establish stable homes and environments for extremely vulnerable children during very challenging circumstances.

They serve in a time of upheaval and great change for these children, assisting them to recognize their self-worth and potential.

Kinship care also enables the children to maintain family relationships and cultural heritage as they continue residence in the native community of the child.

This resolution sends a clear message that the Senate is proud of and wishes to honor these everyday heroes, kinship caregivers, who throughout the history of the United States, have provided loving homes for parentless children.

It is my hope that National Kinship Care Month can provide each of us with an opportunity to recognize and celebrate the sacrifice and devotion of kinship caregivers. And while there is still a great deal of work we can do to ensure that all children have a safe, loving, nurturing, and permanent family, regardless of age or special needs, kinship care providers exhibit a template of care and sacrifice that should be provided for every child in this great country.

I am very proud of this resolution and this acknowledgement, and I thank my colleagues for giving it their unanimous support.

TRIBUTE TO DAVID WOLK

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want to take a moment to recognize the achievements and contributions of a remarkable educator, a personal friend, and a celebrated leader in my home State of Vermont.

For decades, David Wolk has successfully distinguished himself as an educator and public servant to the people of Vermont. Now in his 11th year as president of Castleton University, formally known as Castleton State College, David likes to call Castleton "the small college with a big heart." As the longest serving president in its history, he has increased the college's involvement in the community and has expanded the university's commitment to civic engagement and service among students and faculty alike. His personal commitment to his hometown of Rutland, VT, is evidenced through his service as a former State senator and current role as a local justice of the peace.

As David has emboldened Castleton's primary mission to serve Vermonters, the institution has forged new partnerships and expanded its opportunities to reach far beyond its footprint in Rutland County. David's leadership is currently enabling the Castleton Polling Institute, which conducts surveys for Vermont politicians and media outlets, to expand to a national audience. Meanwhile, the Castleton Center for Schools continues to serve hundreds of Vermont educators by offering advanced continuing education opportunities each summer. Under his leadership, Castleton athletics has expanded from 12 sports at his inauguration to 27 varsity offerings, enabling Vermont students to play Division III sports. Most recently, David has provided the vision and guidance for Castleton to undergo its own transformation as the college seeks to grow its prestige and opportunities as newly named Castleton University.

David held a distinguished career in education even before stepping foot at Castleton. He served as chief of policy for former Vermont Governor Howard Dean and as the Vermont commissioner of education. Dedication to his native community of Rutland may also be witnessed by his impressive resume as a school principal, superintendent of the Rutland City Public Schools, a guidance counselor and teacher, and a college instructor. He has also served as a member of numerous boards, including the Vermont Business Roundtable, the Vermont Public Education Partnership, and the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation. In recognition of these achievements, he received the 2009 Eleanor M. McMahon Award for Lifetime Achievement from the New England Board of Higher Education.

If his career is not inspiration enough, David's commitment to family surely is. The proud father of four children, David led his family through the celebration of the life and legacy of his wife, Diane, when she passed away this summer, nearly a decade after being diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer's. A lifelong educator herself, Diane and David, together, gave more to their community than most. And David's compassion and commitment to Diane leaves a lasting impression on those of us who call him a friend. Marcelle and I admire him.

In recognition of David Wolk's service and resiliency, I ask unanimous consent that Terri Hallenbeck's article from the August 26, 2015, edition of *Seven Days* be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From *Seven Days*, Aug. 26, 2015]

RESILIENT DAVID WOLK CHAMPIONS CASTLETON UNIVERSITY

Between the playing fields that serve the Castleton Spartans, a marble monument tells the story of the Greek king Leonidas and how he bravely resisted an army of invaders.

David Wolk chose the 22,000-pound stone from a Rochester quarry and had it polished and engraved in Barre. As Castleton's longest-serving president and its cheerleader-in-chief, he hoped the monument's message, titled "Spartan Pride," would inspire students. He installed it six years ago, just after the college football team's inaugural season in a brand-new stadium.

Players quickly made the monument the focus of a new Castleton tradition, stopping to touch it on their way to practices and games. It offers no guarantees of victory on the field but is an apt symbol for the little college's fighting spirit to survive—and make a name for itself—in the increasingly competitive world of higher education.

For the past 14 years, Wolk has labored to transform Castleton from a tiny, isolated college into a growing university with adequate funding, marketable programs and satisfied students. Last month, it got a new name: Castleton State College became Castleton University.

"Not a lot of colleges are planning on increasing their enrollment these days," said Vermont State Colleges chancellor Jeb Spaulding, who oversees Castleton and four other state colleges. "Dave's different. His plan is, 'I'm building something that's attractive.'"

"He's the pied piper of Castleton and Rutland County."

Just as impressive is the fact that 62-year-old Wolk managed to remake Castleton while he waged another, personal battle. Beneath the engraved tale of the Spartan king, there's a hint at that story, too. In small type at the bottom of the rock, it reads, "In honor of Dr. Diane Wolk."

Wolk's life is so intertwined with his work at Castleton that he brought in this monument, at his own expense, not just to create a Castleton tradition, but as a tribute to his wife. Diane Wolk was a longtime teacher, school principal, chair of the State Board of Education and one-time director of student teaching at Castleton. She was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's disease in 2007, on her 57th birthday, four years after she first started noticing symptoms.

David Wolk watched in awe as his wife accepted her fate and even strove to demystify

the cruel disease. In 2008, she rallied 400 friends to take part in a "Walk With Wolk" Alzheimer's fundraiser, and, while the disease had already started to affect her mind, she addressed the crowd. Quoting Lou Gehrig, she said she felt like the luckiest person in the world.

"She just stood up and was very brave," Wolk recalled. "The monument is a testament to a woman who had a lot of courage." Diane Wolk died last month.

"THE CASTLETON WAY"

Tony Volpone was the football coach for opposing Endicott College when his team visited Castleton State College in 2013. Endicott defeated Castleton 43-7 that day, but the "losing" side left an indelible impression on Volpone.

He saw a stately new stadium filled with an enthusiastic crowd, a marching band, fans holding tailgate parties in the parking lot, a bouncy house for kids. And at the end of the game, the team locked arms and led the crowd in the singing of the alma mater.

"I was so impressed with what I saw," Volpone said. "It made me go, 'Wow, I could really see myself here.'" A year later, he became Castleton's head coach. Volpone credits Wolk for the scene that sold him.

For most of those home-game Saturdays, Wolk is in the crowd, beaming, with his soon-to-be-96-year-old father, Arthur. "It's a beautiful thing," he said. It's what Wolk envisioned when he became Castleton president in 2001 and set in place a 10-year plan to boost the college's profile.

Wolk was uniquely positioned when he took the job running the public college in his native Rutland County. The son of a local pediatrician, he graduated from Rutland High School and Middlebury College and went on to a career as a teacher, principal and school superintendent. Wolk also represented Rutland County for four years in the state Senate, made an unsuccessful bid for lieutenant governor in 1992 and served as chief of policy for governor Howard Dean before becoming state education commissioner.

By the time he took over at Castleton, he had experience navigating educational and political waters. Wolk also brought boundless optimism and salesmanship to the job.

Zachary Devoid of St. Albans, a senior computer information systems major and lacrosse player at Castleton, remembered meeting Wolk at the start of his freshman year. The president hosts a barbecue for new students every year at his on-campus house. Later, when Devoid's lacrosse team was holding an all-night fundraiser in memory of a student, Wolk came by with pizza.

"He eats in the dining halls. He goes to sporting events," Devoid said. "He's very personable."

"At orientation last year, he shook everybody's hand and introduced himself. It was really cool," said Cassie Papandrea, a senior English major from Orwell who was on campus last month getting ready for this year's orientation.

Spaulding said he visited Wolk at Castleton recently and went off on his own to the gym. When he returned to Wolk's house, he said, "I asked him, 'How come all these students look me in the eye and open the door for me?' He said, 'It's the Castleton way. They have to open doors for people, and they have to pick up trash.'"

In fact, there's no rule about acting responsibly, but Devoid said the campus is so close-knit that people just do.

Wolk has created a campus atmosphere that makes students want to stay, said Scott Giles, president of Vermont Student Assistance Corp., whose organization administers college loans and interacts with a wide variety of colleges. Although its student-retention

rate hasn't budged much in the last decade—it's average, at 73 percent—Castleton's six-year graduation rate has climbed by nearly 10 percent. Enrollment has grown from 1,598 in 2000 to 2,183 last year. The goal is to reach 2,500 by 2023.

Students, faculty and outsiders have noticed a difference.

"Castleton has been one of the real success stories," Giles said, likening its emergence to Champlain College's transformation from a two-year to a four-year school a decade and a half ago.

"Dave has been really, really successful in taking an institution that had a reputation as something of a suitcase college—where you can get a solid degree but you leave to do other things on the weekend," Giles said. "What he's really done is transform the campus. It's a community that meets a student's full range of needs."

DOUBLE DUTY

Not every faculty member was convinced Castleton needed football, according to Louis "Tersh" Palmer, a union rep and English professor. Some "would like to see more emphasis on academics," he said, and "throw all the rest of that stuff out."

The football program has had some problems. In 2011, its first coach was forced to resign after allegedly violating National Collegiate Athletic Association rules by arranging loans for an athlete. In 2013, six players were suspended from the team following a scheme to steal sporting goods from a store.

In both cases, Wolk publicly acknowledged the fumbles and recovered the ball. "We will stay positive and upbeat as we move forward together as a family," he said in response to the 2013 case.

He took the same approach to his wife's illness. Diane Wolk, who'd been named the state's teacher of the year in 1984, was the popular principal of Rutland's Northeast Primary School when Alzheimer's began to manifest itself. In his Woodruff Hall office, Wolk keeps a photo of her 2006 retirement; it shows his wife surrounded by smiling children—a happy spin on a somber moment.

Wolk likes to focus on the positive. He hands out cards printed in Castleton green that say, "Keep smiling." And, amazingly, it works.

He tried to follow his own advice during the nine-year ordeal that Wolk calls the "long goodbye." But he also acknowledged it's been a roller-coaster ride. Asked how he managed the double duties of handling his wife's illness and raising the college's profile—two long but very different journeys—Wolk said candidly, "I didn't."

He relied on his team at Castleton, he said, and there were times he considered quitting to become his wife's full-time nurse. But as the disease progressed, Wolk realized she needed professional care. Diane had chosen to move to Florida, where she could participate in Alzheimer's research and access different levels of specialized care. Wolk said his wife actually preferred being far away because it spared her friends and colleagues the pain of watching her decline. "She didn't want to make them sad," he said with admiration. But for Wolk, who visited many weekends, it was a long haul.

"I think it's been very difficult," said Spaulding, who served in the state Senate with Wolk in the 1980s. "But I think Castleton University is part of his family. It's part of what's enabled him to continue."

Wolk confirmed that Castleton was his salvation during that decade of decline. "I was able to dive into the college," he said. "It gave new meaning to my life."

Castleton had 12 athletic teams when Wolk arrived on campus. It now has 27, which is more than any other Vermont state college

or the University of Vermont. The school is providing Vermont students with an opportunity to play college sports in their home state. And they're tuition-paying students. Because it is Division III, Castleton doesn't offer athletic scholarships.

The school has added a lot more than sports teams. It has invested more than \$75 million in new construction and renovations to every building on campus. The college has gone from offering one master's degree to 10, with plans to add doctorates in education and nursing practice.

While some Vermont state colleges have endured layoffs, Castleton has avoided them, according to Wolk. The college does plan to cut one program next year, though: its associate's degree in nursing, a program that Vermont Technical College offers.

Wolk has also launched a variety of branded initiatives that are generating revenue: The Castleton Polling Institute, which conducts paid surveys for Vermont politicians and media outlets, is expanding and going national; the Castleton Center for Schools brought 800 Vermont teachers to campus this summer for continuing education; the Castleton Downtown Gallery showcases art—and the Castleton name—in downtown Rutland. The university also owns the Spartan Arena at Rutland's Diamond Run Mall, a public operation that gives students real-world business experience. The college bought the building to accommodate its men's and women's hockey teams, which Wolk started in 2003. When they aren't practicing or playing there, it's a rental rink and fitness center.

The income-generating programs have been developed in response to a shrinking pool of college-age students and declining state funding. Vermont routinely ranks near the bottom in state support for its public colleges. This year, Vermont State Colleges will receive \$24.4 million from the state, which is split equally among the five colleges. Castleton's allotment pays just 10 percent of its budget.

"We're getting less money from the state this year than we got in 2008 or '09," Wolk said, and he knows enough about Vermont politics to realize that is unlikely to change anytime soon.

The name change is also intended to counteract the lack of state funding. Wolk said he hopes Castleton University will attract more out-of-state students, who pay higher tuition. Currently, 74 percent of its students are in-staters. By 2023, Castleton's goal is to have a 60-40 in-state versus out-of-state split. Wolk said Castleton's main mission remains to serve Vermonters but will reflect the reality that there are fewer college-age students in the state. Castleton's other programs within the community, including the polling institute and the Spartan Arena, are examples of other ways it's contributing to the public good.

Particularly for international students who equate the word "college" with high school, the "university" designation should send a clearer message. Castleton had 25 students from other countries last year and expects 50 this year, Wolk said. The college upped its overseas admissions efforts by hiring a Chinese-American recruitment coordinator and making two trips to China last year, he said. As part of a residency, 13 Chinese scholars are due on campus this fall.

During the 15 years he's taught at Castleton, English prof Palmer has seen enrollment and programs expand and the quality of students grow. "There really has been an improvement in morale, in offerings," he said. Football, he acknowledged, helped.

WHAT'S IN A NAME CHANGE?

As Vermont's colleges struggle with dwindling resources and occasional layoffs, can

the state afford to keep all five alive—plus the University of Vermont? In a recent commentary, Hinesburg author Bill Schubart took on the issue, arguing, “Vermonters can’t adequately fund six colleges in a time of declining enrollments.” He contended that renaming Castleton was not the answer.

“I really doubt that their new name will do much to solve the enrollment and cost challenges facing all our small state colleges, to say nothing of our students,” he said.

Spaulding, who took over as chancellor last year, said he’s heard all of those arguments before, but he sees no reason to consolidate. “We actually need the colleges we have,” he said.

Spaulding argued that Castleton’s name change will be good for all of them, adding that none of the other college administrators objected.

Each of the state colleges has—and should have—its own identity, Spaulding said. Lyndon has the largest percentage of out-of-staters, a strong meteorology program and an innovative electronic journalism program. Johnson is known for external degrees for nontraditional students, social service programs and the performing arts. The bread and butter of Vermont Technical College is its two-year engineering degree. Community College of Vermont offers an affordable start for students of all ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Castleton’s specialty is being less specialized. “It’s a small university that has a robust graduate program combined with broad academic programs,” Spaulding said. “It’s the only public higher ed institution in Vermont with a football team, and it’s got a very lively campus.”

Wolk acknowledged that the name change is really about perception.

When Richard Stockton College of New Jersey became Stockton University this year, the goal was to “raise the school’s profile, helping it attract faculty, students—especially graduate and international students—and raise funds,” the Philadelphia Inquirer reported.

Massachusetts state colleges changed their names in 2010, though they retained the word “state,” so that Bridgewater State College became Bridgewater State University.

Castleton students are buying into the idea that Castleton University carries just a little bit more prestige. “It means we’re expanding, we’re growing,” said Papandrea.

“It’s going to help the college bring in more students,” Devold said. It might look a little jazzier on his résumé, too, he said.

For Wolk, the name change marks a major milestone for Castleton, which has actually had seven other appellations since 1787: It’s been Rutland County Grammar School, Vermont Classical High School, Castleton Seminary, State Normal School at Castleton, Castleton Normal School and Castleton State Teachers College. The Castleton State College designation dates to 1962.

“Modernizing our name reflects who we’ve become and who we aspire to be,” he said. “It’s a wonderful turning point for a wonderful institution.”

The idea for the name change emerged two or three years ago as Castleton administrators crafted Wolk’s second 10-year plan. Although he was a driving force behind it, the visionary president had to miss some of the meetings that made it happen, during which his staff pitched the idea to the Vermont State College committees. In the last few months, as his wife’s health worsened, he spent more time in Florida than Vermont. He was with Diane when she died there on July 4.

“Our goal was that her death be peaceful and painless,” he said. “It was that.” In the

weeks after, Wolk received hundreds of messages from his wife’s former students, colleagues and friends telling him how much Diane had meant to them.

“Kids just loved her,” said David Blow, a Castleton journalism professor who had Diane as a first-grade teacher. His mother, Lucille, who taught alongside her at Barstow Memorial School in Chittenden, told her son that Wolk’s was the most difficult condolence card she has ever had to write.

When the full Vermont State Colleges Board of Trustees gathered July 23 to make a final decision on the name change, David Wolk traveled to Montpelier for the meeting. “I just wanted to be there, because it was historic,” he said. The vote was unanimous. Word went viral as Castleton spokesman Jeff Weld announced the move on Twitter and Facebook, and the university’s website got more than 10,000 hits.

Afterward, Wolk continued on to Burlington to board a plane for Florida, where two days later family gathered for a celebration of Diane’s life. In his eulogy, Wolk spoke about his wife’s courage.

“Her life was full of teachable moments, and this was the final one,” he said.

Diane Wolk’s family members divided her ashes for each to scatter as he or she wished. The next week, Wolk returned to Castleton. That Friday afternoon, he and two of their four children went to the Spartan monument and spread her remains at the base of the rock that honors and encourages brave souls.

REMEMBERING DOUG KENDALL

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, this past weekend, I learned of the untimely passing of Doug Kendall, founder of the Constitutional Accountability Center. Doug was a true visionary who helped transform how the American public views our Constitution. Despite a recent movement to interpret our founding charter in a cramped manner that too often leaves our most vulnerable populations unprotected, Doug was able to serve as a forceful counterweight and guardian of an inclusive, progressive, and faithful understanding of our National Charter, based on both the text and history of the document.

Under his leadership, the Constitutional Accountability Center revitalized the debate over the original understanding of the Constitution. Doug refused to cede the intellectual ground of originalism and textualism to conservative advocates. Significantly, the organization he founded was defined as much by its scholarship as its effective advocacy.

Doug made myriad contributions to the world of law and policy, but I will point out just two. First, I asked him to testify in March 2010 before the Senate Judiciary Committee on the Supreme Court’s decision in *Citizens United v. FEC* because I knew that no one could better articulate the harm that the decision would cause to our democracy. As he eloquently testified before the Committee, “Since the Founding, the idea that corporations have the same fundamental rights as ‘We the People’ has been anathema to our Constitution. . . . Corporations do not vote, they cannot run for office, and they are not endowed by the Creator with inalienable rights. ‘We the

People’ create corporations and we provide them with special privileges that carry with them restrictions that do not apply to living persons. These truths are self-evident, and it’s past time for the Court to finally get this right, once and for all.” While the Court was unable to get it right in Doug’s lifetime, I believe his views will come to be vindicated in time.

Second, this past year, I introduced a joint resolution with Senator MIKE LEE of Utah, celebrating the sesquicentennial or the 150th anniversary of the 13th Amendment, which, along with the 14th and 15th Amendments, make up our Nation’s “second founding.” The second founding, which has served as the bedrock and inspiration to procuring equality for racial minorities and women, has too often been overlooked by the general public and constitutional scholars. Doug and his organization were the intellectual driving force behind advancing this important resolution. His contributions to the world of law and policy will be sorely missed.

As accomplished as he was as an advocate and scholar, Doug was an even better person. My staff met with him countless times and always came away inspired by his intellect and humanity. An article in the Washington Post from January 2008 about the historic endorsement that then-candidate and Senator Barack Obama received from Senator Ted Kennedy noted that Doug was there with his then 8-year old daughter, Miracle. Doug had pulled Miracle out of her elementary school that day so that she could experience the historic nature of the President’s candidacy and the bridge between former President Kennedy and future President Obama. He stated in the article that he wanted his daughter, Miracle, to be inspired. What she will come to know—if she does not already—is that her father’s life and his accomplishments have helped to inspire a new generation. Doug Kendall has reminded us about the ever-more inclusive story that is reflected in our Constitution. His life was cut short, but his vision—like the Constitution itself—will continue to endure and inspire. The Nation has lost a true patriot with his passing.

RECOGNIZING KING ARTHUR FLOUR

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, each year, it is with great pride that I participate in a reception here on Capitol Hill to showcase some of the best products conceived, developed, and produced in Vermont. One such company featured at the annual Taste of Vermont event is King Arthur Flour, where, for 225 years, generation after generation has produced quality cooking and baking ingredients.

A firm that was born in Boston more than two centuries ago, in 1984 then-owners Frank and Brinna Sands moved King Arthur Flour to Norwich,

Vermont, and the company has become a staple in Vermont's business community. In the 1990s, the Sands made the decision to sell their company to their employees. The returns have been considerable, and the company has seen growth ever since.

In ways that are typical of Vermont businesses, King Arthur Flour has evolved into a quality company offering quality products to its customers. The company's business model reflects one that is committed to its customers, its employees, the environment, and its community, even offering employees 40 hours of paid volunteer time to give back. Those commitments are backed up in its status as a certified B Corporation, a designation that independently recognizes the company's social sustainability and environmental performance standards.

From breads to cakes, cookies to pies, King Arthur Flour's products have become staples in bakers' kitchens across the country, including in the Leahy kitchen, where Marcelle regularly shares her recipes with our grandchildren. In fact, many of our visits to the Upper Valley include a detour to King Arthur's terrific cafe where all of their superb products are available. It is yet another example of a tried and true Vermont-based company, revolutionizing and enticing the market with its quality products.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD an August 28, 2015, article from the Burlington Free Press recognizing King Arthur Flour's "225 years of baking history."

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

[From the Burlington Free Press, Aug. 28, 2015]

KING ARTHUR FLOUR: 225 YEARS OF BAKING HISTORY

(By Susan Reid)

Some 225 years ago George Washington delivered the first State of the Union address in January. In February, the U.S. Supreme Court met for the first time. Vermont itself wasn't yet a state. According to King George, it belonged to New York, despite also being known as the New Hampshire Grants.

In this world, miles away in Boston, a man named Henry Wood started a company that imported flour from England. The brand new United States of America numbered fewer than four million souls. Wood correctly assumed this growing country was going to need flour for baking, and his commitment to pure, high-quality flour fueled a successful business.

ENTER JOHN LOW SANDS

One of the early employees was John Low Sands, who joined the firm in 1820. It was the beginning of generations of Sands family association with, and eventual ownership of, the company. Also a clue to how the company came to be based in Vermont, as you'll soon see. By 1853, the company was doing well enough to buy a large building on the Long Wharf in Boston. There, in the middle of one of the world's busiest ports, the business continued to grow, taking on partners as it expanded. In less than 10 years the city of Boston had filled in the harbor around the wharf, and the company became landlocked

without ever having moved. It stayed in the same spot, with the revised address of 172 State St. until 1904, when the company moved up the street to the Custom House.

By 1895, the company was named Sands, Taylor, & Wood. The third generation of the Sands family to be part of the company, Orrin Sands, was its president. During this decade, roller milling was developed in Hungary. As a result, it was now possible to grind large quantities of wheat into flour very quickly. This led to a boom in flour production, as well as wild fluctuations in the quality of flour being produced.

At the same time, George Wood and his business partners attended a musical play based on the story of King Arthur and his knights. They left the theater inspired by the realization that the values portrayed in the play exemplified what their company stood for: quality, integrity, purity, loyalty, strength, and dedication to a higher purpose. They resolved to rename their new flagship product, their all-purpose flour, after King Arthur. It was introduced at the Boston Food Fair in September 1896, and became an immediate success. The distinctive image of the medieval knight on his horse adorned the tops of 196 pound barrels of flour for the next four decades, until he started being printed on newfangled paper bags.

In the 1920s King Arthur on his steed appeared on the back of a flatbed calliope truck that roamed the streets of Boston and New York. In later decades the company gave scholarships to promising young professional bakers, inserted collectible picture cards of American military ships, airplanes, and weapons in its flour bags during World War II, and after the war sponsored radio shows where "New England's Food Expert" Marjorie Mills endorsed King Arthur Flour on the air.

THE MOVE TO VERMONT

The Sands family became the sole owners of the company in 1932, and in 1984, Frank (a Dartmouth alum) and his wife Brinna Sands moved the company to Vermont. Tired of lugging bags of flour to the post office to mail to retirees in Florida who couldn't buy King Arthur outside of New England, Brinna started The Baker's Catalogue in 1990.

She also published the "200th Anniversary Cookbook," which has sold well over 100,000 copies to date.

In a pivotal move, Frank and Brinna decided to sell the company to their employees, launching King Arthurs Employee Stock Ownership plan. The company has seen steady growth since then.

By 1999, the company officially changed its name to King Arthur Flour, and the Baker's Catalogue was mailing six million catalogues per year. Distribution of the flour to grocery stores up and down the East Coast was well established, and expanding steadily westward. In 2000, Vermont Gov. Howard Dean was on hand to break an oversized baguette in two to celebrate the opening of the bakery and school in Norwich. In 2004 the company became 100 percent employee-owned.

With all of these changes, the principles that the company began with survived and thrived. In 2007, King Arthur Flour was a founding and certified B Corp. Its bylaws reflect a commitment to all stakeholders, including the community and the environment, as well as shareholders and business partners.

Now a national brand known for its quality, customer service, and expertise in all things baking, King Arthur has grown both the brand and its service programs. Bake for Good: Kids teaches 8- to 12-year olds how to bake bread in a curriculum-based program that provides a community service compo-

nent of giving a loaf back to someone in need. King Arthur has long had a policy of giving 40 paid hours of volunteer time to all employees, full- and part-time.

King Arthur's mission and personality is to be a resource for all bakers. It maintains a robust social media presence on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and on its blog, Flourish. The website has thousands of tested recipes, and there's a crew of baking experts on the Baker's Hotline ready to answer any baking question, either by phone or via online chat.

King Arthur is poised to further the quest for honest, homemade, local food, by providing everything one needs to bake. Lucky for the company, and Vermont, that appetite is timeless, and a good apple pie is never going to go out of style.

WHAT'S BAKING IN NORWICH

Baking classes: You can always come and take a class at the Baking Education Center in Norwich (no dishwashing required!). The calendar of classes for home bakers, kids, and professionals can be found at kingarthurfLOUR.com/school.

Cafe and bakery: The cafe and bakery are open daily 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. In September, the store's demonstration kitchen will be showing all comers how to make their best pie crust and baking with apples and cinnamon, chocolate and pumpkin.

Baker's Conference. From Sept. 9 to Sept. 12, King Arthur will sponsor its Third Annual Baker's Conference, Tasting Supper, and Harvest Festival at the King Arthur Baker's Store and School in Norwich.

The two-day conference features demonstrations, hands-on classes, and breakout sessions with a roster of well-known bakers, authors, recipe developers, photographers and editors.

The conference wraps up Friday evening, Sept. 11, with a Tasting Supper to benefit Hunger Free Vermont, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Local food and beverage establishments will offer samples, featuring fresh local foods and drink.

The festival happens from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 12, with hands-on activities for kids, live baking competitions, entertainment, and great food.

For more festival information, go to kingarthurfLOUR.com/bakers-harvest.

ABOUT KING ARTHUR FLOUR

Celebrating its 225th Anniversary, King Arthur Flour is America's oldest flour company and premier baking resource, offering ingredients, mixes, tools, recipes, educational opportunities and inspiration to bakers everywhere since 1790. The company's flour is available in supermarkets nationwide. Additionally, more than 1,000 tested and trusted baking tools and ingredients are available through King Arthur Flour's Baker's Catalogue, online at kingarthurfLOUR.com and at The Baker's Store in Norwich.

2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I rise to address an important event that occurred this week at the United Nations, which is marking the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly, UNGA.

Over the weekend, over 150 world leaders gathered at UNGA to adopt the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is built on the progress achieved by Millennium Development Goals, MDGs, which were

launched in 2000. The Millennium Development Goals brought together nations, businesses, international organizations, and foundations in a focused and coordinated effort to reduce poverty and disease by 2015.

By any and every metric, the initial set of MDGs has resulted in tangible, concrete progress. One goal was to cut extreme poverty by half as measured by the proportion of people living on less than \$1.25 a day. That goal was met 5 years ahead of schedule. Meanwhile, maternal mortality was cut nearly in half. We've also made progress in global education, with a 20 percent increase in primary school enrollment in sub-Saharan Africa and a nearly 50 percent decrease in the number of out-of-school children of primary school age. When it comes to combating HIV/AIDS, we've made truly incredible strides over the past 15 years. New HIV infections have dropped by 40 percent between 2000 and 2013, and the number of people living with HIV that were receiving antiretroviral therapy increased seventeenfold from 2003 to 2014.

In some areas, like gender equality, we still have a long way to go. But we can cheer the fact that, in 90 percent of countries today, women have greater parliamentary representation than they did just 20 years ago.

So there is no doubt that we've seen real growth around the world. Millions of lives have been saved and enriched. But we still have more progress to make.

The old Millennium Development Goals have laid the groundwork for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was adopted by the U.N. over the weekend. The new agenda sets out an ambitious global development framework that includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

These new goals were negotiated with strong engagement by the U.S. government, business leaders, and civil society members over the last 3 years. American and international corporations worked closely with the U.N. because many businesses leaders correctly believe that, to end extreme poverty and open new markets, we must increase government transparency, root out corruption, and accelerate inclusive economic growth.

Many of these new goals focus on the areas where we hope to see additional progress, such as maternal and child health, environmental sustainability, and gender equality. But they also focus on good governance and corruption.

I am particularly pleased at the addition of goal No. 16, which is to "promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels." Including that goal wasn't easy—it was met by resistance from many other countries—but no one can ignore the fact any longer that good governance and anticorruption efforts are critical to development.

Truly sustainable and inclusive development depends on governments and institutions that are accountable and transparent and that respect human rights and deliver justice for everybody, not just some. The U.N. has noted that "lessons learned from MDG implementation showed the importance of incorporating human rights, the rule of law and personal security to ensure progress towards development goals. Effective and inclusive governance and robust institutional capacity are instrumental in achieving this."

The necessity of incorporating good governance and strong anticorruption measures in sustainable development efforts is most evident when we look at resource rich countries in Africa and the extraordinary development challenges there. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, DRC, for example, is a country rich in minerals, water resources, and agricultural potential. And it has experienced high annual economic growth in recent years. Yet most of its people continue to live in extreme poverty. DRC's progress on sustainable development is hindered by minimal central government control over large parts of the national territory, poor transportation and electricity infrastructure, the government's inability to manage and monitor extraction of its natural resources, and broad governance problems including endemic corruption and barely functional state institutions.

Without progress on justice and effective and accountable institutions, corruption will continue to infect governments around the world, like the DRC, creating greater economic and political instability, which often leads to violent conflict.

The DRC is just one example of why we need goal 16. The desperate refugees streaming into Europe provide another sad example. Most of these people are coming from places where ordinary people have experienced long-term repression and other human rights abuses at the hands of deeply corrupt governments. Consequently, many of these countries are now consumed by violent conflict. Most of the people crossing the Mediterranean in rafts are fleeing wars in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Somalia.

The Syrians are the largest group. They are fleeing a deadly combination of their own government's indiscriminate barrel bomb attacks on crowded markets, schools, and clinics; suffocating sieges; and atrocities committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, ISIS and other extremist groups. We know that only a minority of migrants arriving in Europe are motivated solely by economic betterment.

As the world focuses on the wave of refugees and migrants arriving in Europe, we must not lose our focus on the roots of this crisis. We must pay attention to why these desperate men, women, and children are on the move. The misery of many of these refugees is the direct result of the conflicts and

human rights abuses of governments that are ineffective or illegitimate, or both, and mostly likely corrupt.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals is remarkable for the historic inclusion of goal 16. It acknowledges the centrality of good governance and accountable and transparent institutions as prerequisites for sustainable development. If nations across the globe truly embrace goal 16, I am convinced we will also witness far fewer men, women, and children being forced to endure extraordinary misery, violence, displacement, and exploitation as refugees. Surely, that must be our collective goal.

RENAMING OF THE U.S. NAVAL ACADEMY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING FOR ADMIRAL CHARLES R. LARSON

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, this Friday, October 2, 2015, the U.S. Naval Academy will honor ADM Charles R. Larson, class of 1958, by naming the administration building in his honor. Coming just a week before the Naval Academy celebrates its 170th anniversary, this is fitting tribute to man who has made such immeasurable contributions to this fine institution.

Chuck Larson grew up thousands of miles from the nearest ocean. However, the calling of the sea brought him to Annapolis and the start of a career dedicated to the service of this great Nation. It was at the Academy where I had the distinct pleasure of getting to know this great man. Chuck's Academy experience was somewhat different than mine, where he would go on to become the brigade commander, president of the class of 1958, and graduate near the top of the class. I finished some distance behind that mark. Even though our paths were different, I cherished our friendship forged in those shared Academy experiences, a friendship that would last a lifetime.

After graduation in the summer of 1958, Chuck would continue his exemplary career, eventually attaining the rank of admiral. He has led at every level from command at sea to theater command, as commander of the 2nd Fleet, a Deputy Chief of Naval Operations, commander of the Pacific Fleet, and finally as the commander of United States Pacific Command. Impressive as this resume was, the two jobs Chuck cherished most were his two tours as the Superintendent of the Naval Academy.

As the only two-time Superintendent of the Academy in its 170-year history, Chuck left an indelible mark on the institution he so loved. Returning from retirement in 1994 to lead the Academy after serious problems left the institution with an uncertain future, Chuck focused on character development and fundamental leadership training to return to the founding principles of the Academy. In 4 years, he returned the institution to greatness and, in the process, trained the officers that would

become the leaders in the fight against terrorism that would define a generation.

As a result of Chuck's tireless efforts and the lasting initiatives he put in place, today the Naval Academy consistently ranks among the top schools in the Nation. His legacy of service to the Academy and the Nation will be felt in the decades to come as graduates from the institution become leaders in the military, government, and corporate venues. I can think of no better way to honor the legacy of Chuck's service than with the rededication of the administration building as Larson Hall. It will stand as an ever present reminder to the dedication and the ideals of great naval officer, leader, and dear friend.

NATIONAL MANUFACTURING DAY

Mr. REED. Mr. President, today I join with my colleagues, led by Senators COONS and BALDWIN, to recognize the significant role manufacturing plays in the United States and in my home State of Rhode Island. According to facts compiled by the National Association of Manufacturers, over 41,000 Rhode Islanders, nearly 9 percent of the workforce, work in manufacturing. Those workers were responsible for \$4.1 billion in economic output, just under 8 percent of the State's total output, in 2013. On average these workers brought in over \$67,000 in annual compensation.

Manufacturing is a highly technical and innovative industry that creates good-paying jobs for skilled workers. It is also an industry that is expanding; in Rhode Island manufacturing jobs have increased by 1,100 compared to a year ago. And just last week I joined a Rhode Island advanced manufacturer, Yushin America, Inc., to celebrate a ribbon cutting for its \$2 million expansion.

This sort of expansion is representative of the type of highly technical growth we see in manufacturing. Moreover, these good-paying, highly-skilled, middle-class jobs are what will help further support widespread economic growth. That is why I look forward to celebrating National Manufacturing Day with the mayor of Providence and my delegation colleagues on Monday and continuing to work to advance measures that support manufacturers and job creation back home.

TRIBUTE TO JEFFREY F. PANIATI

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I wish to pay tribute to an outstanding civil servant and constituent, Jeffrey F. Paniati, executive director of the Federal Highway Administration, FHWA, who is retiring after 32 years of Federal service.

Jeff Paniati received his master of science degree in civil engineering from the University of Maryland. He joined FHWA in 1983 as a highway engineer trainee and rose through the ranks to join the Senior Executive

Service in 2000 and eventually became executive director in April 2008. The executive director, the number three official in FHWA, is the only civil service position in the agency that requires the approval of the President. As executive director, Jeff assists the Federal Highway Administrator and Deputy Administrator in establishing policies, programs, and priorities for the \$40 billion annual Federal aid highway program. As FHWA's chief operating officer, he oversees a workforce of approximately 2,900 transportation professionals and an annual operating budget of \$400 million.

One of the biggest challenges Jeff faced came just months after he became executive director. The economic collapse in the fall of 2008 brought the country into the worst recession since the Great Depression of the 1930s. On February 17, 2009, President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, ARRA, into law. ARRA, also known as the stimulus act, authorized \$26.6 billion for road and bridge projects that would create construction jobs to help the economy recover while providing transportation facilities to make our communities safer, greener, more livable, less congested, and economically stronger. This funding was in addition to the regular \$40 billion a year Federal aid highway program.

At the time, Jeff was the highest ranking FHWA official because the President had not yet nominated a new Federal Highway Administrator or Deputy Administrator. It fell to Jeff, serving as acting Deputy Administrator, to ensure the agency was able to absorb the additional funds, deploy them to State and local officials for shovel-ready projects, ensure proper oversight of record numbers of projects, and help deliver the jobs the country so desperately needed. The result was more than 13,000 highway and bridge projects across the country that put tens of thousands of people to work, in addition to the thousands of projects and jobs resulting from regular program funds. All of this was accomplished within ARRA's deadlines, without any increase in staff by FHWA but with the full cooperation of State and local transportation officials under the familiar Federal-State partnership of the Federal aid highway program.

President Obama remarked that there has never been a program of this scale, moving at this speed, enacted as effectively, and meeting such high standards of transparency and accountability. The stimulus provided by implementation of the Recovery Act paved the foundation for the economic growth that has continued to this day. Many people deserve credit for this outstanding accomplishment, including FHWA employees around the country, especially Jeff Paniati.

Throughout Jeff's earlier career in FHWA, he accumulated a diverse range of experience in helping to make America's transportation systems work safe-

ly and efficiently. He served as chief of the safety design division, a research office helping to advance the state of the art in highway safety. As program manager for Intelligent Transportation Systems, ITS, he led the more than \$100 million annual Federal ITS program. He directed day-to-day operations of the ITS Joint Program Office, which focuses on bringing advanced communication and information system technologies to the management and operation of our Nation's surface transportation system. At the time of his appointment as executive director, he was FHWA's associate administrator for operations; in this capacity, he provided national leadership in system management and operations, ITS deployment, and freight management. Throughout Jeff's career, he has worked closely with the Transportation Research Board, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, and ITS America—to name just a few of FHWA's many partners and stakeholders.

Jeff's extensive experience throughout the agency gave him the background to move FHWA forward. He oversaw the successful implementation of the many program changes required under the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act, MAP-21, in 2012. Perhaps the most significant change was that MAP-21 shifted FHWA to risk-based stewardship and oversight that redefined FHWA's role in working with its State and local partners. It also gave FHWA the leadership role in transitioning with its partners to a transportation performance management focus that emphasizes a strategic approach by using data to make investment and policy decisions to achieve national performance goals. These dramatic changes in operation of the Federal aid highway program required extensive outreach, which Jeff coordinated, to explain the shifts to FHWA's partners and gain their support for them.

Jeff played a leadership role in advancing U.S. interests and bolstering international cooperation under the auspices of the World Road Association, where he served as U.S. first delegate and chair of the strategic planning commission. He led an international team in overseeing the work of the association's 15 technical committees and the development of its next strategic plan. He also facilitated efforts to advance special reports on the importance of road maintenance and helped produce a climate change adaptation framework. Jeff's involvement in the association enabled the U.S. to further enhance our international leadership and expertise in the design, delivery, and operation of highway and road networks.

Closer to home, Jeff never forgot the importance of giving all FHWA employees the opportunity to advance in their careers. He listened to employee feedback, administered a strategic

workforce assessment, established a formal mentoring program, developed the leadership for innovation decision-making program and expanded the Leadership Development Academy, and instilled in leadership ranks throughout the FHWA the value of expanding opportunity. Initiatives of this type are valuable to employees and their families, but are also critical to ensuring the FHWA can meet the challenges of the future by helping the agency to recruit and retain the best public servants our Nation has to offer. Through these and other initiatives, Jeff helped make FHWA successful not only in accomplishing its vitally important mission, but in making the agency a better place to work. Among agencies of its size, FHWA has ranked in the top 10 best places to work in the Federal Government among agency subcomponents for the past 3 years. Under Jeff's leadership, FHWA moved from No. 33 in 2009 to No. 5 in 2013, an impressive achievement in a short period of time.

Jeff will be retiring this month after 32 years of Federal service to become president and chief executive officer of the Institute of Transportation Engineers. After his long career and especially his 7½ years as executive director, Jeff leaves FHWA a better place, which is good for America. I am proud to represent Jeff and so many other Federal workers. I believe our Federal workforce is the best in the world. We are fortunate to have dedicated, talented, creative, hard-working, and patriotic public servants like Jeff. I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking Jeff for serving the American public with such distinction and devotion and wishing him much success as he leaves Federal service. We also need to thank his wife, Kim, and his children Chris and Lauren for supporting him in his public career.

TRIBUTE TO SYLVIA OLIVER

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, there are many people who work behind the scenes to help the Senate function. We tend to take them for granted, but we shouldn't. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge one such Senate staffer, Sylvia Oliver, who is leaving at the end of this week. I won't say that Sylvia is retiring because there is a chance we can coax her into returning at some point. But she is leaving her job as coordinator of the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD in the Office of the Official Reporters of Debates because she wants to spend more time at home with her daughter, Lily, who is a senior in high school. That is a completely understandable and laudable desire.

Few people appreciate that even though the Office of the Official Reporters of Debates has embraced the latest information technology, producing the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD remains a painstaking, labor-intensive process. Even fewer people appreciate that the officials and employees like

Sylvia who are responsible for its production typically have to work for several hours each night after the Senate has adjourned making sure the RECORD is accurate and complete before sending it to the Government Publishing Office. We take for granted that a printed copy of the RECORD, one of the most important documents in our Nation, will be delivered to our offices the next morning. There are many people who work late into the night without fanfare or accolades to make this possible. They are an invaluable part of what I call the Senate family.

Sylvia is a Vermont native and graduated from the University of Vermont. She still visits her mother, Betty Reid, in Barre as often as possible and is close to her siblings, John Reid, Betsy Reid, David Reid, and Sarah Schroeder. She started her congressional service on the House side in 1988 working for then-Representative Jim Jeffords of Vermont. She came with him to the Senate in 1989. She returned to the House for a few years, working as an executive assistant to the House Sergeant at Arms. Then, she came back to the Senate in 1993, where she worked as a scheduler and executive assistant for Senator Byron Dorgan of North Dakota and the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs before assuming her current job with the Office of the Official Reporters of Debates. She is unfailingly professional and polite. We will all miss her, but I know her colleagues in the Office of the Official Reporters of Debates will miss her the most because she is such a kind and gentle and pleasant person.

I am proud to have Sylvia as a constituent. She lives near Annapolis; and, true to the rural roots of her Vermont upbringing, she has made her home atop a converted barn. Even though she works long hours in the Senate, she has usually done more each morning before she arrives here than most people accomplish in a week. She maintains a small farm and looks after three horses whose names are Conge, Chance, and Love It. She starts most mornings by mowing acres of pasture, hauling dozens of bales of hay, and feeding the chickens. She also has a small pumpkin patch. But that is not enough for Sylvia—she has a number of bee hives to look after, too.

Lily Oliver, who has graciously shared her mother with us, has said, "My mom is the most beautiful person I know. She makes the world a better place by always treating those around her with compassion and patience. I am so fortunate to have such a strong, genuine, resourceful, mother to emulate throughout life." Well, we have been so fortunate to have Sylvia in the Senate family for the past 20-plus years. The American people are so fortunate to have talented and dedicated public servants like Sylvia. I truly believe our Federal workforce is the best in the world.

I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking Sylvia Oliver for her exem-

plary service and wishing her well as she begins the next chapter in her life with the most important family of all, her own.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

ROBIN TRIPOD PATTEN

• Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I wish to honor Robin Tripod Patten as a 2015 Angel in Adoption award recipient for her outstanding advocacy of adoption issues. Robin serves as Director of Social Services at Arkansas Methodist Medial Center, AMMC, in Paragould, AR. One of her many responsibilities in this position includes coordinating adoptions.

Being a bereaved parent herself, Robin offers a unique perspective to the adoption process because she understands the pain of giving birth and leaving the hospital without a baby. She provides emotional support to both the birth mother and the adoptive parents and assists new and prospective parents in navigating complicated legal matters when contemplating adoption.

Robin is a Licensed Master Social Worker, LMSW, and dedicates her life to children. She is a mandated child abuse reporter who directs care of infants whose birth mothers had illegal substances in her system during pregnancy. For 11 years, she has served on the Greene County multidisciplinary child abuse task force working to ensure no child is overlooked or forgotten.

I am proud of Robin for her dedication to adoption services and for investing in the lives of families in northeast Arkansas and am glad to recognize Robin as an Angel in Adoption for her efforts to connect children to permanent families. I commend her for her service and ask my colleagues to join me in honoring her and the many other advocates who continue to selflessly work to ensure that all children grow up in safe, healthy, and loving homes.●

OBSERVING THE 250TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE REPUDIATION OF THE BRITISH STAMP ACT

• Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I wish to honor the actions of "12 immortal justices" of the Frederick County Court in Maryland who refused to discharge the British Stamp Act on November 23, 1765. This first official act of defiance against the British Government's "taxation without representation" in the Thirteen Original Colonies—8 years before the Boston Tea Party—helped set the stage for the American Revolution that would lead to a free and independent United States of America.

The Stamp Act the British Parliament passed in early 1765 exacted revenue from the Colonies by imposing a stamp duty on newspapers and legal and commercial documents. Colonists

in Maryland quickly realized that the Stamp Act and other new taxes would severely impede trade in the Colonies and hinder their economic growth. Jonas Green, the publisher of the Maryland Gazette at the time, used his platform as the only news outlet in the colony to stir opposition to the actions of the British Parliament among Marylanders. As protests turned to revolts, plans to distribute stamped paper were delayed, which made stamped paper in Frederick County and Western Maryland unavailable. When the county's clerk of the court refused to carry out the business of the court without stamped paper, Frederick County's 12 justices responded by holding him in contempt and unanimously passing the resolution that would come to be known as the Repudiation Act, allowing business to continue without the use of stamped paper and effectively nullifying the act of Parliament. The text of the Repudiation Act stated: "that all proceedings shall be valid without the use of stamps . . . and ordering all sheriffs, clerks, counsellors, and officers of the Court to proceed with their several avocations as usual, without delay occasioned from the want of stamped paper, parchment or vellum." The justices took this action at great peril to their livelihood and even their lives.

Since 1894, Repudiation Day has been marked by the Maryland General Assembly as an official bank half-holiday in Frederick County and by the Frederick Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution with celebratory events. This year, which marks the 250th anniversary of this courageous act of defiance by 12 Maryland justices, will be particularly special with a parade, dedication of an interpretive plaque, educational presentations, and public display of the original court act. In addition, Frederick's Brewer's Alley has collaborated with the Sergeant Lawrence Everhart Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution on the release of the 250th Anniversary Commemorative "Twelve Immortals Ale" inspired by the beers of the 18th Century.

I commend the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Sons of the American Revolution, Brewer's Alley, the Tourism Council of Frederick County, the city of Frederick, and everyone else involved in the effort to honor the brave actions of these 12 Marylanders and encourage every American to commemorate the 250th anniversary of an event that sparked the first flames of liberty in the American Colonies.●

TRIBUTE TO SALLY ASCHIM

● Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, I rise today in recognition of Sally Aschim, who is retiring after 38 years of dedicated teaching.

Not only has Sally aided in the achievements and successes of Montana's youth, but she also has spear-

headed multiple community outreach projects aimed at helping those in her community. She took her passion for helping Montana's youth outside of the classroom as well and helped design and build a playground in Sunburst, Montana.

In Montana, we know how important it is to give back to our communities and help one another, and Sally is a perfect example of this. Sally started the Christmas Stroll in Sunburst over a decade ago, which has enhanced the holiday for hundreds of community members.

Sally has a selfless heart and does everything with a giving spirit. The State of Montana is sad to see her teaching career come to an end, but her incredible legacy will continue to live on.●

CARNEGIE HALL

● Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, with great pleasure and pride, I wish to recognize the 125th anniversary of Carnegie Hall in New York City. At the ceremonial laying of the cornerstone of Carnegie Hall in 1890, Andrew Carnegie declared: "It is built to stand for ages, and during these ages it is probable that this Hall will intertwine itself with the history of our country."

The Hall has intertwined itself with the history of the United States but also with the history of the world. Today Carnegie Hall is the world's most recognized performing arts center and is a global symbol of artistic excellence. For 125 years the Hall has defined and shaped the future of music, and it continues in that leadership role today.

The Hall has hosted world leaders, American presidents, authors, activists and intellectuals. The Hall's greatest influence, however, is through sound. Carnegie Hall's three performance centers project all forms of music to listeners around the world. Musicians from all corners of the globe strive to perform at Carnegie Hall. The Hall is a beacon inspiring and attracting the world's finest musicians in all genres.

Less known but equally important, Carnegie Hall's Weill Music Institute produces an extraordinary range of music education and community programs that extend far outside the physical walls of its concert halls. Its music education in New York City schools serves as a laboratory of best practices for performing arts centers in major urban areas. Carnegie Hall provides and supports a partnership curriculum for 81 orchestras throughout the United States and abroad to work with local school students in urban, suburban, and rural settings. Its highly acclaimed National Youth Orchestra of the United States—recently returned from a tour of China—helps build the next generation of musicians into lifelong community leaders and contributors. In the 2015–2016 season these programs will reach millions people in New York City, across the United States, and around the globe.

In the spirit of Andrew Carnegie and of bold endeavors to tackle contemporary challenges, Carnegie Hall has recently initiated work to eliminate the music education "access gap" in schools throughout our nation. Carnegie Hall's leadership, from volunteers, trustees, to staff at all levels, are committed to quality and to equity of opportunity regardless of circumstance.

Carnegie Hall's 125th opening night will occur on October 7th. I rise to commend the Hall's leadership, volunteers, contributors, performing artists, and staff. Carnegie Hall is a global icon symbolizing artistic excellence, achievement, and the power of music to feed our souls and bring people together. Congratulations, Carnegie Hall.●

CONGRATULATING ALICIA REBAN

● Mr. HELLER. Mr. President, today, I wish to congratulate Alicia Reban on receiving the Ambassador of the Year award from the Land Trust Alliance. It gives me great pleasure to see her receive this national award recognizing her years of hard work within the Nevada community.

Throughout her 17 years working at the Nevada Land Trust Alliance, Ms. Reban has been a shining example of someone who dedicated her career to the betterment of her community and Nevada's open spaces. In 2000, she led a successful campaign on a ballot initiative focused on improving Washoe County's parks, libraries, and trails. Additionally, in 2002, she served on the campaign executive committee for Nevada's State Question 1 for clean water, parks, and wildlife, the largest conservation bond measure in Nevada history.

Throughout her tenure, Ms. Reban has demonstrated professionalism, an unwavering commitment to conservation, and dedication to the highest standards of the Nevada Land Trust Alliance. I have been fortunate during my time in Congress to work with Ms. Reban on federal legislation, the Conservation Easement Incentive Act, S. 330, which makes the Federal enhanced conservation easement income tax deduction permanent. This important policy would provide Westerners with important tools to preserve our proud tradition of ranching, fishing, hunting, and other outdoor recreational activities. She has been a tireless advocate and an invaluable ally on this effort.

Alicia's advocacy on behalf of Nevada's vast natural resources and wildlife is unmatched, and I am thankful for all of the work that she has done for our great State. Today, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Nevada Land Trust Co-Executive Director Alicia Reban on receiving this award. I look forward to continuing to work with her on conservation issues important to our State.●

CONGRATULATING STEVE TETREAULT

• Mr. HELLER. Mr. President, today, I wish to congratulate Steve Tetreault on his incredible career, bringing Nevada in-depth political news coverage from our Nation's Capital. It gives me great pleasure to recognize Steve for his unwavering dedication to the people of Nevada and for showcasing journalistic integrity and excellence throughout his tenure. Though he will be greatly missed by Nevada journalism and the Las Vegas Review-Journal, his future with the United States Department of Energy will be of great service to our country.

Throughout my time serving Nevada in the United States Congress, Steve has been there to convey accurate and truthful news stories to the people of Nevada. From covering my very first experiences in the United States House of Representatives to writing about the most recent events in the United States Senate, Steve was there to capture both sides of the argument, bringing fair coverage from the entire Nevada delegation. Our relationship operated with a great amount of respect and understanding, and I am grateful for his professionalism. However, his jealousy of my impeccable beard-growing skills prompted him to also grow one of his own.

Steve's insatiable appetite to cover important news stories and bring Nevadans pertinent political information made him an incredible journalist. He was always one step ahead, ready to share breaking political news, and had a genuine interest in painting the most accurate story for his readers. He will always be remembered for his top tier work at the Las Vegas Review-Journal.

The insight and knowledge he gained throughout his career could never be replicated. He truly left his footprint in Nevada journalism, specifically at the Las Vegas Review-Journal, where he served as the Washington bureau chief. His writing has given the Silver State a detailed archive of Nevada's delegation throughout his years in Washington, a truly unique piece of our State's history.

Steve has demonstrated absolute dedication to excellent reporting, bringing pertinent political news stories outside of the walls of the United States Capitol to audiences across Nevada. I am both humbled and honored by his hard work and am proud to call him a friend. Today, I ask all of my colleagues to join me in congratulating Steve Tetreault on his long and meaningful career at the Las Vegas Review-Journal. I give my deepest appreciation for all that he has done and offer him my best wishes for many successful and fulfilling years to come with the United States Department of Energy.●

TRIBUTE TO CAPTAIN LAWSON ALMAND

• Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I wish to honor CAPT Lawson Almand, JAGC,

USN, Retired, a son of North Carolina who is retiring after 39 years of Active Duty and civilian service to our Nation with the U.S. Navy.

CAPT Almand is a native of Cary, NC. He received his B.A. in linguistics from the University of California, San Diego, a J.D. from the University of Puget Sound, and an LL.M. in international and comparative law from the National Law Center, The George Washington University.

In 1976, CAPT Almand began his dedicated service to our Nation as a commissioned officer in the Navy Judge Advocate General's Corps. During the next 32 years, Captain Almand served on Active Duty in a wide variety of roles, traveling throughout the United States and overseas. His assignments included Naval Air Station, Agana, Guam; Naval Support Office, La Maddalena, Sardinia, Italy; Naval Legal Service Office, Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines; commander, Submarine Group 10, Kings Bay, GA; commander, Patrol Wings, U.S. Pacific Fleet; executive officer and commanding officer, Naval Legal Service Office Southwest, San Diego, CA; commanding officer, Naval Legal Service Office Northeast, Groton, CT; director, Defense Institute of International Legal Studies, Newport, RI; professor and associate dean, College of International and Security Studies, George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, Garmisch, Germany; force judge advocate, Naval Surface Forces, U.S. Pacific Fleet, San Diego; and Deputy Assistant Judge Advocate General, General Litigation Division.

Following his retirement from Active Duty in July 2007, CAPT Almand continued his superlative service to the Navy as a civilian, serving for another 7 years as Deputy Director of the Administrative Law Division in the Office of the Judge Advocate General in the Pentagon.

For his outstanding service to our Nation, CAPT Almand earned numerous awards, including the Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal, Navy Commendation Medal, Navy Achievement Medal, and the Superior Civilian Service Award.

I commend CAPT Almand for his commitment to our country and the sacrifices he made on its behalf. On the occasion of his retirement from the Federal service, I thank him and his family for his honorable service to our Nation and wish him fair winds and following seas as he concludes a distinguished career.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

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

PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGES

REPORT RELATIVE TO THE DESIGNATION OF FUNDING FOR OVERSEAS CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS/GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM, RECEIVED DURING ADJOURNMENT OF THE SENATE ON SEPTEMBER 30, 2015—PM 26

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the President of the United States, together with an accompanying report; which was referred to the Committee on the Budget:

To the Congress of the United States:

In accordance with section 114(c) of the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2016, also titled the TSA Office of Inspection Accountability Act of 2015 (the "Act"), I hereby designate for Overseas Contingency Operations/Global War on Terrorism all funding (including the rescission of funds) and contributions from foreign governments so designated by the Congress in the Act pursuant to section 251(b)(2)(A) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, as amended, as outlined in the enclosed list of accounts.

The details of this action are set forth in the enclosed memorandum from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

BARACK OBAMA.
THE WHITE HOUSE, September 30, 2015.

NOTIFICATION OF THE PRESIDENT'S DESIGNATION OF AN EMERGENCY REQUIREMENT IN EMERGENCY FUNDING FOR URGENT WILDLAND FIRE SUPPRESSION ACTIVITIES, RECEIVED DURING ADJOURNMENT OF THE SENATE ON SEPTEMBER 30, 2015—PM 27

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the President of the United States, together with an accompanying report; which was referred to the Committee on the Budget:

To the Congress of the United States:

In accordance with section 135 of the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2016, also titled the TSA Office of Inspection Accountability Act of 2015 (the "Act"), I hereby designate as an emergency requirement all funding so designated by the Congress in the Act pursuant to section 251(b)(2)(A) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, as amended, for the following account: "Department of Agriculture—Forest Service—Wildland Fire Management."

The details of this action are set forth in the enclosed memorandum from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

BARACK OBAMA.
THE WHITE HOUSE, September 30, 2015.

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 2:25 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has agreed to the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 2617) to amend the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2007 to postpone a scheduled increase in the minimum wage applicable to American Samoa, and that the House has agreed to the amendment of the Senate to the title of the bill.

The message also announced that the House has agreed to the following concurrent resolution, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H. Con. Res. 81. Concurrent resolution providing for corrections to the enrollment of the bill H.R. 1735.

The message further announced that the House has agreed to the report of the committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 1735) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2016 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

At 2:45 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has agreed to the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 1020) to define STEM education to include computer science, and to support existing STEM education programs at the National Science Foundation.

ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

At 3:52 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. UPTON) has signed the following enrolled bills:

H.R. 1020. An act to define STEM education to include computer science, and to support existing STEM education programs at the National Science Foundation.

H.R. 2617. An act to amend the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2007 to postpone a scheduled increase in the minimum wage applicable to American Samoa.

The enrolled bills were subsequently signed by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

ENROLLED BILLS PRESENTED

The Assistant Secretary of the Senate reported that on September 30, 2015, she had presented to the President of the United States the following enrolled bills:

S. 136. An act to amend chapter 21 of title 5, United States Code, to provide that fathers of certain permanently disabled or deceased veterans shall be included with mothers of such veterans as preference eligibles for treatment in the civil service.

S. 139. An act to permanently allow an exclusion under the Supplemental Security In-

come program and the Medicaid program for compensation provided to individuals who participate in clinical trials for rare diseases or conditions.

S. 565. An act to reduce the operation and maintenance costs associated with the Federal fleet by encouraging the use of remanufactured parts, and for other purposes.

S. 2082. An act to amend title 38, United States Code, to extend certain expiring provisions of law administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-3018. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Benzovindiflupyr; Pesticide Tolerances" (FRL No. 9933-03) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 22, 2015; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-3019. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Acibenzolar-S-methyl; Pesticide Tolerances" (FRL No. 9933-27) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 22, 2015; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-3020. A communication from the Acting Congressional Review Coordinator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Importation of Kiwi From Chile Into the United States" ((RIN0579-AD98) (Docket No. APHIS-2014-0002)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 25, 2015; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-3021. A communication from the Director, Office of Management and Budget, Executive Office of the President, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a violation of the Antideficiency Act; to the Committee on Appropriations.

EC-3022. A communication from the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a violation of the Antideficiency Act that involved fiscal years 2010 and 2011 Operation and Maintenance, Navy, funds, and was assigned Army case number 14-02; to the Committee on Appropriations.

EC-3023. A communication from the Secretary of Defense, transmitting a report on the approved retirement of Lieutenant General Patricia D. Horoho, United States Army, and her advancement to the grade of lieutenant general on the retired list; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-3024. A communication from the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), transmitting, pursuant to law, a semiannual report entitled, "Acceptance of Contributions for Defense Programs, Projects, and Activities; Defense Cooperation Account"; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-3025. A communication from the Director of Defense Procurement and Acquisition Policy, Department of Defense, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement: Contract Debts-Conform to FAR Section Designations" ((RIN0750-A170) (DFARS Case 2015-D029)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on Sep-

tember 29, 2015; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-3026. A communication from the Director of Defense Procurement and Acquisition Policy, Department of Defense, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement: Electronic Copies of Contractual Documents" ((RIN0750-AI29) (DFARS Case 2012-D056)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 29, 2015; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-3027. A communication from the Assistant Secretary for Export Administration, Bureau of Industry and Security, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Enhancing Support for the Cuban People" (RIN0694-AG67) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 28, 2015; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-3028. A communication from the Certifying Officer, Bureau of the Fiscal Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Cuban Assets Control Regulations" (31 CFR Part 515) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 23, 2015; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-3029. A communication from the Chief Counsel, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Suspension of Community Eligibility" ((44 CFR Part 64) (Docket No. FEMA-2015-0001)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 30, 2015; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-3030. A communication from the Chief Counsel, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Suspension of Community Eligibility" ((44 CFR Part 64) (Docket No. FEMA-2015-0001)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 23, 2015; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-3031. A communication from the Secretary of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, a six-month periodic report on the national emergency declared in Executive Order 12978 of October 21, 1995, with respect to significant narcotics traffickers centered in Colombia; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-3032. A communication from the Regulatory Specialist of the Legislative and Regulatory Activities Division, Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Regulatory Capital Rules: Regulatory Capital, Final Revisions Applicable to Banking Organizations Subject to the Advanced Approaches Risk-Based Capital Rule" (RIN1557-AD88) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 28, 2015; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-3033. A communication from the Secretary of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the export to the People's Republic of China of items not detrimental to the U.S. space launch industry; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-3034. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "National Priorities List" (FRL No. 9934-75-OSWER) received in the Office of the

President of the Senate on September 22, 2015; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3035. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Hazardous Waste Management System; Identification and Listing of Hazardous Waste; Direct Final Rule” (FRL No. 9934-78-Region 7) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 22, 2015; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3036. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Approval and Promulgation of State Plans for Designated Facilities and Pollutants; Missouri; Control of Mercury Emissions from Electric Generating Units” (FRL No. 9934-68-Region 7) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 22, 2015; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3037. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans; Mississippi; Miscellaneous Changes” (FRL No. 9934-73-Region 4) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 22, 2015; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3038. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans; Florida; Combs Oil Company Variance” (FRL No. 9934-72-Region 4) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 22, 2015; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3039. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Air Plan Approval; CO; Revised Format for Material Incorporated by Reference” (FRL No. 9931-73-Region 8) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 22, 2015; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3040. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Approval and Promulgation of State Plans for Designated Facilities and Pollutants; Missouri; Control of Mercury Emissions from Electric Generating Units” (FRL No. 9934-68-Region 7) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 22, 2015; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3041. A communication from the Director of Congressional Affairs, Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Interim Staff Guidance on Acceptable Acute Uranium Exposure Standards for Workers” (FCSE-ISG-014, Revision 0) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 22, 2015; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3042. A communication from the Director of Congressional Affairs, Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Consolidated Guidance About Material Licenses: Applications for Sealed Source and Device Evaluation and Registration” (NUREG-1556, Volume 3, Revision 2) received

in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 22, 2015; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3043. A communication from the Director, Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, Department of the Interior, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Kentucky Regulatory Program” ((SATS No. KY-253-FOR) (Docket No. OSM-2009-0014)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 30, 2015; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-3044. A communication from the Deputy Director, Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, Department of the Interior, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Pennsylvania Regulatory Program” ((SATS No. PA-154-FOR) (Docket No. OSM-2010-0002)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 30, 2015; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-3045. A communication from the Assistant General Counsel for Legislation, Regulation and Energy Efficiency, Department of Energy, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards” (RIN1991-AB94) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 28, 2015; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-3046. A communication from the Assistant General Counsel for Legislation, Regulation and Energy Efficiency, Department of Energy, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Energy Conservation Program: Energy Conservation Standards for Single Package Vertical Air Conditioners and Single Package Vertical Heat Pumps” (RIN1991-AC85) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 28, 2015; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-3047. A communication from the Division Chief, Bureau of Land Management, Department of the Interior, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Minerals Management: Adjustment of Cost Recovery Fees” (RIN1004-AE44) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 30, 2015; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-3048. A communication from the Assistant General Counsel for Legislation, Regulation and Energy Efficiency, Department of Energy, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Medical, Physical Readiness, Training, and Access Authorization Standards for Protective Force Personnel” (RIN1992-AA40) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 22, 2015; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-3049. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, Department of Energy, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to recommendations concerning energy performance requirements for fiscal years 2016 through 2025; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-3050. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Dividend Equivalents from Sources Within the United States” ((RIN1545-BJ56) (TD 9734)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 22, 2015; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3051. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the

report of a rule entitled “Reorganizations Under Section 368(a)(1)(F)” ((RIN1545-BF51) (TD 9739)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 22, 2015; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3052. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Update to Weighted Average Interest Rates, Yield Curves, and Segment Rates” (Notice 2015-61) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 22, 2015; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3053. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Investments Made for Charitable Purposes” (Notice 2015-62) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 22, 2015; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3054. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Special per diem Rates 2015-2016” (Notice 2015-63) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 22, 2015; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3055. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Per Capita Distributions of Funds Held in Trust by the Secretary of the Interior” (Notice 2015-67) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 22, 2015; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3056. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Fringe Benefits Aircraft Valuation Formula” (Rev. Rul. 2015-20) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 22, 2015; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3057. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Applicable Federal Rates—October 2015” (Rev. Rul. 2015-21) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 22, 2015; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3058. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Additional First Year Depreciation” (Rev. Proc. 2015-48) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 22, 2015; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3059. A communication from the Chairman of the U.S. International Trade Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the biennial report relative to the impact of the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3060. A communication from the Assistant Secretary for Legislation, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled “Evaluations of Hospitals’ Ambulance Data on Medicare Cost Reports and Feasibility of Obtaining Cost Data from All Ambulance Providers and Suppliers”; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3061. A communication from the Chief of the Trade and Commercial Regulations

Branch, Customs and Border Protection, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Disclosure of Information for Certain Intellectual Property Rights Enforced at the Border" (RIN1515-AD87) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 16, 2015; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3062. A communication from the Chief of the Trade and Commercial Regulations Branch, Customs and Border Protection, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Disclosure of Information for Certain Intellectual Property Rights Enforced at the Border" (RIN1515-AD87) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on September 17, 2015; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3063. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to section 36(c) and 36(d) of the Arms Export Control Act (DDTC 15-051); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-3064. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to section 36(c) and 36(d) of the Arms Export Control Act (DDTC 15-062); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-3065. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act (DDTC 15-032); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. JOHNSON, from the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute:

S. 750. A bill to achieve border security on certain Federal lands along the Southern border (Rept. No. 114-150).

S. 991. A bill to establish the Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 114-151).

By Mr. ALEXANDER, from the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute:

S. 481. A bill to amend the Controlled Substances Act and the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act with respect to drug scheduling recommendations by the Secretary of Health and Human Services, and with respect to registration of manufacturers and distributors seeking to conduct clinical testing, and for other purposes.

By Mr. ALEXANDER, from the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute and an amendment to the title:

S. 799. A bill to combat the rise of prenatal opioid abuse and neonatal abstinence syndrome.

By Mr. ALEXANDER, from the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute:

S. 1893. A bill to reauthorize and improve programs related to mental health and substance use disorders.

EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEE

The following executive reports of nominations were submitted:

By Mr. CORKER for the Committee on Foreign Relations.

*Lucy Tamlyn, of New York, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Benin.

Nominee: Lucy Tamlyn.

Post: Benin.

(The following is a list of all members of my immediate family and their spouses. I have asked each of these persons to inform me of the pertinent contributions made by them. To the best of my knowledge, the information contained in this report is complete and accurate.)

Contributions, amount, date, and donee:

1. Self: 0.

2. Spouse: 0.

3. Children and Spouses: Filipa Tamlyn Serpa (single): 0. Benjamin Tamlyn Serpa (single): 0.

4. Parents: Ann D. Tamlyn (widow), 0; Thomas T. Tamlyn (deceased), 0.

5. Grandparents (none living).

6. Brothers and Spouses: Thomas T. Tamlyn, 0; Spouse: Maria Sramek, 0; Benjamin W. Tamlyn (single), \$300, 2013, DSCC; \$300, 2013, DCCC; \$300, 2014, DCCC; \$200, 2014, DSCC. Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (DSCC), Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC).

7. Sisters: none.

*Jeffrey J. Hawkins, Jr., of California, 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 Central African Republic.

Nominee: Jeffrey Jones Hawkins, Jr.

Post: Bangui.

(The following is a list of all members of my immediate family and their spouses. I have asked each of these persons to inform me of the pertinent contributions made by them. To the best of my knowledge, the information contained in this report is complete and accurate.)

Contributions, amount, date, and donee:

1. Self: None.

2. Spouse: Annie Chansavang-Hawkins: None.

3. Children: Maxime Hawkins: None. Alexandre Hawkins: None.

4. Parents: Jeffrey Hawkins, Sr.: None. Susan Wester: None.

5. Grandparents: Issac Hawkins—Deceased; Annie-Claire Hawkins—Deceased; Jack Hensley—Deceased; Jean Hensley—Deceased.

6. Brothers and Spouses: None.

7. Sisters and Spouses: None.

*David R. Gilmour, of Texas, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Togolese Republic.

Nominee: David R. Gilmour.

Post: Togo.

(The following is a list of all members of my immediate family and their spouses. I have asked each of these persons to inform me of the pertinent contributions made by them. To the best of my knowledge, the information contained in this report is complete and accurate.)

Contributions, amount, date, and donee:

1. Self: 0.

2. Spouse: 0.

3. Children and Spouses: Miles D. Gilmour, none; Tristan J. Gilmour, none; Schyler B. Gilmour, none.

4. Parents: John T. Gilmour, none; Shirley A. Gilmour—deceased.

5. Grandparents: John T. Gilmour—deceased; Molly Gilmour—deceased.

6. Brothers and Spouses: John and Deanna Gilmour, none; Gregory and Kathy Gilmour, none; Aaron Gilmour, none.

7. Sisters and Spouses: Kathryn Gilmour, none; Lydia Gilmour, none; Jayne Gilmour, none.

*Edwin Richard Nolan, Jr., of Massachusetts, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Suriname.

Nominee: Edwin Richard Nolan, Jr.

Post: Suriname.

(The following is a list of all members of my immediate family and their spouses. I have asked each of these persons to inform me of the pertinent contributions made by them. To the best of my knowledge, the information contained in this report is complete and accurate.)

Contributions, amount, date, and donee:

1. Self: None.

2. Spouse: None.

3. Children and Spouses: Ryan P. Nolan: none; Katherine A. Nolan: none.

4. Parents: Edwin R. Nolan: deceased; Agnes H. Nolan: deceased.

5. Grandparents: John. J. Nolan: deceased; Mary C. Nolan: deceased.

6. Brothers and Spouses: none.

7. Sisters and Spouses: Maryann K. Steele: none; William Steele: none.

*John L. Estrada, of Florida, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Nominee: John Learie Estrada.

Post: Trinidad & Tobago.

(The following is a list of all members of my immediate family and their spouses. I have asked each of these persons to inform me of the pertinent contributions made by them. To the best of my knowledge, the information contained in this report is complete and accurate.)

Contributions, amount, date, and donee:

1. Self: \$250.00, 05/12/2012, John Estrada; \$250.00, 10/16/2012, John Estrada; \$400.00 01/29/2013, John Estrada. Self and Spouse Joint: \$250.00, 04/03/2014, John Estrada, Elizabeth Cote; \$100.00, 10/10/2014, John Estrada, Elizabeth Cote; \$50.00, 09/18/2014, John Estrada, Elizabeth Cote; \$100, 09/08/2014, John Estrada, Elizabeth Cote; \$200.00, 07/28/2014, John Estrada, Elizabeth Cote.

2. Spouse: None.

3. Children and Spouses: None.

4. Parents: None.

5. Grandparents: None.

6. Brothers and Spouses: None.

7. Sisters and Spouses: None.

*Carolyn Patricia Alsop, 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 Gambia.

Nominee: Carolyn Patricia Alsop.

POST: The Gambia.

(The following is a list of all members of my immediate family and their spouses. I have asked each of these persons to inform me of the pertinent contributions made by them. To the best of my knowledge, the information contained in this report is complete and accurate.)

Contributions, amount, date, and donee:

1. Self: \$50.00, 3/31/15, DSCC; \$50.00, 2/25/15, DNC; \$50.00, 4/2/14, DNC; \$64.00, 1/29/14, DNC; \$75.00, 10/28/12, Obama for America; \$100.00, 10/1/12, Obama for America; \$22.00, 12/30/11, Obama for America.

2. Spouse: N/A.
3. Children and Spouses: N/A.
4. Parents: Fred W. Alsup, M.D. (father) (deceased 2002), none; Edith Laurence Alsup (mother) (deceased 1980), none.
5. Grandparents: Mitchinson Laurence (deceased), none; Maude Laurence (deceased), none; Eules Alsup, Sr. (deceased), none; Nora Tubbs Alsup (deceased), none.
6. Brothers and Spouses: Fred W. Alsup, Jr. (not married), none; Alan R. Alsup (deceased 2001), none.
7. Sisters and Spouses: Peggy Ann Alsup (not married), none.

*Daniel H. Rubinstein, of Virginia, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Tunisia.

Nominee: Daniel Howard Rubinstein.
Post: Ambassador to the Republic of Tunisia.

(The following is a list of all members of my immediate family and their spouses. I have asked each of these persons to inform me of the pertinent contributions made by them. To the best of my knowledge, the information contained in this report is complete and accurate.)

- Contributions, Amount, Date, and Donee:
1. Self: none.
 2. Spouse: Julie D. Adams: none.
 3. Children: Jonah G. Rubinstein: none; Simon L. Rubinstein: none.
 4. Parents: Morris L. Rubinstein (deceased): none; Mildred Rubinstein: none.
 5. Grandparents: David Rubinstein—(deceased); Fay Rubinstein—(deceased); Philip Hochberg—(deceased); Ruth Hochberg—(deceased).
 6. Brothers: Aaron B. Rubinstein (spouse Sharon Rubinstein), none; David E. Rubinstein (unmarried), none.
 7. Sisters: Naomi B. Weiss (spouse Stephen Weiss), none; Judith D. Massarano (spouse Glenn Massarano), none.

Ann Calvaresi Barr, of Maryland, to be Inspector General, United States Agency for International Development.

*David Malcolm Robinson, of Connecticut, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization.

*David Malcolm Robinson, of Connecticut, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Conflict and Stabilization Operations).

*Scott Allen, of Maryland, to be United States Director of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

*Susan Coppedge Amato, of Georgia, to be Director of the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking, with the rank of Ambassador at Large.

*Barbara Lee, of California, to be a Representative of the United States of America to the Seventieth Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

*Christopher H. Smith, of New Jersey, to be a Representative of the United States of America to the Seventieth Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, for the Committee on Foreign Relations I report favorably the following nomination lists which were printed in the RECORDS on the dates indicated, and ask unanimous consent, to save the expense of reprinting on the Executive Calendar that these nominations lie at the Secretary's desk for the information of Senators.

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

Foreign Service nominations beginning with Jennifer Ann Amos and ending with Holly Rothe Wielkoszewski, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on July 8, 2015.

Foreign Service nominations beginning with Kreshnik Alikaj and ending with Brett David Ziskie, I which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on September 8, 2015.

Foreign Service nominations beginning with Jason Douglas Kalbfleisch and ending with Stuart MacKenzie Hatcher, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on September 21, 2015. (minus 1 nominee: DereII Kennedo)

*Nomination was reported with recommendation that it be confirmed subject to the nominee's commitment to respond to requests to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Senate.

(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 Ms. MURKOWSKI (for herself, Mr. SULLIVAN, and Mr. SCHATZ):

S. 2114. A bill to correct inconsistencies in the definitions relating to Native Americans in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. FLAKE:
S. 2115. A bill to continue job creation and the promotion of investment through improvements to targeted employment areas; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mrs. SHAHEEN (for herself and Mr. VITTER):

S. 2116. A bill to improve certain programs of the Small Business Administration to better assist small business customers in accessing broadband technology, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

By Mr. CORNYN:
S. 2117. A bill to prevent certain discriminatory taxation of natural gas pipeline property; to the Committee on Finance.

By Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself and Mr. HEINRICH):

S. 2118. A bill to amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to extend the application of the Medicare payment rate floor to primary care services furnished under Medicaid and to apply the rate floor to additional providers of primary care services; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. CARDIN (for himself, Mr. BENNET, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. COONS, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. WARNER, Mr. BOOKER, and Mr. SCHATZ):

S. 2119. A bill to provide for greater congressional oversight of Iran's nuclear program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mrs. SHAHEEN (for herself, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. SANDERS, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. BENNET, Ms. BALDWIN, and Mr. MARKEY):

S. 2120. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Vet-

erans Affairs to carry out a program to support veterans in contact with the criminal justice system by discouraging unnecessary criminalization of mental illness and other nonviolent crimes, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mrs. SHAHEEN:
S. 2121. A bill to facilitate and enhance the declassification of information, including in the Legislative Branch, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. PAUL:
S. 2122. A bill to increase the worldwide level of employment-based immigrants and to reauthorize the EB-5 regional center program; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. LEE, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. BOOKER, and Mr. SCOTT):

S. 2123. A bill to reform sentencing laws and correctional institutions, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Ms. STABENOW:
S. 2124. A bill to establish a Federal tax credit approximation matching program for State new jobs training tax credits, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN:
S. 2125. A bill to make the Community Advantage Pilot Program of the Small Business Administration permanent, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

By Ms. CANTWELL (for herself, Mr. VITTER, and Mrs. SHAHEEN):

S. 2126. A bill to reauthorize the women's business center program of the Small Business Administration, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

By Mr. JOHNSON (for himself and Ms. AYOTTE):

S. 2127. A bill to provide appropriate protections to probationary Federal employees, to provide the Special Counsel with adequate access to information, to provide greater awareness of Federal whistleblower protections, and for other purposes; 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 Mr. UDALL:
S. Res. 273. A resolution expressing the sense of the Senate regarding the need for reconciliation in Indonesia and disclosure by the United States Government of events surrounding the mass killings during 1965 and 1966; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mrs. SHAHEEN (for herself and Mr. JOHNSON):

S. Res. 274. A resolution commemorating the 25th anniversary of the peaceful and democratic reunification of Germany; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. CASSIDY (for himself and Ms. MIKULSKI):

S. Res. 275. A resolution calling on Congress, schools, and State and local educational agencies to recognize the significant educational implications of dyslexia that must be addressed and designating October 2015 as "National Dyslexia Awareness Month"; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. ENZI, Mr. DONNELLY, Mr. ALEXANDER, Mr. COCHRAN, and Mrs. FEINSTEIN):

S. Res. 276. A resolution designating the week beginning October 18, 2015, as “National Character Counts Week”; considered and agreed to.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 298

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 298, a bill to amend titles XIX and XXI of the Social Security Act to provide States with the option of providing services to children with medically complex conditions under the Medicaid program and Children’s Health Insurance Program through a care coordination program focused on improving health outcomes for children with medically complex conditions and lowering costs, and for other purposes.

S. 697

At the request of Mr. UDALL, the name of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 697, a bill to amend the Toxic Substances Control Act to reauthorize and modernize that Act, and for other purposes.

S. 1014

At the request of Mrs. FEINSTEIN, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. KIRK) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1014, a bill to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to ensure the safety of cosmetics.

S. 1099

At the request of Mrs. SHAHEEN, the names of the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON) and the Senator from Virginia (Mr. KAINE) were added as cosponsors of S. 1099, a bill to amend the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act to provide States with flexibility in determining the size of employers in the small group market.

S. 1178

At the request of Mr. FLAKE, the name of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1178, a bill to prohibit implementation of a proposed rule relating to the definition of the term “waters of the United States” under the Clean Water Act, or any substantially similar rule, until a Supplemental Scientific Review Panel and Ephemeral and Intermittent Streams Advisory Committee produce certain reports, and for other purposes.

S. 1214

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1214, a bill to prevent human health threats posed by the consumption of equines raised in the United States.

S. 1455

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

S. 1817

At the request of Ms. HEITKAMP, the names of the Senator from Virginia

(Mr. WARNER) and the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. AYOTTE) were added as cosponsors of S. 1817, a bill to improve the effectiveness of major rules in accomplishing their regulatory objectives by promoting retrospective review, and for other purposes.

S. 1831

At the request of Mr. TOOMEY, the names of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) and the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) were added as cosponsors of S. 1831, a bill to revise section 48 of title 18, United States Code, and for other purposes.

S. 1874

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the names of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN), the Senator from Utah (Mr. LEE) and the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER) were added as cosponsors of S. 1874, a bill to provide protections for workers with respect to their right to select or refrain from selecting representation by a labor organization.

S. 1989

At the request of Mr. CASSIDY, the name of the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1989, a bill to improve access to primary care services.

S. 2032

At the request of Mr. HOEVEN, the name of the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2032, a bill to adopt the bison as the national mammal of the United States.

S. 2045

At the request of Mr. HELLER, the name of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. PORTMAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2045, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to repeal the excise tax on high cost employer-sponsored health coverage.

S. 2066

At the request of Mr. SASSE, the names of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS) and the Senator from Alabama (Mr. SESSIONS) were added as cosponsors of S. 2066, a bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to prohibit a health care practitioner from failing to exercise the proper degree of care in the case of a child who survives an abortion or attempted abortion.

S. 2067

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

S. 2089

At the request of Ms. CANTWELL, the name of the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. MCCASKILL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2089, a bill to provide for

investment in clean energy, to empower and protect consumers, to modernize energy infrastructure, to cut pollution and waste, to invest in research and development, and for other purposes.

S. 2108

At the request of Mr. TOOMEY, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2108, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for an extension of certain long-term care hospital payment rules and the moratorium on the establishment of certain hospitals and facilities.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. CORNYN:

S. 2117. A bill to prevent certain discriminatory taxation of natural gas pipeline property; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

S. 2117

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

SECTION 1. LIMITATION ON DISCRIMINATORY TAXATION OF NATURAL GAS PIPELINE PROPERTY.

(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this Act:

(1) ASSESSMENT.—The term “assessment” means valuation for a property tax that is levied by a taxing authority.

(2) ASSESSMENT JURISDICTION.—The term “assessment jurisdiction” means a geographical area used in determining the assessed value of property for ad valorem taxation.

(3) COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL PROPERTY.—The term “commercial and industrial property” means property (excluding natural gas pipeline property, public utility property, and land used primarily for agricultural purposes or timber growth) devoted to commercial or industrial use and subject to a property tax levy.

(4) NATURAL GAS PIPELINE PROPERTY.—The term “natural gas pipeline property” means all property (whether real, personal, and intangible) used by a natural gas pipeline providing transportation or storage of natural gas subject to the jurisdiction of the Federal Regulatory Commission.

(5) PUBLIC UTILITY PROPERTY.—The term “public utility property” means property (excluding natural gas pipeline property) that is devoted to public service and is owned or used by any entity that performs a public service and is regulated by any governmental agency.

(b) DISCRIMINATORY ACTS.—A State, subdivision of a State, authority acting for a State or subdivision of a State, or any other taxing authority (including a taxing jurisdiction and a taxing district) may not do any of the following:

(1) ASSESSMENTS.—Assess natural gas pipeline property at value that has a higher ratio to the true market value of the natural gas pipeline property than the ratio that the assessed value of commercial and industrial property in the same assessment jurisdiction has to the true market value of such commercial and industrial property.

(2) **ASSESSMENT TAXES.**—Levy or collect a tax on an assessment that may not be made under paragraph (1).

(3) **AD VALOREM TAXES.**—Levy or collect an ad valorem property tax on natural gas pipeline property at a tax rate that exceeds the tax rate applicable to commercial and industrial property in the same assessment jurisdiction.

(4) **OTHER TAXES.**—Impose any other tax that discriminates against a natural gas pipeline providing transportation or storage of natural gas subject to the jurisdiction of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

SEC. 2. JURISDICTION OF COURTS; RELIEF.

(a) **GRANT OF JURISDICTION.**—Notwithstanding section 1341 of title 28, United States Code, and without regard to the amount in controversy or citizenship of the parties, the district courts of the United States shall have jurisdiction, concurrent with other jurisdiction of the courts of the United States, of States, and of all other taxing authorities and taxing jurisdictions, to prevent a violation of section 1.

(b) **RELIEF IN GENERAL.**—Except as provided in this subsection, relief may be granted under this Act only if the ratio of assessed value to true market value of natural gas pipeline property exceeds by at least 5 percent the ratio of assessed value to true market value of commercial and industrial property in the same assessment jurisdiction. If the ratio of the assessed value of commercial and industrial property in the assessment jurisdiction to the true market value of commercial and industrial property cannot be determined to the satisfaction of the court through the random-sampling method known as a sales assessment ratio study (to be carried out under statistical principles applicable to such a study), each of the following shall be a violation of section 1 for which relief under this Act may be granted:

(1) An assessment of the natural gas pipeline property at a value that has a higher ratio of assessed value to the true market value of the natural gas pipeline property than the ratio of the assessed value of all other property (excluding public utility property) subject to a property tax levy in the assessment jurisdiction has to the true market value of all other property (excluding public utility property).

(2) The collection of an ad valorem property tax on the natural gas pipeline property at a tax rate that exceeds the tax rate applicable to all other taxable property (excluding public utility property) in the taxing jurisdiction.

By Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. LEE, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. BOOKER, and Mr. SCOTT):

S. 2123. A bill to reform sentencing laws and correctional institutions, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

SENTENCING REFORM AND CORRECTIONS ACT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, today I am pleased to introduce, along with a broad bipartisan group of colleagues, a truly landmark piece of legislation.

It is the result of months of hard work and thoughtful deliberations. It is the largest criminal justice reform bill in a generation.

This bill represents a consensus among my colleagues and me.

There are elements of the criminal justice system that we agree can and

should be improved. We all agree that statutory mandatory minimum sentences can serve an important role in protecting public safety and bringing justice to crime victims, and this bill will preserve the primary mandatory minimums to keep some certainty and uniformity in Federal sentences and to encourage criminals to cooperate with law enforcement. We even add two new mandatory minimums for crimes involving interstate domestic violence and supplying weapons or other defense materials to prohibited countries or terrorists, but our current system has produced some specific instances of severe and excessive sentences.

So we all agree that we need to lower some of the harshest enhanced mandatory minimums, and we all agree that we can do a better job of targeting those enhanced mandatory sentences to the most serious violent and repeat offenders.

This bill does just that. It even expands some of those enhanced mandatory minimums to criminals with prior violent felonies and State crimes involving the unlawful use of firearms. That will be a big help in cities across the country who face rising homicide rates from violent offenders who have been released from prison.

We also all agree that our current system could benefit from giving judges a bit more discretion in sentencing. That is why we are expanding the current safety valve.

We also create a second safety valve so that nonviolent offenders who have minor criminal histories or play low-level roles in drug organizations are not improperly swept up by mandatory minimums.

Finally, we all agree that we must improve our prisons and stop the revolving door. Those of us introducing the bill have agreed to give lower-risk inmates a chance to return to society earlier and with better prospects to become productive, law-abiding citizens.

There are other parts of this bill that are also important, but I will not go into them at this time. As I said, this is the biggest criminal justice reform in a generation.

Instead, I wish to end with the idea that this bill is about the Senate. Senators from both sides of the aisle and Senators with very different perspectives have come together to solve an important problem facing the United States. This is how the U.S. Senate can work, should work, and I am pleased to be a part of it and the chairman of the Judiciary Committee.

Finally, I extend my sincere thanks to my colleagues who joined me in this effort: Senators DURBIN, CORNYN, WHITEHOUSE, LEE, GRAHAM, SCHUMER, BOOKER, and SCOTT, and my friend Ranking Member LEAHY.

I close by again thanking the ranking member of the Judiciary Committee, Senator LEAHY, for the great help that he has been, not only as my friend, but also for his work on this piece of legislation.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN:

S. 2125. A bill to make the Community Advantage Pilot Program of the Small Business Administration permanent, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, today I am introducing the Small Business Lending and Inequality Reduction Act of 2015.

It is a simple bill with a straightforward goal: to increase economic activity in underserved communities to help create jobs and reduce economic inequality. We must help low and moderate income communities grow by partnering with organizations that can channel expertise and resources to these communities. The bill I am introducing today would assist community development institutions provide more funding to small businesses.

This bill would increase their ability to lend in underserved communities and promote development and economic growth. The more lending they can offer to underserved communities, the more those communities can prosper.

One example of this process can be found from CDC Small Business Finance, an organization that has created more than 165,000 jobs and funded more than 10,000 small businesses. In Anaheim, CA, for example, they provided \$178,000 in financing to help Gretchen Shoemaker and her family successfully launch a restaurant based on Gretchen's grandmother's Southern-style cooking in an historic area of Anaheim.

Another example is Leatherby Family Creamery, an ice-cream parlor in Sacramento that opened in 1982 with the goal of creating a family-friendly community gathering place. They received a loan backed by the Small Business Administration that allowed them to modernize and expand their business. Leatherby's now has three locations and has sustained itself for over 30 years despite bumps in the economy. It is truly dedicated to its communities as well, donating to over 180 associations, schools, and organizations in 2015 alone.

Overall, it should be clear: these loans provided real dividends back to the communities.

With more access to financial services—which my bill would provide—there will be more improvements to businesses, nonprofits, and our communities.

The bill I am introducing today would do two main things: First, it allows community development institutions to increase their lending by providing them access to loans backed by the Small Business Administration.

It would do this by authorizing and making permanent an existing pilot program run by the Small Business Administration and raising the maximum loan amount so that small businesses have access to additional funding. There are currently over 95 approved

lenders in the pilot program, which has approved over \$214 million in over 1,650 loans.

Small businesses eligible for loans under the program include small businesses located in areas of high poverty and unemployment; small businesses that have more than 50 percent of employees living in low- or moderate-income communities; and Small businesses owned by veterans.

Second, this bill would expand the ability of Community Development Financial Institutions to access funding from the Federal Home Loan Bank System, which in turn allows them to provide more loans to low-income communities.

These are two simple actions that can have a significant impact on small businesses and communities in California and across the country.

I am proud to say that the Opportunity Finance Network, which is an association of community development financial institutions, supports this bill.

I strongly urge my colleagues to support this legislation and am hopeful that this Congress will move it forward.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 273—EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE REGARDING THE NEED FOR RECONCILIATION IN INDONESIA AND DISCLOSURE BY THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT OF EVENTS SURROUNDING THE MASS KILLINGS DURING 1965 AND 1966

Mr. UDALL submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 273

Whereas, on October 1, 1965, 6 Indonesian Army generals were killed by military personnel, including members of Indonesia's Presidential Guard, and these killings were blamed on the Indonesian Communist Party and labeled an "attempted Communist coup d'état";

Whereas this alleged coup was used to justify the mass killing of alleged supporters of the Indonesian Communist Party, with estimates of the number of dead ranging from 500,000 to 1,000,000 killed;

Whereas the targeted individuals were predominantly unarmed civilians, and often included members of trade unions, intellectuals, teachers, ethnic Chinese, and those involved in the women's movement;

Whereas these killings and the imprisonment of up to 1,000,000 targeted individuals were done without due process of law;

Whereas the targeted individuals were subject to extrajudicial execution, torture, rape, forced disappearance, forced labor, and forced eviction;

Whereas the United States Central Intelligence Agency, in a 1968 research study, described the period as one of the worst mass murders of the twentieth century;

Whereas the United States Government provided the Indonesian Army with financial, military, and intelligence support during the period of the mass killings, and did

so aware that such killings were taking place as recorded in partially declassified documents in the Department of State history, "Foreign Relations of the United States", pertaining to this period;

Whereas, within months of military leader Suharto's assumption of the Presidency following the mass killing, the United States Government began sending economic and military support to Suharto's military regime, and played an indispensable role in its consolidation of power;

Whereas aid to the Suharto government continued for more than 3 decades, despite on-going crimes against humanity committed by the Suharto government, including mass killing and other gross violations of human rights during the invasion and subsequent 24-year occupation of East Timor;

Whereas perpetrators of the 1965 and 1966 mass killings have largely lived with impunity, and the survivors and descendants of the victims suffer continuing economic discrimination and had limited civil and political rights for decades, as noted in the 2012 report by the Indonesian National Commission on Human Rights;

Whereas the United States Government has not yet fully declassified all relevant documents concerning this time period, and full disclosure could help bring historical clarity to atrocities committed in Indonesia during 1965 and 1966;

Whereas the United States Government has recently supported the declassification and release of documents in support of truth and reconciliation efforts following periods of violence in countries such as Chile and Brazil;

Whereas open dialogue about alleged past crimes against humanity and past human rights violations is important for continued efforts to reconcile populations of Indonesia and to ensure a stable, sustainable peace that will benefit the region and beyond;

Whereas, Indonesia has undergone a remarkable democratic transition over the last 2 decades, and is the world's third largest democracy with the largest Muslim population in the world;

Whereas through free and fair elections, the people of Indonesia have elected new leaders who now have the opportunity to establish a culture of accountability in partnership with the country's vibrant civil society, press, academia, and human rights activists;

Whereas the relationship between the United States and Indonesia is strong and involves many shared interests, as reflected in the 2010 United States-Indonesia Comprehensive Partnership, including democracy and civil society, education, security, climate and environment, energy, and trade and investment;

Whereas the economic relationship between the United States and Indonesia is strong, with bilateral goods trade exceeding \$27,000,000,000 and with major United States companies making significant long-term investments in Indonesia; and

Whereas strong relations between the United States and Indonesia are mutually beneficial to both countries: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) condemns the mass murder in Indonesia during 1965 and 1966;

(2) expresses great concern about the lack of accountability enjoyed by those who carried out crimes during this period;

(3) urges political leaders in Indonesia—

(A) to consider a truth, justice, and reconciliation commission to address alleged crimes against humanity and other human rights violations; and

(B) to work to mend differences and animosity that remain after the mass killings during 1965 and 1966; and

(4) calls on the Department of State, the Department of Defense, the Central Intelligence Agency, and others involved in developing and implementing policy towards Indonesia during this time period to establish an interagency working group—

(A) to locate, identify, inventory, recommend for declassification, and make available to the public all classified records and documents concerning the mass killings of 1965 and 1966, including records and documents pertaining to covert operations in Indonesia from January 1, 1964, through March 30, 1966;

(B) to coordinate with Federal agencies and take such actions as necessary to expedite the release of such records to the public; and

(C) to submit a report to Congress that describes all such records, the disposition of such records, and the activities of the Interagency Group.

SENATE RESOLUTION 274—COMMEMORATING THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PEACEFUL AND DEMOCRATIC REUNIFICATION OF GERMANY

Mrs. SHAHEEN (for herself and Mr. JOHNSON) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 274

Whereas more than 22,000,000 people of the United States served in the Cold War by supporting the efforts to bring military, economic, and diplomatic pressure to bear in the defense of Germany and the West, and ultimately helping more than 400,000,000 people gain freedom from the bondage of communism in the Soviet Bloc;

Whereas the United States supported the promulgation of the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany, under which Germany was eventually reunited;

Whereas the United States created the Reconstruction Loan Corporation, which, under West German leadership, became the Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau that invested in the reconstruction of West Germany and lay the economic groundwork for the reunification of Germany;

Whereas on November 4, 1989, more than 1,000,000 people gathered in Alexanderplatz in East Berlin and 40 other cities and towns in East Germany to demand free elections and basic civil rights, such as freedom of opinion, movement, press, and assembly;

Whereas on November 9, 1989, East German politbureau member Guenter Schabowski announced that the Government of East Germany would allow "every citizen of the German Democratic Republic to leave the GDR through any of the border crossings" and East German leader Egon Krenz promised "free, general, democratic, and secret elections";

Whereas thousands of people in East Berlin immediately flooded the border checkpoints at the Berlin Wall and demanded entry into West Berlin, causing the overwhelmed border guards of East Germany to open the checkpoints to allow people to cross into West Berlin;

Whereas in the days following the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989, hundreds of thousands of people from East Germany freely crossed the border into West Berlin and West Germany for the first time in more than 28 years;

Whereas German Chancellor Helmut Kohl demonstrated leadership and vision when he

announced a 10-point program calling for the 2 Germanys to expand mutual cooperation with the view toward eventual reunification on November 28, 1989;

Whereas in March 1990, East Germany held free elections for the first time and those elections led to the defeat of the Party of Democratic Socialism and demonstrated the desire of the East German people to reunify Germany and rejoin the world community, which led to the May 1990 treaty on monetary, economic, and social issues and the signing of the Unification Treaty on August 31, 1990;

Whereas on October 2, 1990, President George Herbert Walker Bush told the German people: "The United States is proud to have built with you the foundations of freedom, proud to have been a steady partner in the quest for 1 Germany, whole and free. America is proud to count itself among the friends and allies of free Germany, now and in the future.";

Whereas on October 3, 2015, the people of Germany will celebrate in Frankfurt and across Germany, the 25th anniversary of the reunification of Germany; and

Whereas the reunification of Germany demonstrated the end of the division of Europe and the triumph of democracy over communism: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) with the people of the former communist countries and Western Europe, celebrates 25 years of a united Germany, free from the oppression of communism;

(2) honors the courage and sacrifice of the people of Germany, the United States, and other countries who served in the Cold War to bring freedom to Central and Eastern Europe;

(3) recognizes the importance of the alliance between the United States and Germany in—

(A) common defense;

(B) an enduring shared commitment to the free and unified Europe; and

(C) an expanding and deepening economic prosperity under the rule of law throughout Europe;

(4) expresses to the people of Germany an appreciation for the commitment of the people of Germany to the promotion of freedom through leadership in providing international assistance, support for peace-keeping and international security efforts, and acceptance of refugees, including efforts by the people of Germany in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Lebanon, Sudan, and Ukraine; and

(5) reaffirms the deep and historical friendship between the Government and people of the United States and the Government and people of Germany.

SENATE RESOLUTION 275—CALLING ON CONGRESS, SCHOOLS, AND STATE AND LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES TO RECOGNIZE THE SIGNIFICANT EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF DYSLEXIA THAT MUST BE ADDRESSED AND DESIGNATING OCTOBER 2015 AS "NATIONAL DYSLEXIA AWARENESS MONTH"

Mr. CASSIDY (for himself and Ms. MIKULSKI) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 275

Whereas dyslexia is—

(1) defined as an unexpected difficulty in reading for an individual who has the intelligence to be a much better reader; and

(2) due to a difficulty in getting to the individual sounds of spoken language, which affects the ability of an individual to speak, read, spell, and often, learn a language;

Whereas dyslexia is the most common learning disability and affects 80 percent to 90 percent of all individuals with a learning disability;

Whereas an individual with dyslexia may have weakness in decoding or reading fluency and strength in higher level cognitive functions, such as reasoning, critical thinking, concept formation, or problem solving;

Whereas great progress has been made in understanding dyslexia on a scientific level, including the epidemiology and cognitive and neurobiological bases of dyslexia; and

Whereas early diagnosis of dyslexia is critical for ensuring that individuals with dyslexia receive focused, evidence-based intervention that leads to the promotion of self-awareness and self-empowerment and the provision of necessary accommodations so as to ensure school and life success: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) calls on Congress, schools, and State and local educational agencies to recognize that dyslexia has significant educational implications that must be addressed; and

(2) designates October 2015 as "National Dyslexia Awareness Month".

SENATE RESOLUTION 276—DESIGNATING THE WEEK BEGINNING OCTOBER 18, 2015, AS "NATIONAL CHARACTER COUNTS WEEK"

Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. ENZI, Mr. DONNELLY, Mr. ALEXANDER, Mr. COCHRAN, and Mrs. FEINSTEIN) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 276

Whereas the well-being of the United States requires that the young people of the United States become an involved, caring citizenry of good character;

Whereas the character education of children has become more urgent, as violence by and against youth increasingly threatens the physical and psychological well-being of the people of the United States;

Whereas, more than ever, children need strong and constructive guidance from their families and their communities, including schools, youth organizations, religious institutions, and civic groups;

Whereas the character of a nation is only as strong as the character of its individual citizens;

Whereas the public good is advanced when young people are taught the importance of good character and the positive effects that good character can have in personal relationships, in school, and in the workplace;

Whereas scholars and educators agree that people do not automatically develop good character and that, therefore, conscientious efforts must be made by institutions and individuals that influence youth to help young people develop the essential traits and characteristics that comprise good character;

Whereas, although character development is, first and foremost, an obligation of families, the efforts of faith communities, schools, and youth, civic, and human service organizations also play an important role in fostering and promoting good character;

Whereas Congress encourages students, teachers, parents, youth, and community leaders to recognize the importance of character education in preparing young people to play a role in determining the future of the United States;

Whereas effective character education is based on core ethical values, which form the foundation of a democratic society;

Whereas examples of character are trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, citizenship, and honesty;

Whereas elements of character transcend cultural, religious, and socioeconomic differences;

Whereas the character and conduct of youth reflect the character and conduct of society, and, therefore, every adult has the responsibility to teach and model ethical values and every social institution has the responsibility to promote the development of good character;

Whereas Congress encourages individuals and organizations, especially those that have an interest in the education and training of the young people of the United States, to adopt the elements of character as intrinsic to the well-being of individuals, communities, and society;

Whereas many schools in the United States recognize the need, and have taken steps, to integrate the values of their communities into teaching activities; and

Whereas the establishment of "National Character Counts Week", during which individuals, families, schools, youth organizations, religious institutions, civic groups, and other organizations focus on character education, is of great benefit to the United States: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates the week beginning October 18, 2015, as "National Character Counts Week"; and

(2) calls upon the people of the United States and interested groups—

(A) to embrace the elements of character identified by local schools and communities, such as trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship; and

(B) to observe the week with appropriate ceremonies, programs, and activities.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Armed Services be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on October 1, 2015, at 9:30 a.m.

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

COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on October 1, 2015, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing entitled "American Crude Oil Export Equality Act."

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

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Finance be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on October 1, 2015, at 10 a.m., in room SD-215 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled "Improper Payments in Federal Programs."

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

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on October 1, 2015, at 10 a.m.

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

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on October 1, 2015, at 10:30 a.m., to conduct a hearing entitled "Reviewing the Civil Nuclear Agreement with South Korea."

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

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on October 1, 2015, at 2 p.m., to conduct a hearing entitled "Nominations."

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

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR,
AND PENSIONS

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on October 1, 2015, at 10 a.m., in room SD-430 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building to conduct a hearing entitled "Achieving the Promise of Health Information Technology."

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

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND
ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on October 1, 2015, at 10 a.m., in room SR-428A of the Russell Senate Office Building to conduct a hearing entitled "Examining the Significant Cost and Related Burdens for Small Businesses Resulting from the Gold King Mine Waste Water Spill near Silverton, CO."

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

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Select Committee on Intelligence be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on October 1, 2015, at 2:30 p.m.

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

SUBCOMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION AND THE
NATIONAL INTEREST

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Immigration and the National Interest, be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate, on October 1, 2015, at 2 p.m., in room SD-226 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled "Oversight of the Administration's FY 2016 Refugee Resettlement Program: Fiscal and Security Implications."

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

SUBCOMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LANDS, FORESTS,
AND MINING

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources' Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and Mining be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on October 1, 2015, at 2:30 p.m., in room SD-366 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

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

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that floor privileges be granted this Congress for David Palmer and Zach Terwilliger, detailees from the Department of Justice.

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREE-
MENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at 5 p.m. on Monday, October 5, the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination: Calendar No. 138; that there be 30 minutes for debate on the nomination equally divided in the usual form; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the Senate vote without intervening action or debate on the nomination; that following disposition of the nomination, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to the nomination; that any statements related to the nomination 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.

NATIONAL CHARACTER COUNTS
WEEK

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 276, which was submitted earlier today.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 276) designating the week beginning October 18, 2015, as "National Character Counts 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 laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 276) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

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

ORDERS FOR MONDAY, OCTOBER 5,
2015

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 4 p.m., Monday, October 5; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, and the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; that following leader remarks, the Senate be in a period of morning business until 5 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each; finally, that following morning business, the Senate proceed to executive session as under the previous order.

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

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL MONDAY,
OCTOBER 5, 2015, AT 4 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 5:54 p.m., adjourned until Monday, October 5, 2015, at 4 p.m.