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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal Lord God, the Giver of every good and perfect gift, thank You for this fresh opportunity to do Your will on Earth.

Guide our lawmakers. Give them consciences void of offense toward You and humanity and honesty of conduct. May they bring You their daily challenges, casting their cares on You. Lord, help them to draw more fully from Your inexhaustible resources, claiming Your promise to provide for all their needs. Use them to bring peace, justice, and prosperity to our Nation.

And Lord, bless the members of the illustrious fall 2017 page class as they prepare to leave us.

We pray in Your loving Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. YOUNG). The majority leader is recognized.

WORK OF THE SENATE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, this week, the Senate has moved past a partisan paralysis and checked off several important items for the American people.

On Monday, we passed the bipartisan measure that funds the government

through February 8. But that bill didn't only end the shutdown, it also extended the State Children's Health Insurance Program for 6 years. That is long-term security for millions of vulnerable children and peace of mind for their families. And the bill delayed three onerous taxes that ObamaCare would otherwise have imposed on the American people.

Yesterday, I filed cloture on commonsense legislation to protect unborn children who can feel pain. There are only seven countries left that still permit elective abortion after 20 weeks, including us, unfortunately, China, and North Korea. On issues of human dignity, this is not the company we ought to keep. I look forward to voting to advance this bill next week.

We also made important headway in another vital area—the personnel business. We confirmed three of President Trump's highly qualified nominees for important posts. We have a new Chairman of the Federal Reserve, Mr. Powell. We have a new Secretary of Health and Human Services, Mr. Azar. And we have a new Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, our former colleague Sam Brownback. Here in the Senate, Mr. Brownback championed legislation to combat human trafficking and work to facilitate cooperation on issues facing vulnerable children. As the voices of religious minorities are being suppressed around the world, I am glad they will have Ambassador Brownback to speak up for them.

Of course, a great deal of work lies ahead of us. In the near future, we need to make bipartisan progress on areas such as immigration and border security, disaster relief, healthcare, and securing adequate funding for our Armed Forces. It is my strong preference that Senators reach bipartisan agreements on these issues in advance of the February 8 deadline. Fortunately, with the government shutdown behind us, serious discussions have resumed on all

these matters. A bipartisan, bicameral group, including Senators CORNYN and DURBIN, is hard at work on immigration. We will also hear from the White House on Monday, and I look forward to the framework they will present.

I am optimistic these ongoing negotiations will lead to results; nonetheless, I came to the floor on Sunday night and again on Monday to restate a possibility I had previously discussed with Members with diverse views on immigration policy. I restated that if the February 8 deadline for the current funding bill passes and a long-term agreement still eludes us, as long as the government remains open, the Senate will proceed to a variety of priorities on the subject of immigration, including border security, the DACA issue, and other aspects of immigration policy.

The bill I choose to introduce for debate will have an amendment process that will ensure a level playing field at the outset. The amendment process will be fair to all sides, allowing Members to offer their own legislation for consideration and votes. While I obviously cannot guarantee any outcomes, let alone supermajority support, I can ensure the process is fair to all sides.

I am glad that my restating this simple position helped my Democratic colleagues to persuade their leader to abandon his filibuster and permit the government to reopen. The American people are waiting for us to act as soon as possible, so I hope that hard work and honest discussions will yield agreements before February 8.

TAX REFORM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter, on Tuesday, President Trump will deliver his first State of the Union Address. He will have good news to deliver on a variety of fronts. I am particularly looking forward to his remarks on our economy.

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



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Consumer confidence is up. Unemployment is down. Markets are breaking records. From small businesses to our largest job creators, pay raises, bonuses, and plans for new investments are all in season.

Of course, the engine of American prosperity is the American people, but smart policy can help by getting the government out of their way.

Last December, Republicans in the House and the Senate joined the President to deliver once-in-a-generation tax reform. Every day, more evidence piles up that tax reform is already working for the American people. The headlines are full of major employers announcing pay raises and bonuses for workers, as well as new investments.

For example, Brown-Forman—a global spirits company headquartered in my hometown of Louisville that employs more than 1,000 Kentuckians—announced yesterday that tax reform will help the company to start a new charitable foundation for community investment and commit \$120 million to fund employee pensions.

Soon, thanks to tax reform, a Main Street small business owner will finally be able to realize her dream to expand into the vacant shop next door. Of course, that will mean hiring more help.

Soon, thanks to tax reform, a father-and-son manufacturing plant will be able to afford the new equipment they have been eyeing and give their workers new skills in the process.

Stories like these may not make waves here in Washington, but believe me, they will be front-page news in communities all across our country. From coast to coast, Americans' lives will improve as Main Street businesses operate for the first time under a 21st-century tax code.

This is not just a tax law for the big guys. Now even the smallest businesses will be able to take a significant deduction on their business income, giving them more money to buy new equipment, hire new employees, or provide health coverage for their team.

So much focus has been on bonuses, pay raises, and 401(k) matches, and for good reason. But we should not forget all of the jobs that will be created when businesses decide to invest more because they can immediately deduct their capital expenditures. I am already hearing from small business owners this law was designed to help.

Before tax reform, one franchise restaurant owner in Kentucky wrote me to say that “the current high tax rate that I pay as a pass-through entity reduces the amount of earnings I can reinvest into my business, employees, and community.” She went on to say, “I am very encouraged that tax reform is under way in Congress and hope that it can be accomplished in a timely manner.” Well, Republican majorities in Congress and the President did just that.

In Nicholasville, KY, another constituent of mine operates a rental busi-

ness for event equipment. He recently explained that “the relief that will be provided by the new tax bill gives companies like mine the capital to purchase new inventory . . . as well as hire additional employees.”

Summing it up, American enterprise is thriving. Tax reform helped make it happen.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of R.D. James, of Missouri, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Army.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

DACA AND OTHER ISSUES BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, there are now only 13 days remaining before the continuing resolution expires on February 8. In that short amount of time, we must seek a budget deal, an agreement on healthcare legislation, and a bipartisan bill to protect the Dreamers and provide for border security. All these items are important. All of them are urgent, and we are working hard to get them all done.

On the issue of immigration, the bipartisan group of moderate Senators should continue trying to find a consensus. I think that is an excellent idea. The White House, unfortunately, has proven unreliable and wildly unpredictable. Within the course of hours, they say different things. Every time the President moves forward on one thing, his staff pulls him back and undoes what he said. The action should be here in the Senate to find a narrow deal on DACA and border security.

Now, as we have found time and again, when we open up the negotiations to discussions of broad immigra-

tion reform, there is no end to what each party says could be on the table. Republicans want vast curtailment of legal immigration. Democrats want to discuss a pathway to citizenship for 11 million. That is a recipe for delay when we can't afford one. Some on the other side are insisting on expanding this beyond the DACA and border security issues. That will just delay. That will just make sure that things don't work.

My Republican colleagues, particularly the leader and his more moderate Members, should feel the pressure to get this done, or else this administration will start separating families, taking kids out of school, servicemembers out of our military, and workers out of our companies. They will rip them from the American fabric in which they are embedded. What a tragedy that would be.

So the clock is ticking on Dreamers, and we don't have time for extraneous issues that some on the right or the left might want to add that have nothing to do with DACA or border security. The clock is also ticking for pensioners, for victims of opioid addiction seeking treatment, and for our veterans seeking quality healthcare. We have other issues: rural infrastructure, childcare, things that Democrats want to get done in this deal. We have to get a budget deal and a DACA deal that can get 60 votes—13 days before Dreamers get a lot closer to deportation; 13 days to help our economy, our communities, and the middle class, who have been waiting for over a year for this Congress to do something for them, instead of just helping business interests.

FBI

Mr. President, now I want to focus on one more thing that really should disturb every American, and it certainly disturbs me—recent events concerning the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

For decades, the FBI has been our Nation's premier law enforcement agency, admired from one end of the country to the other. TV shows and movies all talked about how good the FBI was. We know because we trust them with protecting our country against many-faced threats: drug trafficking, terrorism, white-collar crime.

In 2016, the FBI—not politically, but just in the way it works to keep being vigilant to protect us in our security—was tasked with another mission of great importance—investigating Russia's interference in our elections.

As that investigation progressed, it found that members of the Trump campaign had concerning associations with the Russians in the lead-up to the election. That was pure law enforcement. That wasn't some political direction. Now that that investigation led by Special Counsel Mueller has resulted in two guilty pleas and two more indictments of Trump campaign officials, there seems to be a fervor on the other side to discredit what the special counsel's investigation has already revealed. That should give serious pause to Democrats, Republicans, and all

Americans. A foreign power, probably the one that is most in our face, Russia, is interfering in our elections. I don't care if it is Democratic elections, Republican elections, national elections, or local elections. When a foreign power interferes in our elections, that gnaws at the wellspring of our democracy. All of us should be giving the FBI space and encouragement to finish their investigation without delay or interference.

Instead, ever since Special Counsel Mueller was appointed, too many Republicans and too many in the right-wing media have been desperate to distract the Nation from his investigation.

First they waged an aggressive and coordinated—I would say shameful—attack on the integrity of the special counsel. I was in the gym this morning. I spoke to one of my senior Republican colleagues, who said he knew Mueller, and he knew what a fine man he was. He is a model public servant. He spent decades earning the trust and reverence of both parties. He was known as somebody who was a registered Republican through my years in Washington. He wasn't regarded as a partisan figure, somebody who would have vendettas, political or otherwise—no. It got so out of hand—I couldn't believe this—that a Republican Congressman suggested Special Counsel Mueller's investigation was a “coup,” on the floor of the House. That Congressman ought to go back and read his Constitution and read his history books. The rule of law is not a coup. I would say to that Republican Member of Congress: No person, not even the President, is above the law.

The political smear campaign has now bled into a spiraling and delusional attack on the FBI itself. The Republican majority on the House Intelligence Committee has, according to Representative SCHIFF, manufactured a secret memo of partisan talking points, full of innuendo and glaring omissions, intended to suggest widespread corruption at the Department of Justice and the FBI. They are very, very serious allegations, if they had any truth to them or backing. Adding to the impropriety, some of those same Republicans are now trying to release this slanderous memo—and that is what it is, a slanderous memo—to the public.

Since this investigation has started, our Nation has had to endure conspiracy after conspiracy from Republican Congressmen and Senators and, of course, from the rightwing press, which acts in total cahoots. There are conspiracies about “deep state” leaks and unmasking requests, phone taps at Trump Tower, Uranium One, who paid for the so-called Steele dossier, and today it is this memo. On and on and on, they are conspiracy theories with virtually no fact—paranoia, delusion. Why? Are they afraid of the truth of the Mueller investigation? It seems so.

Meanwhile, Republican Members of this body, I am ashamed to say, picked

up on casual texts sent between FBI agents to peddle the nonsense that there is a “secret society” at the Department of Justice, without a shred of evidence. I saw one of those—the Senator who was propagating this, this morning on television. It looked crazy. It looked delusional. It looked paranoid. What began as an attempt to discredit the investigator has now devolved into delusional, self-serving paranoia.

The Republican Party, which used to hold itself up as a law and order party, seems intent on destroying the credibility of our premier law and order agency and the hard-working men and women who serve there—all to assist a President who cares and knows very little about the boundaries of rule of law.

Imagine, the FBI, which for decades the Republican Party upheld—I remember lots of political debates here—now they are discrediting them with virtually no basis in fact. Guess who has joined the Republican campaign to attack the FBI. The Republican campaign to attack the FBI has been joined by the same forces that interfered in the 2016 election—Wikileaks, Julian Assange, and Russia.

Just a few years ago, those things were attacked by our Republican friends, particularly the hard right. Now they are joining them, wittingly or unwittingly. Can you imagine the outrage on the right if President Obama's message was being spread by Wikileaks, Julian Assange, or Kremlin sources?

Within hours of GOP lawmakers and FOX News calling for the release of the Nunes memo, Russian-linked bots began pushing the narrative using the hashtag “releasethememo”—Russian bots, hashtag “releasethememo.” Just a few hours after some of our Republican friends started this push, use of the hashtag spiked and was used 100 times more than any other hashtag by Kremlin-linked accounts.

We are witnessing an effort by the Russian Government to intervene and influence our democratic processes in real time. Every single American should be concerned by this, particularly when their elected officials are willing to work—wittingly or unwittingly—alongside Russia to manipulate our opinion. Some of our Republican colleagues—sadly, unfortunately, wittingly or unwittingly—are acting as allies of Russia's disinformation campaign. Can you imagine? Can you imagine? It is hard to make this stuff up, but it is real—hard-right Republicans and the Russians trying to discredit our premier law enforcement agency.

This country erected institutions like the FBI and the Department of Justice to defend the vital interests of the Nation without deference to political parties. Much like the Federal judiciary, they act as an essential check on political power—whosever power it is—a defense against creeping authoritarianism.

What the FBI is investigating right now is about shielding our democracy from the disinformation campaigns of foreign adversaries. Russia wants nothing more than to undermine our democracy by eroding people's faith in its institutions, for without resilient democratic institutions, there can be no democracy.

Make no mistake about it. Today Russia may be doing the same thing that a lot of our Republican colleagues are. Tomorrow they may be attacking our Republican colleagues. The Russians have no interests other than hurting America. So the Republican attacks on the credibility of the FBI and the Department of Justice are playing right into Putin's hands. They constitute an attack on democracy itself.

There has to be a line. There has to be a line where the interests of your political party stop, because to go any further would be to diminish our country. I say that to my colleagues here and in the House who have participated in this besmirching unfairly, paranoically, self-interestedly of the FBI. Peddling delusions of secret societies, “deep state” leaks, and coup d'etats cross the line of what anyone of any party should do. It has to stop.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

TAX REFORM

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, we have finally ended this government shutdown that was produced and directed by the Democrats in the Senate.

The reason Democrats decided to take this extreme step and shut down the government was because of the narrow issue of illegal immigration. They shut down services for citizens of the United States to provide services for people who are not citizens of the United States, and the Democrats have admitted it was all about this issue of illegal immigration.

There may have been another reason, as well, that Democrats wanted to shut down the government, and that was so they could change the subject being debated by people, talked about by friends, noticed by Americans, and making the headlines. That subject, of course, is the competence and optimism in the American economy—by workers, by people who are paying taxes, by people who realize how the Republican tax relief legislation is going to help improve their lives personally.

I think the success of the Republican tax relief bill scares a lot of Democrats. It scares them because every one of them voted against it. They didn't think it was a good idea to let people keep more of their hard-earned money. The Democrats thought it was a better idea for possibly the government to keep that money and use it and spend it in ways many people—certainly in Wyoming—feel is not a good use of that money. Families know how to get more value out of their dollars than the government ever will. Democrats voted

against it—the tax cuts that would actually create jobs all across the country, and we have seen that job creation occurring. They voted against the tax relief that is going to allow money to be brought back to America so investments are made in America.

It was so interesting to listen to NANCY PELOSI—the former Speaker of the House and now the minority leader in the House—refer to what we were doing in the Senate and in the House as Armageddon. She said it was the end of the world. That is what she said.

The American people, hard-working people, don't believe that at all. They believe it is good for them personally. It turns out that people who work at more than 200 companies in this country have already gotten a raise or some kind of a cash benefit or additional contribution to their retirement because of the tax law. That is why all those companies said they did it. Over 2 million people have obtained this benefit of the tax relief law, and more are going to benefit in the years ahead. Millions of Americans are going to start seeing more take-home pay in their paychecks next month. That is because of this tax relief law the Democrats—every one of them—opposed. We are seeing it not just with American families; we are seeing it with investments coming in from abroad.

This law has totally changed how we tax the money companies earn that sell things to people overseas. This chart goes through it. It used to be that when U.S. companies made money somewhere else; they paid taxes there. If they wanted to bring it back home, they had to pay taxes again, a double taxation. Very few countries do that, but the United States was one of them—double taxation. Businesses then had to make a decision, had to make a choice. It could bring money back home, pay taxes a second time, or keep the money overseas, invest it there, and not have to pay that second tax. A lot of companies, looking at the tax laws the United States had on the books previously, decided it was too much of a penalty to bring that money back home and invest it in the American economy. There was something like \$2.8 trillion in American business that American businesses had been holding in other countries.

We actually had a tax code that worked to the advantage of foreign countries, not to the advantage of the United States. It was locking money out, keeping it overseas, keeping it from helping American workers at home. That is a very backward way to look at how the Tax Code should work. We changed the law when Republicans voted to change the tax law, give taxpayers relief. Now the money gets taxed once, not twice. It changed the system in America the way most countries around the world do it. That means businesses no longer have this warped incentive to keep their money out of the United States. It makes it much easier for that money to come

back from overseas to the United States. It is good for America. It is what an America first economy looks like. It gets rid of this crazy Tax Code that we had, giving other countries an advantage—not anymore.

The second thing this tax relief law has done is actually cut taxes. When American businesses had to pay this second tax, the rates were very high—one of the highest in the world. It was adding insult to injury. Other countries have actually been cutting taxes for years—not the United States, not on our own companies in the United States. Here at home, we had one of the highest and most punitive taxes in the world. There wasn't a major country in the world where businesses paid as high a tax as we did in the United States. Washington was taxing companies about 35 percent if they tried to bring home some of the profits from overseas. Because of the tax law we passed and President Trump has signed, this rate has now dropped to 21 percent—from 35 percent to 21 percent.

Now our tax rates are actually below the average of other countries around the world. That puts American businesses at a significantly stronger position to compete around the world. It puts us at a competitive advantage. We got rid of the double taxation system—Republicans did—when we passed this law, and we cut tax rates significantly as well.

When you put these two things together—cutting the rates, making it easier to bring money back to the United States, eliminating this double taxation—it is a big help to American workers, to the men and women who work in America, as well as the businesses that employ those people. Businesses are much more likely now to invest in America, put their money back home, in American workers, in the American economy. We are seeing it already.

The tech company Apple recently announced it is increasing investments in U.S. operations. They said their total contribution to the American economy over the next 5 years will be \$350 billion. They are planning to bring home as much as \$250 billion in money that right now is parked overseas. They are talking about employing 20,000 more workers, hiring 20,000 more people. They have been letting that money sit overseas because of this system that locked the money out. Now, with the new tax law, it is going to be much easier to bring this money home and invest it in America.

It is not just Apple. We are seeing it with Fiat Chrysler, with Boeing, with AT&T, and with others. They are increasing investment in the United States and in the workers at home, and it is all because of the tax law the Republicans voted for, and every one of the Democrats voted against. It is no surprise that Democrats may have wanted to shut down the government to knock off the front page of the paper the headlines of the success of the tax

law and instead see reports about the Democrats shutting down the government.

It is interesting. There has been so much economic activity after this changed that other countries are beginning to become nervous. Other countries used to know they had the upper hand over the United States when it came to investments in the economy, and they figured the United States would never get its act together enough to change the tax laws to make us the competitive, thriving economy we know we can be. These countries knew the U.S. tax law was working in their favor—not anymore.

Countries like China, the United Kingdom, and Japan are considering changing their own taxes in response to what we have done. We are leading the way. They are trying to play catch-up with their economy. In Australia, as a matter of fact, they expect the loss of significant amounts of economic activity and growth to the United States because of the new tax law. Other countries are running scared because President Trump and Republicans in Congress are doing exactly what we promised the American people we would do. We are keeping our promises. We are putting American workers first. Tax relief is working. It is helping hard-working American families. It is creating economic growth. It is giving America the competitive edge we deserve because of the work we do, and we haven't had it in a long period of time.

Democrats said it would never happen, during the debate, on the tax law. First, they did everything they could to make sure we wouldn't get it passed—slowed it down, voted against it, talked against it. They were wrong, and now they know they were wrong. They have seen the money come back. They have seen the growth in the economy. They have seen the number of jobs created. They have seen the growth in wages. They are seeing people keeping more of their hard-earned dollars. They see people happier. They see a level of confidence and optimism that wasn't there in a previous administration.

The Democrats seem to be trying to change the subject by putting up a smokescreen—shutting down the government to avoid and try to deflect from the success the Republicans have allowed the American people to recognize in themselves because the tax laws have changed, and the American people will benefit from it for years to come.

It is time for the Democrats to give up the games, come to the table, join Republicans, and do what we know we need to do, which is put the American workers first. It is time for the Democrats to join the Republicans and work on behalf of all the American people who have sent all of us here in the first place, and we are seeing it now with the tax law and the tax relief and the tax cuts that are benefiting people all across this country.

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

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

FOREIGN POLICY

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I come to the floor to reflect on the troubling foreign policy 1 year into President Donald Trump's administration.

A recent poll out from Gallup showed a dramatic reduction in global public opinion toward the United States. Confidence in the United States by the global community has plummeted to 30 percent under President Trump. A low public opinion of our great country, among other nations, is not a good thing, and it is not something to celebrate. In fact, it makes the world less safe for America and Americans. It limits our economic opportunities, and it undermines our ability to promote our values of portraying President Reagan's vision of a city on a hill. In just 1 year, the Trump administration has betrayed America's values, abandoned our allies, and appeased our enemies.

America's alliances, for example, with the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization keep our country safe and prosperous while they also build a more secure world, but President Trump has repeatedly questioned the worthiness of both organizations and has attacked leading members of each body—almost always key American allies.

These concerns were made much worse when, early in the administration, Secretary Tillerson said that America's interests would no longer be dictated by our values. It was almost unfathomable to hear the Nation's top diplomat speak in such a narrow, myopic way. Also, the games the administration has played with the mission statements of the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development have been clear attempts to depart from the values that define who we are—support for democracy, human rights, transparency, and good governance.

President Trump has praised strongmen leaders in Russia, China, Turkey, Egypt, and the Philippines even as they imprison, torture, or kill their own citizens. If support for world leaders who lack almost all of our values is not bad enough, President Trump's attacks on some of America's closest friends have undermined the credibility of America's word and America's commitment to its values. Launching verbal broadsides against the United Kingdom, Australia, and South Korea—the latter during the ongoing standoff with North Korea—are deeply regrettable and completely counterproductive.

Speaking of verbal mistakes, you cannot conduct high stakes diplomacy through the use of Twitter. We should never normalize such conduct by a President of the United States. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson conceded last week that he, essentially, learns about the President's foreign policy statements—or even of his positions—because his staff at Foggy Bottom prints off the President's tweets for him. That should give everyone a moment for pause.

Besides the nuclear crisis with North Korea, nowhere have the President's statements been more damaging than in the tenuous relationship between Washington and Moscow. Frankly, the President's words and actions send a clear signal to Mr. Putin that he can continue to attack democratic institutions and values with impunity. Each time Mr. Putin denies to Mr. Trump that the Kremlin was involved in attempting to influence the 2016 election—a bald-faced lie—the American President races to say that he believes him. Never before in history has such a clear threat to our national security been so clearly ignored by a President of the United States.

Last week, I released a report through the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that documented Mr. Putin's pattern of 20 years of attacks against democratic institutions in Europe. In order to best understand what he did here in the United States in 2016—a matter still under investigation—as well as to protect ourselves in 2018, 2020, and beyond, we need to understand the big picture and respond accordingly. We will never be fully protected or have a robust enough response with the President's repeated public appeasement of Mr. Putin.

We have seen again this week how that has been playing out in a matter that is being debated in Congress. The Russian Government continues to interfere in our political debates here in the United States. There are reports that Russian internet bots and trolls are working to support Congressman NUNES's efforts to produce and release a Republican staff report on the investigation into Russia's interference in our 2016 elections. We know that Russian bots and trolls are vigorously promoting these attacks and corroding our political institutions and norms of behavior, seeking to paralyze our government and undermine our democracy. This sort of behavior carries a possible grave risk to our democratic system and our very way of life.

I am not surprised to find that Russian services are attacking us, as a recent report that we released made it clear that it was part of their strategy, but I do hope that all of us—Democrats and Republicans—will stand up for our democratic institutions and speak out against Russia's interference in our political system.

The President refers to his foreign policy strategy as “America first.” “America first” is a risky and chaotic

proposition and will, certainly, lead to America alone. The Muslim ban, hastily handed down not 1 week into his administration, was the early defining moment of President Trump's tenure—the clearest sign yet he would actively work to denigrate our values and isolate us from the rest of the world.

President Trump's rhetoric has made a multifaceted conflict with China more likely at a time when we need to work with the Chinese on stronger diplomatic ties between our nations to improve regional stability in East Asia.

The President's decision to withdraw the United States from the Paris climate agreement—an accord that every nation on Earth is a member of and which the majority of the President's senior advisers recommended against—is a gross abdication of American leadership and a narrow-minded rejection of basic science and fact.

I and other Members of this body are engaged in an attempt to prevent the President from withdrawing without reason from another major international agreement—the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, otherwise known as the Iran nuclear deal. The President has jeopardized the agreement by not certifying Iran's compliance and without his producing any evidence that Iran is in violation of the agreement. He has now made a number of aggressive demands of Congress and of our European allies, once again demonstrating that he is no negotiator.

America first, supposedly, but as communities in Maryland and across the country struggle with a nationwide epidemic of opioids, heroin, and fentanyl overdoses, President Trump's budget has proposed a 27-percent reduction in America's global counter-narcotics efforts, which will directly weaken our ability to work with international partners to stem the illegal flow of drugs that are entering our country.

The President sought to slash \$1 billion from America's global efforts to fight HIV/AIDS in Africa, Asia, and elsewhere. Thanks to bipartisan American leadership, we have made enormous strides against this disease. We should not turn back from that progress. This kind of fear, insecurity, and even xenophobia are damaging our reputation abroad and corroding our core identity as Americans here at home.

The President has doubled down on the disastrous wall rhetoric and continues to belittle Mexico, one of our closest friends and partners in the world. Even the White House Chief of Staff's attempt to clean up the President's wall position ended embarrassingly for him.

President Trump's campaign to undermine American values resulted in slashing refugee resettlement into the United States, while asking other countries to do more. His policies damage our moral leadership, condone other countries' rejection of refugees on their borders, and strengthen the

hand of those who wish to do us harm through recruitment and radicalization. U.S. leadership on this issue is key to our counterterrorism strategy.

President Ronald Reagan admitted 140,000 refugees in just 1 year of his Presidency. By contrast, at a time of extraordinary international need—far greater than when President Reagan was in office—President Trump capped refugee resettlement at 45,000 this fiscal year. Since he announced that policy, refugee admissions in this country have fallen to a level unseen in modern history. At the current rate, the United States may grant entry to fewer than 20,000 refugees—the lowest number since the program was established in 1980. The President's stealth attack on refugee resettlement is a war on a program that has embodied America's compassion and global leadership.

Much attention has been drawn to the despicable uncertainty that President Trump has injected into the lives of hundreds of thousands of Dreamers, preparing to deport young people who are essentially American citizens to countries they have never known. But equally as troubling is the President's denial of temporary protected status, or TPS, for hundreds of thousands of people from Haiti and El Salvador. Many more from Honduras and Syria sit in the President's crosshairs. These people have lived in our country, sometimes for decades, contribute to our economy, and many have American citizen children. Sending them back to their home nations at this time—countries that are already destabilized to various degrees—will exacerbate local and regional problems.

I am proud of the legislation I have written with Senators FEINSTEIN and VAN HOLLEN that is supported by numerous colleagues to create a legal pathway to residency for TPS recipients who only seek a better life for themselves and their families, enriching our country and all that it stands for in the process.

The U.S. military is the finest in the world, but increasingly, President Trump wants our men and women in uniform to do what should be the responsibility of our diplomatic and development corps—our forces for peace. And it is not just a slow and steady transfer of responsibilities from Foggy Bottom to the Pentagon; President Trump has failed to fill critical national security jobs and is gutting our development and diplomatic institutions.

It infuriates me when the President or his team dares to accuse the Senate of failing to do its constitutional responsibilities regarding nominations. Of 163 Senate-confirmed positions across the State Department and USAID, the administration does not have nominees for 72 of those jobs—just under 50 percent—1 year into office of this administration.

The administration has proposed an illogical and ideological cut of over 30

percent to the State Department and USAID budgets, attempting to disembowel critical national security tools. Secretary Tillerson has maintained an unexplained hiring freeze at the Department and Agency. Diplomats are leaving the government in large numbers, and his attempt to reorganize the Department many view as a solution in search of a problem. The President has little interest in how diplomacy advances our interests, promotes our values, and makes us safer and more prosperous.

To make matters worse, the President and his family continue to conduct themselves in a manner that promotes their business interests, making our foreign policy more difficult. In his dealings with China alone, the writing is on the wall. Candidate Trump said that on day one of his Presidency, he would declare China a currency manipulator. American businesses are still waiting. Did he sacrifice the American worker in order to appease the Chinese banker who paid him rent at Trump Tower? Or perhaps it was so he could secure those long sought after business trademarks with China—38 in all.

The American people should not lose sight of the fact that the President has refused to divest himself from the Trump Organization, ignoring decades of ethical norms and precedent. The President of the United States is engaged in foreign policy while maintaining unprecedented business interests in about 20 countries. Today, the President has a financial stake in real estate projects in India, Indonesia, the Philippines, and elsewhere—developments that require approval and intervention from governments, financing from banks, and cooperation from local partners. He continues to earn royalties from properties located throughout the world, from Panama to the United Arab Emirates.

Reaping a financial profit while serving as President begs the question of whether he is working in his own best interest or the Nation's best interest—exactly why the Constitution's emolument clause exists and of which I believe he is in violation. President Trump could easily rectify this by cutting his financial ties and leaving no doubt that his first and foremost priority is serving the Nation's interests.

In closing, let me say that American foreign policy led by our values, support for our allies, and a desire to make the world a better place, keeps us safe at home and advances our country's prosperity and security. President Trump has not put the strategies in place to deal with the complicated national security crises facing our country. Instead, he has made international security challenges more difficult to solve, including the crisis with Iran, the nuclear weapons dilemma with North Korea, and the Kremlin activities sowing discord in our country and throughout the world. President Trump has been unwilling to engage in the delicate diplomacy and tough na-

tional security decisions that are required to keep this country safe and maintain our global leadership.

The role of Congress in shaping and advancing U.S. foreign policy has never been more important, and I will continue to advance legislation, conduct oversight, and speak out about these important issues in the name of the American people and the values and norms that define us and our place in this complicated world. I am proud that there are many Members on both sides of the aisle who share these concerns, and we will work together for America's national security interests.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. 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.

SENATE PRIORITIES

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, now that the government is up and running again, we need to look ahead at what our legislative priorities should be. I can't speak for everybody, but I can speak for myself. My priorities are threefold.

First, we need to expedite disaster relief. In December, the House passed an \$81 billion disaster relief bill designed to address the natural disasters caused by Hurricane Irma, Hurricane Harvey, as well as the wildfires out West. That has been sitting in the Senate since December. We need to act and act with dispatch.

Everybody remembers Hurricane Harvey—we certainly do in Texas—which pummeled us last August. It was last August; this is February. Most of the media attention in the months since has focused on the city of Houston, which quite literally was torn apart. This was the most intense rain event in American history—more than 50 inches of rain fell in 5 days.

Other areas beyond Houston fared worse—I am thinking of cities like Rockport and Port Arthur on the Texas coast. I am thinking of cities like Victoria and Beaumont. More than 28,000 square miles were flooded. Crops rotted, livestock died, and almost 6 months later people are still piecing together their lives.

In addition to Hurricane Harvey, as I said, there was Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Maria, and there were the wildfires that burned across California that later resulted in mudslides after the rains fell. I know the Federal Government is not the only entity charged with ensuring help gets to these places, but it certainly has an important part to play.

This morning, I attended the U.S. Conference of Mayors and saw a number of my mayors from Texas who were part of the success or at least the management of this natural disaster in

Texas. They have done their part. The State has done its part. It is time for the Federal Government to step up, and it is time for the Senate to pass this supplemental bill that was passed by the House in December.

The second priority I have, personally, is lifting the spending caps that impair our national defense, particularly our men and women in uniform. In my remarks yesterday, I said this is a problem set in motion by the Budget Control Act of 2011. While well-intentioned—for a while it did hold down discretionary spending and reduced our deficits and our debt—its implementation has not stemmed our national debt, but it has tied the hands of our military. This is an important lesson. It is not defense spending, it is not tax cuts, it is not discretionary spending; it is the mandatory spending in our entitlement programs which continue to run up deficits and debt and which threaten us and our financial future, to be sure.

In the meantime, our military faces readiness challenges across the globe. We simply must listen to people like Defense Secretary Jim Mattis. We should lift the caps, end sequester so our military no longer suffers and so our national security is on safer ground.

The third on my immediate to-do list is working with a bipartisan group of legislators as well as President Trump on the issue of the DACA recipients. As everybody who has been paying much attention in recent days knows, this is a group of about 690,000 young adults who came into the country as children because their parents brought them in illegally, in noncompliance with our immigration laws.

In the United States, we don't hold children responsible for the mistakes of their parents, nor should we punish these young adults who have now grown up because their parents broke our immigration laws. We know they face an uncertain future, and much of the responsibility for our porous borders should be borne by Congress—not only the present Congress, but past Congresses—for basically turning our heads the other way while people continued to immigrate illegally into the United States.

We are going to need to improve our infrastructure, personnel, and technology to make sure we don't experience that sort of rush of illegal immigration in the future, which is why some of our Democratic colleagues like to say that we need to protect DACA recipients, which we are willing to do. But we want to make sure there is not a repetition of this in 3 years or 5 years hence. So there are important measures we need to combine with that, and the President has told us that he is going to insist upon—and he is correct in doing so—a robust border security component, as well as ending chain migration and the diversity lottery visas. From the news I saw this morning, it sounds like the President made some

statement about the first piece of that puzzle last night. We are expecting to hear more from the White House on how they expect Congress to respond and what the President would find acceptable here in the next few days.

This bill can't become law without the President's signature. So the President's views are not irrelevant, but we are the ones who have the primary responsibility to resolve these complicated issues. Getting 60 votes is not the only thing we are aiming for. Certainly, that is the hurdle we have in the Senate, but it would be a futile act if the President wouldn't sign it or if it wouldn't pass the House of Representatives. So we have our work cut out for us, and I know the American people will not support it unless it is a serious and well-thought-out proposal. The blowback will be strong, and we will face a harsh reprisal if we don't take into account the opinions and the views of our constituents back home, which I intend to do.

Beyond these short-term actions, which we need to move on as soon as possible, there are other priorities I would like to mention as well. Infrastructure is something everybody likes to talk about, until you ask the question: How are we going to pay for it?

Recently, I introduced a bipartisan bill with Senator WARNER from Virginia that would expand an infrastructure financing authority already in use by many States and local governments across the United States. This legislation is called the BUILD Act, which would raise the caps on a specific category of what are known as private activity bonds, giving additional access to tax-exempt bond authority for the purpose of constructing highway projects.

I was with a number of Texas mayors earlier this morning, and they told me they see that as a positive development, something they can use in their cities. They appreciate that during the tax reform debate we maintained the tax-exempt status of municipal bonds used for those kinds of purposes.

In the near future, I intend to introduce a few other legislative initiatives to help rehabilitate our Nation's infrastructure. I come from a State that is growing because we are creating so many jobs, and that is putting a strain on our existing infrastructure. So for the interest of public safety and the environment, as well as our economy, we need to repair and build out our infrastructure. I know the White House has some plans in this area as well, and we look forward to hearing more about them and working with the administration when it comes to infrastructure.

Thinking about other areas that we could work on in a bipartisan fashion, I firmly believe it is important for us to look at success stories in the States, and then, once these laboratories of democracy have done things that actually result in positive things, we can then learn from them and scale them up at the Federal level.

That is one reason I am very interested in taking the lessons we learned in Texas and other States on prison reform and offering a better, more enlightened, and sensible path to reentry for people who made mistakes and ended up in our jails and prisons. Not everybody is going to take advantage of it. In my visits in Texas prisons, I know illiteracy is rampant. Some people have drug or alcohol problems that need to be addressed. Some people just need to learn basic job skills if we expect for them to succeed once they get out of prison. We have used various incentives for low-risk offenders in Texas to provide them opportunities to address each of those concerns, and it has been quite successful. Not only have fewer people recommitted crimes and ended up back in prison, but our communities have become safer as a result, and taxpayers have had to build fewer prisons in the process.

I have been working in the Senate on a bipartisan way with my colleague from Rhode Island, Senator WHITEHOUSE, and my colleague from Utah, Senator LEE. I know this issue has gotten some real traction thanks to President Trump and the roundtable he hosted at the White House earlier this month.

More than 11 million people go to jail each year in the United States, and there are currently 2.3 million people under confinement. This is a matter of great public concern, but to me the No. 1 concern is public safety. If we can keep the public safer, if we can save taxpayer dollars, and if we can help people who are willing to accept the opportunity to turn their lives around and become productive members of our society, it seems to me that we ought to be doing that.

I look forward to hearing more—perhaps even from the President during the State of the Union Address on Tuesday night, if he chooses to mention his interest in that topic, which I know he is interested in.

Finally, we have to keep filling our judicial vacancies. Last year, we were able to put two Texans on the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, but more district judges have come through the pipeline this year. One of the judges we confirmed earlier this month is David Counts from Midland, TX. He will be serving in the Western District of Texas. Just this week, the President announced his intention to nominate another judge for the Western District of Texas, Alan Albright, as well as Cam Barker, Jeremy Kernodle, and Michael Truncale for the Eastern District of Texas.

We are a big State. So we have a lot of judicial vacancies, and Senator CRUZ and I are working hard, together with the White House, to make recommendations to President Trump for nomination. They go through a very extensive vetting process. Senator CRUZ and I have created something we call the Federal Judicial Evaluation Committee, which is a group of our

most experienced practitioners in the State, on a bipartisan basis, to evaluate the people who apply for these important life-tenured positions.

I want to compliment the President for his sterling picks for the judiciary, certainly so far, starting with the Supreme Court of the United States. But at the intermediate appellate courts, like the Fifth Circuit and these district courts, these are the people who do the day-in and day-out work of the judiciary to make sure that all Americans have access to justice and the opportunity for a fair hearing before an impartial judge. That is one of the most important things the Federal Government provides through our judicial branch: "Equal justice under law," as the words above the Supreme Court building say.

TRIBUTE TO EMILY KIRLIN

Madam President, I wish to recognize and sincerely thank a member of my staff, Emily Kirlin, for her decade of public service here in the Senate. Everybody knows Emily in the Senate because of her bubbly personality, and she is always looking to find ways to help Senators be more successful and to recognize their tremendous contributions to this body.

Emily is originally from Crossville, TN, and we will not hold that against her. She is not a Texan, but many people from Tennessee eventually came to Texas, as I tell a couple of my Tennessee colleagues, most of them one step ahead of a great spouse or one step ahead of the law. Those are the Tennesseans who made their way to Texas at the time of our founding. Things have gotten better, by the way, but that is sort of an inside joke between Tennesseans and Texans.

Emily has been director of Member services in my whip office and is the longest serving member of our operation. Before working in her current capacity, she served under my predecessor, Senator Jon Kyl, and before that for my colleague, Senator ALEXANDER.

Everyone who has had the privilege of meeting Emily knows that she is one of a kind. Her smile lights up rooms, and her personality is contagious. Everyone loves being around her. But she also works incredibly hard. Some nights she is here until 1 in the morning and goes home and works even harder alongside her husband Michael. Together, they have two small children, Brock and Madge, who, I am sure, require a lot of love and attention.

So we are sad to see Emily go, but we wish her nothing but the best and want to express our sincere gratitude for her service to the Senate. We know her future will be bright in whatever path she decides to take.

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

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

WORK OF THE SENATE

Mr. PETERS. Madam President, I believe every campaign for elective office in this great Nation is essentially a months-long job interview with the voters or, perhaps more accurately, it is thousands and thousands of individual interviews. Like any employer, the voters have expectations for us once we have been hired to do this job.

I will never forget I work for the people of Michigan, and I feel very fortunate to have earned the opportunity to serve them. When I ran for the U.S. Senate, I told Michiganders I would be a pragmatic problem-solver and stand by that promise each and every day. We were all sent here to be problem-solvers, especially the hard problems. Making the effort to participate in our democracy is fundamentally optimistic. Voters want us to make their lives and our Nation better. Every Senator elected to this body carries the hopes, the dreams, and the expectations of the people who live in their State.

While we should never lose sight of our Nation's hopes and dreams, today I wish to focus on expectations. Americans expect us to work together. They expect us to talk to each other. They expect us to negotiate and find common ground where we disagree. They expect us to help our fellow Americans after disasters. They expect us to respond to crises like the opioid epidemic and dangerously underfunded pensions that jeopardize their retirement security. They expect us to keep our borders secure and enact reasonable human immigration policies that keep our Nation competitive and boost economic growth, and they expect us to responsibly fund the Federal Government.

None of us should be proud of the recent government shutdown. There is no such thing as a good government shutdown. I am nevertheless hopeful that lessons can be learned from last weekend and a better path forward can be found. I think the coming weeks and months are of vital importance to the future of the U.S. Senate as a meaningful, functional institution.

Let's be honest with ourselves and with the American people. In the last few years, we have not been functional. We have blown deadline after deadline. It took us almost 4 months past the funding deadline to tackle the easiest problem: reauthorizing the Children's Health Insurance Program, a program that provides healthcare to millions of Americans children, while saving taxpayers money.

As I stand here, healthcare for over 600,000 Michiganders—including over 12,000 Michigan veterans—remains at risk because we have blown through deadline after deadline to fund community health centers, a program that

provides cost-effective care to millions of Americans in both rural and urban areas across our country.

How is it that a nation that put the first man on the Moon still can't put lights on for our own American citizens in Puerto Rico? We need to help families clean out their flooded homes in the gulf, support communities that have faced out-of-control wildfires and mudslides during the devastating 2017 disaster season, and ensure affordable flood insurance is available to every homeowner who needs it.

Americans stand by each other in the face of tragedy. This is why Senator STABENOW and I fought for a year to deliver Federal resources to Flint and continue working to make sure families are receiving the care they need and get their damaged pipes repaired. In addition to addressing all of these urgent issues, we need to keep the lights on in the Federal Government, where funding is set to expire again in just 2 weeks.

While the government was shut down this past weekend, I worked with a bipartisan group of Senators pulled together by my colleagues Senator COLLINS and Senator MANCHIN. This group is called the Common Sense Coalition, and we worked through the weekend to find a bipartisan compromise to open the Federal Government and find a path forward to tackle the complex, pressing issues before us in Congress.

While the lights are back on, the real work is just beginning. In the coming weeks, we need to find a legislative solution to provide certainty to the Dreamers—young men and women brought to the United States as small children. They grew up as Americans, went to school here, served in our military, only speak English, and are every bit as American as you and I. They graduate from our colleges and universities and provide critical talent to a growing American economy. They start their own small businesses and create jobs in our communities. They are young adults who voluntarily came out of the shadows to participate in the DACA Program and are fearful they will be ripped from their home and be deported to a country they have never visited, a country where they don't even speak the language and will find themselves a stranger in a foreign land, which is an absolutely terrifying situation.

Without question, we must also pass a disaster relief package to help communities devastated by the hurricanes, floods, and wildfires. We must also reauthorize the Community Health Center Program that provides essential healthcare to Americans and over 600,000 Michiganders.

We must do more to fight the far-reaching opioid epidemic that is hurting and killing far too many of our friends, family, and neighbors. The opioid epidemic is a public health crisis that touches everyone in every State and every county.

We need to deliver certainty to the hard-working Americans who spent

decades earning their pensions and now see them at risk as they prepare to enter retirement, and we must follow through on our most basic of duties. We need a bipartisan deal to fund the government that takes care of the men and women who serve our country in the armed services, keeps us safe, and properly funds both our military and domestic programs.

This will not be easy, but solving easy problems is not why we were sent to the Senate. I ran for the U.S. Senate to solve the tough problems facing our country, and I know my colleagues in the Common Sense Coalition ran to solve tough problems as well. We need the entire Senate and the House to start acting like one, big Common Sense Coalition. No organization or business can run their budget in 2- or 3-week increments.

The Defense Department and all of our domestic agencies need certainty for budget planning just like any household or business does. We cannot let the American people down any longer by kicking the can down the road with another series of short-term budget patches. The coming weeks will be difficult, but we need to rise to the occasion and deliver on all of these responsibilities. Now is the time for us to step up our game. The American people expect and deserve nothing less.

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. BROWN. 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. BROWN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for up to 10 minutes.

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

TRIBUTE TO JONATHAN MILLER

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, I rise to honor a member of my staff, Jonathan Miller, who has dedicated his life to serving his country and his State.

Not only does Jonathan serve the people of Ohio each day on our staff, helping Ohio servicemembers and veterans, but he also wears the uniform himself, first as a member of the National Guard and now as a member of the Army Reserve. Earlier this month was his last day in the office for a year as his unit is deploying to fight for our country.

Jonathan grew up in Macedonia, OH, and graduated from Nordonia High School and Ohio University. In 2011, while working toward his master's degree, he enlisted in the National Guard. Jon told me he enlisted, in part, because he was "inspired by the debate and repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell and the stories of veterans in my family," like so many who join the armed services because of patriotism, family values, and family precedent.

He said: "The Army seemed like the place for me to help my community and my country and to experience new people, places, and ideas."

Jonathan went through officer candidate school in 2013 and now serves with the 300th Chemical Company, Army Reserve, out of Morgantown, WV. He has worked in our office since 2015 and has impressed all of us with his dedication to both of his jobs. In the Senate, he handles veterans and military issues along with energy and environmental policy. He has read, literally, thousands of letters from Ohio servicemembers and veterans over the years and has always worked to make sure their views and concerns have been heard and that our office has helped them whenever we have been able to. He has often called the families directly to follow up and listen to their stories.

In 2016, during a meeting with the Gold Star Wives of America, Jon learned that education benefits for some spouses who had lost their loved ones in the earliest days following 9/11 would expire before they could make full use of this benefit their families had earned. He immediately brought this issue to my attention, and we worked to introduce the Military Spouses Achieving College Education for Survivors Act. We passed this bipartisan legislation as part of a larger veterans package that will directly affect veterans and their families in my State, in Nebraska, and other States across the country.

Jonathan has played a critical role in ensuring that our military installations in my State have the support they need to perform critical national security missions—from the 180th in Toledo and the 910 in Youngstown, to Camp Ravenna, to the base in my hometown of Mansfield, to Springfield, and of course to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. He often attends visiting Ohio Honor Flight ceremonies, representing our office and supporting Ohio veterans who visit the memorials that have been built in their honor.

His love for the outdoors and for Ohio has also shone through in his work on issues like protecting the Great Lakes, including the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and in preserving the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, which is near his childhood home.

I would add that Ohio is one of the lucky States east of the Mississippi in that it is one of the few States that has a national park, and it is not far from the population centers of Cleveland and Akron. Even though the Trump administration tried to zero out—the way we talk about it—or dramatically cut funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, I and Senator PORTMAN, a Republican, worked together to restore that funding.

We know keeping Lake Erie clean is an ongoing challenge. Right off the city of Toledo, Lake Erie is only 30 feet deep, contrasted with Lake Superior, which is 600 feet deep, on the average.

That means, whether it is Ashtabula and Cleveland in Lake County to the east or it is Toledo to the west, Lake Erie is much more vulnerable to pollutants than are the other Great Lakes. This is why the work Jonathan does is so important in keeping that Great Lake clean.

At the end of the week, while others might look forward to a relaxing weekend with family and friends, so often, Jonathan heads out for drill with his unit. He used to drive from Washington to Illinois and, later, to West Virginia for the weekend as part of his service. Now his unit is deploying. While we will miss his expertise, his enthusiasm, and his unique perspective in this office this year, we are also so grateful for his service to Ohio and to our country.

One final note, before his deployment, last month, Jon got engaged to his partner Kevin. Jon and Kevin will join so many of Ohio's military families who understand the unique challenges of having a family member serving far from home.

One of the things that is so important that we as Members of the Senate must do is recognize the service of our men and women in uniform. We should also recognize the importance of the service and sacrifice of those family members who are left behind and who often live in the margins financially.

On behalf of my whole office, we congratulate Jon and Kevin on their engagement. We wish Jon well on his tour overseas, and we thank him for his sacrifice and his service.

CHIP AND COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS

Madam President, Congress finally did the right thing, after having failed to do the right thing in September and October and November and December and early January, by reauthorizing the Children's Health Insurance Program. The bill passed out of the Senate Finance Committee with only one "no" vote. The Children's Health Insurance Program has been around for 20 years, and it has always been bipartisan.

There are 209,000 children in Ohio who benefit from the Children's Health Insurance Program. These are children—sons and daughters—of parents who generally work full time but who only make \$8 or \$10 or \$12 an hour. These families often don't have insurance themselves, but the Children's Health Insurance Program will provide insurance for those children.

It is particularly aggravating to many of us that so many Members of Congress—all of us who have health insurance provided by taxpayers—failed to continue the program, which has always been bipartisan, in September, when the program expired, as well as in October and November and December. Now, as our vote the other day demonstrated, the Children's Health Insurance Program will be around for 6 more years as we continue to make improvements with it. The problem is, while we provide insurance for 6 more years for these 209,000 children in Ohio and 9 million children all over the country, we

haven't, in so many cases, provided the place and the environment for these parents to take their children.

One big shortcoming is Congress's refusal to do its job to reauthorize the community health centers, the so-called federally qualified health centers. My State is home to several dozen federally qualified community health centers. They provide all kinds of healthcare services, in many cases, including pediatric, dentistry, all kinds of preventive care, all kinds of emergency care, and other help for so many families, particularly for low-income families, in their neighborhoods, where this can make a difference.

I want to briefly share three letters to illustrate the importance of this.

Stephanie Wiersma, the CEO of Lorain County Health & Dentistry, wrote to me 2 weeks ago before we passed the most recent continuing resolution:

We desperately plod on, doing all the right things for our health centers and patients, yet for months we have been in limbo and, frankly, sick with fear.

I worry about the impact on my staff and patients. I know the impact on recruitment of providers . . . what professional wants to chance a funding crisis to come work for a health center at this point in time?

Open provider positions means less access to care, plain and simple. Access is especially important now with all the flu and illness going around.

What Stephanie is saying is that when Congress doesn't do its job—when all of us who have health insurance that is paid for by taxpayers fail to do our jobs—these community health centers, which are professionally run and close to home for so many families, cannot plan for the future. They cannot recruit a physical therapist or a pediatric dentist or an internist or a family practice doctor. Is a professional provider, who has invested a lot of money in her education, going to want to go to a health center where Congress simply doesn't do its job in providing funding? I think Stephanie wrote that so very well.

Jared Pollick, CEO of Third Street Family Health Services in my hometown of Mansfield, wrote:

It is nearly impossible to make sound strategic decisions for our organizations without the security of our funding. We are always told both sides of the aisle love Community Health Centers. We really need them to show it with funding.

That is exactly right. I have heard my Republican colleagues talk almost ad nauseam about how much they like the Children's Health Insurance Program, how much they like the community health centers, and I think they really in their guts do. But then Senator MCCONNELL and the Republican leadership let them expire on September 30, did nothing in October, nothing in November, nothing in December. They did a tax cut for the rich. We know that, but they didn't reauthorize, didn't provide additional significant, predictable, sufficient funding for the community health centers or the Children's Health Insurance Pro-

gram. A week ago, finally, we did the Children's Health Insurance Program, but we left hanging the community health centers.

The last letter is from Julie DiRossi-King, chief operating officer for the Ohio Association of Community Health Centers, which represents 512 health centers in Ohio. She said:

We have hit that critical point . . . that the Community Health Center Program as we know and rely on it today will soon be on life support. There literally is no room for additional delay.

I appreciate that Congress finally did the right thing on the Children's Health Insurance Program. I ask Congress to do what is right for the community health centers. It will literally save lives and will matter for so many families in my State and States all over the country.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WICKER. 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. WICKER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that all time be yielded back on both sides and the Senate proceed to the vote.

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

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

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. CORKER), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY).

Mr. SCHUMER. I announce that the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL), the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY), the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN), and the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. MCCASKILL), are necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 89, nays 1, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 24 Ex.]

YEAS—89

Alexander	Boozman	Cassidy
Baldwin	Brown	Cochran
Barrasso	Cantwell	Collins
Bennet	Capito	Coons
Blunt	Cardin	Cornyn
Booker	Carper	Cortez Masto

Cotton	Isakson	Roberts
Crapo	Johnson	Rounds
Cruz	Jones	Rubio
Daines	Kaine	Sasse
Donnelly	Kennedy	Schatz
Duckworth	King	Schumer
Enzi	Klobuchar	Scott
Ernst	Lankford	Shaheen
Feinstein	Leahy	Shelby
Fischer	Lee	Smith
Flake	Manchin	Stabenow
Gardner	Markey	Sullivan
Gillibrand	McConnell	Tester
Graham	Menendez	Thune
Grassley	Merkley	Tillis
Harris	Murkowski	Udall
Hassan	Murphy	Van Hollen
Hatch	Murray	Warner
Heinrich	Nelson	Warren
Heitkamp	Paul	Whitehouse
Heller	Perdue	Wicker
Hirono	Peters	Wyden
Hoeven	Portman	Young
Inhofe	Reed	

NAYS—1

Sanders

NOT VOTING—10

Blumenthal	Durbin	Risch
Burr	McCaIn	Toomey
Casey	McCaskill	
Corker	Moran	

The nomination was confirmed.

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

The Senator from Alaska.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for 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.

RECOGNIZING THE ALASKA PACIFIC UNIVERSITY NORDIC SKI TEAM

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, every week, I have been coming to the floor, going on 2 years now, to talk about what makes my State, the great State of Alaska, such an amazing place to live—gorgeous, untouched mountains, the glaciers, the wildlife. I have live web cams in my office. For people who want to see the bears, walrus, the salmon spawning, bears scooping up these amazing fish from the choked streams, please come on by. Most of that happens during the spring, summer, and fall. The winter, of course, is the longest season in Alaska. In my opinion, it is one of the best times to experience our State.

For those watching on TV or in the Gallery, we want to welcome you to Alaska. Come on by. You will have the trip of a lifetime. I guarantee it.

It is truly the people who make my State such a truly special place. What we try to do each week is talk about

some of those people in what we have termed our “Alaskan of the Week” celebration, to talk about community, to talk about so many Alaskans who are helping not only their State and their community but their country, generous yet tough and competitive people who make up our Wonderful State.

Many of them get very excited when the snow starts to fall. They strap on their skis and they fly through the snow. One group of Alaskans who every winter strap on their skis and train—actually train all year round and compete on the hundreds of miles of Anchorage’s trail system—is the Alaska Pacific University Nordic Ski Program. Hands down, it is the very best ski team in America. They are our Alaskans of the Week.

Let me tell you a little bit about the APU Nordic Ski Program. Led by Coach Erik Flora, Alaska’s APU Nordic Ski team year after year produces some of our Nation’s finest athletes, who compete in races all across the world, including the upcoming Winter Olympics in Korea. As I mentioned, year after year, APU athletes are simply the best cross-country skiers in the Nation. Their depth of talent was put on display earlier this month at the U.S. Cross Country Championships in Anchorage, where they took 11 out of the 24 podium spots in the senior races and 8 out of the 24 junior podium spots. Think about that. One team dominated the U.S. Cross Country Championships this year.

They train year-round. In the summer, the ski team trains on Eagle Glacier, accessible by a 10-minute helicopter ride from Girdwood, AK. As the Anchorage Daily News put it, this unique training area has “been a springboard to APU’s international and domestic success [and dominance]. Flora and his staff have groomed serpentine, undulating trails there that mimic [international] courses” on a glacier in Alaska in the summer. That is great training. It is year-round.

In addition to training and coaching these world-class athletes, the APU Nordic Ski Center also has a popular junior program, which helps develop the next generation of Olympic skiers.

I have had the honor to get to know some of these skiers, these wonderful athletes, over the past few years. They certainly would make Alaskans proud, but I think they would make all Americans proud. They are great young men and women who are dedicated, disciplined, humble, hard-working, and very smart. They are students; they are very, very good students. I even had the opportunity to go and train with them occasionally. I am more of a downhill skier than a cross-country skier. I went with them in the fall, when there wasn’t any snow on the ground, to do some mountain interval training, running with them up and down the mountains. To witness and train with these world-class athletes was an amazing experience. I must

admit, it was a difficult experience for me. I think I was smoked after about 10 minutes with them, and they had about a 2-hour workout session on the mountain. It gave me a sense of how hard they work and what dedicated, world-class athletes we have in my hometown.

Next month, several of these APU skiers will travel to Korea to represent the United States of America at the Winter Olympics, the way they have in previous Olympics. They are top skiers for America. Let me name a few.

First and I would say foremost, Kikkan Randall, America’s most decorated cross-country skier in U.S. history and an Alaskan icon—she will participate in her fifth Winter Olympics. Let me say that again. She will participate in her fifth Winter Olympics. That is an incredible record for any American athlete, winter or summer games. She is also a wonderful person. She is very, very community-oriented. Alongside her will be APU teammates Sadie and Erik Bjornsen—they are brother and sister—Rosie Brennan, and maybe, hopefully, even a few more. Additionally, their APU teammate Jess Yeaton, who was born in Australia but grew up in Alaska, will ski for the Australian cross-country ski team. You are getting the picture. This is a group of people who are going to do very, very well in the Olympics and are going to represent our country and other countries proudly.

Cross-country skiing is woven into the fabric of Alaska’s winter community. It brings people together, and it helps build community. So many of our skiers, including and especially the APU team, are also generous and kind in helping others learn how to ski and graciously host skiers from all across the country, as was on full display during the recent U.S. Cross Country Championships.

On behalf of all Alaskans—really, on behalf of all U.S. Senators—I wish the team good luck in Korea. We will be watching. I know you will make Alaskans and our fellow Americans very proud as you compete on the world stage once again. Once again, thanks for all you do. Thanks for your tremendous hard work and dedication. And to the APU Nordic ski team, thanks again for being our Alaskans of the Week.

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. 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.

(The remarks of Mr. HATCH pertaining to the introduction of S. 2344 are printed in today’s RECORD under “Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.”)

CONFIRMATION OF SAM BROWNBACK

Mr. HATCH. Now, Mr. President, turning to another subject, I would like to speak for a few minutes on Sam Brownback’s recent confirmation as Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom. I’ve known Governor Brownback for many years, and I am confident he will serve our Nation well in advancing and defending religious freedom across the world.

Throughout my Senate service, it has been my privilege to defend religious freedom. In 1990, for example, I served as one of the principal authors of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, or RFRA, a crucially important piece of legislation that prohibits the government from substantially burdening a person’s exercise of religion unless doing so is necessary to further a compelling government interest.

The bill passed the Senate 97 to 3 and passed the House without recorded opposition. This remarkable, broad support demonstrated that religious liberty is a rare issue that unites Americans of all stripes.

That unity of purpose extends to our commitment to protect this fundamental right abroad. 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.

Fifty years later, Congress unanimously passed the International Religious Freedom Act. I was proud to support this act, which declares religious freedom to be a universal human right, a pillar of our Nation, and a fundamental freedom. The law established the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom and created the position of Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, the position to which Governor Brownback was just confirmed.

As evidenced by his work here in the Senate, Governor Brownback truly understands the need for leaders who will stand up for religious liberty and ensure that all people—no matter where they live—are able to worship how, where, or what they may.

During his 14 years in this body, Governor Brownback was involved in a wide range of issues related to religious freedom. Governor Brownback knows firsthand how crucial the Commission is in keeping our Nation and world leaders informed about the status of religious freedom throughout the world.

It seems unfathomable in this day and age, but thousands and even hundreds of thousands of our brothers and sisters throughout the world are being imprisoned, tortured, and even executed for their personal convictions. In recent remarks, Secretary of State Tillerson discussed the prevalence of religious persecution and intolerance. He noted that almost 80 percent of the global population lives with restrictions on their freedom of religion.

As a nation, we must act to protect this most fundamental, inalienable right for all people.

At his recent confirmation hearing, Governor Brownback pledged to “stand for liberty and stand with the persecuted [and] to promote respect for religious freedom by all governments and peoples.” I believe he will fulfill this pledge, and I thank him for his willingness to serve our country as Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom.

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 (Mr. YOUNG). Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session for the consideration of the following nomination: Executive Calendar No. 474.

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

The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Jonathan H. Pittman, of the District of Columbia, to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia for the term of fifteen years.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nomination.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nomination with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nomination be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Is there further debate?

If not, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Pittman nomination?

The nomination was confirmed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and 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.

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

VOTE EXPLANATION

• Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for the confirmation vote on the nomination of R.D. James to be an Assistant Secretary of the Army.

On vote No. 24, had I been present, I would have voted yea on confirmation of the James nomination.●

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

VOTE EXPLANATION

• Mrs. McCASKILL. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for vote No. 24 on January 25, 2018, on the confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 552, R.D. James to be an Assistant Secretary of the Army, Army Corps of Engineers. Had I been present, I would have voted yea.●

10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE YELLOW RIBBON REINTEGRATION PROGRAM

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program. The National Defense Authorization Act of 2008 established the Department of Defense Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program to assist National Guard and Reserve servicemembers as they transition between their civilian and military roles and back again. The program ensures the readiness of Reserve Component members, their families, and communities before, during, and after deployment.

National Guard and Reserve servicemembers are the backbone of our Nation's military, comprising nearly half of our total force. We have relied on them to support combat missions abroad, and we will continue to rely on them. Nearly 1 million guardsmen and reservists have deployed since September 11, 2001, with nearly 35,000 currently mobilized.

Not only do National Guard and Reserve servicemembers support combat operations, security, and humanitarian missions around the world, they also ensure our safety when unforeseen disasters and emergencies occur. Just this past year, Reserve Component members have responded to Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, providing relief and emergency services to hundreds of thousands of Americans. Through their compassion, professionalism, and courage, they protect our way of life, not just abroad, but also here at home.

In establishing the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, Congress recognized that National Guard and Reserve servicemembers face challenges throughout the deployment cycle that

are uniquely different than those confronting their Active-Duty counterparts. Most notably, Reserve Component members often live far from military installations and other members of their units, decreasing their opportunities for support during each stage of deployment.

The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program bridges this gap by connecting National Guard and Reserve servicemembers and their families with resources where they live and provides a support network to aide their unique challenges. Through the program, Reserve Component members and their families gain access to relevant information and resources, including family and marriage counseling, financial planning and education, small business planning, legal benefits, healthcare information, employment training opportunities, and veterans benefits education.

I had the distinct pleasure of working with Congressman John Kline and Senators Norm Coleman, Saxby Chambliss, and JOHNNY ISAKSON in introducing the legislation that created the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program in 2008. I am pleased to say the Minnesota National Guard's program, Beyond the Yellow Ribbon, sought to improve how Minnesota's servicemembers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan experienced reintegration and became the model for the national program we are recognizing today.

Since its launch, the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program's pre, during, and postdeployment events have supported more than 1.5 million servicemembers and their families. These 10 years have demonstrated the necessity of the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program's mission in maintaining the readiness of National Guard and Reserve servicemembers, their families, and their communities.

I am sure the entire Senate will join with me in congratulating the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program on the successes that have brought it to its 10th anniversary and supporting its continued success moving forward.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO DANIELLE HIGHLEY AND JAXON AGEE

• Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, this week I have the honor of recognizing two of Montana's 24,000 children who benefit from the Children's Health Insurance Program, better known as CHIP. Jaxon Agee of Helena was diagnosed with Leigh syndrome as a baby. Access to a pediatrician is absolutely critical for Jaxon. Despite having a team of medical professionals who work to ensure he remains healthy, he has had to be flown from Helena to Community Medical Center's pediatric intensive care unit in Missoula several times. Jaxon's family is committed to caring for their son no matter what,

but CHIP helps them manage Jaxon's condition and makes well-baby checks more affordable, ultimately lowering the odds of another emergency visit.

Danielle Highley of Deer Lodge is another Montana kid who relies on CHIP funding. At just 18 months of age, Danielle lost the ability to walk. A form of juvenile arthritis proved to be a costly condition, as injections and infusions cost several thousand dollars, but when Danielle has consistent treatment, she can walk, run, and play like a kid again. Before being enrolled in CHIP, Danielle went without treatment for 3 months, and she again lost the ability to walk. CHIP has allowed Danielle the opportunity to get treatment and be a kid again. She is back in school, and when she grows up, of all things, she hopes to be a doctor for kids. I am also pleased to announce that she will be joining me as my guest at the State of the Union.

Jaxon and Danielle, thank you for sharing your stories. I am so glad that Congress has passed, and the President has signed into law a 6-year reauthorization of the program, the longest in its history. Now, the families of the 24,000 Montana children who depend on CHIP can rest assured their children will continue to have access to critical care.●

TRIBUTE TO ERIN COSKY

● Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I ask to have printed in the RECORD an article that was published in yesterday's Pensacola News Journal, "Meet the Santa Rosa Teacher of the Year." I commend Ms. Erin Cosky for her dedication to Florida's students, and wish her well in the State's Teacher of the Year selection process.

The material follows:

[From the Pensacola News Journal USA Today Network, Jan. 24, 2018]

MEET THE SANTA ROSA TEACHER OF THE YEAR
FLORIDA.—Gulf Breeze High School science teacher Erin Cosky has been selected as the Santa Rosa County School District's Teacher of the Year.

The news was announced during a surprise visit to Cosky's classroom Wednesday morning.

Cosky teaches earth and space science and advanced placement environmental science at the school. She is Santa Rosa's nominee for the Florida Department of Education's Teacher of the Year 2019.

The Florida Teacher of the Year will be selected in May and will serve as Florida's nominee for National Teacher of the Year, which will be announced in January 2019. Cosky, other nominees for the award and all Santa Rosa County educators will be honored at Santa Rosa's Golden Apple Celebration on March 2.●

TRIBUTE TO SAMANTHA NEFF, LEESA LAVENDER, AND JULIE DELRUSSO

● Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I ask to have printed in the RECORD an article that was published in the Orlando Sentinel, "Seminole Announces Three

Teacher-of-the-Year Finalists." I commend Ms. Samantha Neff, Ms. Leesa Lavender, and Ms. Julie DelRusso for their dedication to Florida's students and wish them well in the State's Teacher of the Year Selection process.

The material follows:

[From the Orlando Sentinel, Jan. 24, 2018]

SEMINOLE ANNOUNCES THREE TEACHER-OF-THE-YEAR FINALISTS

(By Leslie Postal)

A math coach, a civics teacher and a high school instructor who works with students with disabilities were tapped Wednesday as finalists for Seminole County's teacher-of-the-year honors.

The winner will be announced March 15 and will then be in the running for Florida's top teacher award.

Seminole's three finalists are:

Samantha Neff, a math coach at Idyllwild Elementary School, who has been an elementary school teacher in the district for 17 years and also teaches at the University of Central Florida.

Leesa Lavender, a seventh-grade civics teacher at Markham Woods Middle School, who has taught middle school social studies since 2007.

Julie DelRusso, who works with 9th-to-12th-grade students through the district's Exceptional Student Support Services Department. She's been a teacher with the district for 25 years.

The district will announce the winner at the teacher-of-the-year ceremony at the Hilton Orlando/Altamonte Springs.●

TRIBUTE TO COLTON MEEHAN

● Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, today I recognize Colton Meehan, an intern in my Washington, DC, office, for all of the hard work he has done for me, my staff, and the State of South Dakota.

Colton is a graduate of the University of California, Santa Cruz, having earned a degree in politics. He is a dedicated worker who has been committed to getting the most out of his experience.

I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to Colton Meehan for all of the fine work he has done and wish him continued success in the years to come.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

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

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting nominations which were referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

(The message received today is printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

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-4132. A communication from the Secretary of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Technical Amendments to Rules of Registration and Review of Exchange Disciplinary, Access Denial or Other Adverse Actions" (RIN3038-AE15) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 23, 2018; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-4133. A communication from the Management Analyst, Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "United States Standards for Barley" (7 CFR Part 800 and 810) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 23, 2018; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-4134. A communication from the White House Liaison, Department of Education, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a vacancy in the position of Assistant Secretary, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Department of Education, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 23, 2018; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-4135. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 22-230, "Health Literacy Council Establishment Act of 2017"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4136. A communication from the Assistant Attorney General, Office of Legislative Affairs, Department of Justice, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled "Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA) Quarterly Report to Congress; First Quarter of Fiscal Year 2018"; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEE

The following executive reports of nominations were submitted:

By Mr. INHOFE for Mr. McCain for the Committee on Armed Services.

Army nomination of Maj. Gen. Scott D. Berrier, to be Lieutenant General.

Air Force nomination of Brig. Gen. Charles L. Plummer, to be Major General.

Air Force nomination of Col. Sharon R. Bannister, to be Brigadier General.

Air Force nomination of Maj. Gen. Jeffery A. Rockwell, to be Lieutenant General.

Army nominations beginning with Col. Anthony R. Hale and ending with Col. Garrick M. Harmon, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on December 11, 2017.

Army nomination of Maj. Gen. Eric J. Wesley, to be Lieutenant General.

Army nomination of Maj. Gen. Theodore D. Martin, to be Lieutenant General.

Army nomination of Col. Susie S. Kuilan, to be Brigadier General.

Army nomination of Maj. Gen. Leslie C. Smith, to be Lieutenant General.

Navy nomination of Rear Adm. (1h) Johnny R. Wolfe, Jr., to be Vice Admiral.

Navy nomination of Capt. John C. Ring, to be Rear Admiral (lower half).

Navy nomination of Rear Adm. (1h) Scott D. Conn, to be Rear Admiral.

Mr. INHOFE for Mr. McCain. Mr. President, for the Committee on Armed

Services 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.

Air Force nominations beginning with Sarah E. Abel and ending with Michelle E. Wyche, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on November 14, 2017.

Air Force nominations beginning with Brett L. Hedgepeth and ending with Ryan M. Yi, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on December 11, 2017.

Air Force nominations beginning with Joanna K. Kowalik and ending with Mahasin M. Hangalay, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on December 11, 2017.

Air Force nominations beginning with Trish M. Arno and ending with Christopher N. White, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on January 8, 2018.

Air Force nominations beginning with Jin Hwa Lee Frazier and ending with Jack David Spencer, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on January 18, 2018.

Air Force nominations beginning with Corey L. Anderson and ending with Robert K. Talton, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on January 18, 2018.

Air Force nomination of Michael C. Maine, to be Colonel.

Air Force nominations beginning with Melissa A. Day and ending with Roberta J. Stemem, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on January 18, 2018.

Air Force nominations beginning with Matthew M. Bird and ending with Paul Kelley Stroud, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on January 18, 2018.

Air Force nominations beginning with Holly L. Brewer and ending with Mario Tommasi, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on January 18, 2018.

Air Force nominations beginning with John G. Andrade and ending with Lawrence P. Wood, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on January 18, 2018.

Air Force nomination of Joshua M. Kovich, to be Colonel.

Air Force nominations beginning with David M. Dersch, Jr. and ending with Patrick J. Travers, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on January 18, 2018.

Air Force nominations beginning with Lance J. Kim and ending with Sonia W. S. Taoyi, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on January 18, 2018.

Air Force nomination of David L. Wells II, to be Colonel.

Army nomination of Aleksandr Gutman, to be Major.

Army nomination of Robert L. Ozburn, to be Major.

Army nomination of Jocelyn A. Leventhal, to be Colonel.

Army nominations beginning with Alyssa S. Adams and ending with Bradley O. Wood, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on January 18, 2018.

Army nominations beginning with Kenneth S. Katrosh and ending with Dolly R. Livingston, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on January 18, 2018.

Army nominations beginning with Joseph Kloiber and ending with Paul Navas III, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on January 18, 2018.

Army nomination of Erick C. Crews, to be Colonel.

Army nominations beginning with Michael C. Bradwick and ending with Douglas S. Yoon, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on January 18, 2018.

Army nominations beginning with Zachary T. Busenbark and ending with Jaime A. Sanjuan Rubio, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on January 18, 2018.

Army nominations beginning with Gabby V. Canceran and ending with John P. Cross, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on January 18, 2018.

Army nomination of Adam T. Soto, to be Lieutenant Colonel.

Army nomination of Philip J. Dacunto, to be Colonel.

Army nomination of Lyle A. Ourada, to be Colonel.

Army nomination of Sherry M. Kwon, to be Major.

Marine Corps nomination of Christopher N. Earley, to be Major.

Marine Corps nominations beginning with William Doctor, Jr. and ending with Scott E. Vasquez, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on January 18, 2018.

Marine Corps nominations beginning with Paulo T. Alves and ending with Patrick J. Toal, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on January 18, 2018.

Marine Corps nomination of Henry W. Soukup, to be Lieutenant Colonel.

Marine Corps nomination of William W. Inns III, to be Lieutenant Colonel.

Marine Corps nomination of Craig A. Elliott, to be Lieutenant Colonel.

Marine Corps nominations beginning with Bill W. Brooks, Jr. and ending with Kyle L. Hollis, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on January 18, 2018.

Marine Corps nominations beginning with Edward J. Abma and ending with Joseph A. Zimmermann, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on January 18, 2018.

Marine Corps nominations beginning with Justin R. Anderson and ending with Michael D. Wilcox, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on January 18, 2018.

Marine Corps nomination of Steven P. Hulse, to be Lieutenant Colonel.

Navy nominations beginning with Paul F. Magoulick and ending with Li Sung, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on November 14, 2017.

Navy nomination of Nicholas H. Steging, Jr., to be Lieutenant Commander.

Navy nomination of Jonathan S. Durham, to be Lieutenant Commander.

Navy nominations beginning with Laura C. Gilstrap and ending with Diana Tranyu, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on December 11, 2017.

Navy nomination of Todd D. Husty, to be Lieutenant Commander.

Navy nomination of Dawn M. Stankus, to be Lieutenant Commander.

Navy nomination of Paul I. Ahn, to be Lieutenant Commander.

Navy nomination of Allen G. Gunn, to be Lieutenant Commander.

(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 Mr. TESTER:

S. 2338. A bill to amend chapter 55 of title 5, United States Code, to reform the manner in which Border Patrol agents are compensated; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. PAUL:

S. 2339. A bill to amend title 31, United States Code, to provide for automatic continuing resolutions; to the Committee on Appropriations.

By Mr. SCHATZ (for himself, Mr. BROWN, Ms. WARREN, and Mr. CARDIN):

S. 2340. A bill to establish the Federal Labor-Management Partnership Council; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. TESTER (for himself, Mr. BROWN, and Mr. BLUMENTHAL):

S. 2341. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the processing of veterans benefits by the Department of Veterans Affairs, to limit the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to recover overpayments made by the Department and other amounts owed by veterans to the United States, to improve the due process accorded veterans with respect to such recovery, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. YOUNG:

S. 2342. A bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to create an innovation zone initiative, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. WICKER (for himself, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. DAINES, and Mr. TESTER):

S. 2343. A bill to require the Federal Communications Commission to establish a task force for meeting the connectivity and technology needs of precision agriculture in the United States; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

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

S. 2344. A bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to authorize additional visas for well-educated aliens to live and work in the United States, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. CORNYN (for himself, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. BROWN, Mr. CRUZ, Mr. HELLER, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. PORTMAN, and Mr. HATCH):

S. 2345. A bill to amend the DNA Analysis Backlog Elimination Act of 2000 to provide additional resources to State and local prosecutors, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. BOOKER (for himself and Mrs. CAPITO):

S. 2346. A bill to establish an innovative water infrastructure workforce development program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. TILLIS (for himself and Mr. VAN HOLLEN):

S. 2347. A bill to amend the Securities Act of 1933 to expand the ability to use testing

the waters and confidential draft registration submissions, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. HATCH:

S. 2348. A bill to amend title 49, United States Code, to ensure reliable air service to American Samoa; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

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

By Mr. SCOTT (for himself, Mr. ALEXANDER, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. BURR, Mr. CASSIDY, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. COTTON, Mr. CRUZ, Mr. DAINES, Mr. ENZI, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. GARDNER, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. HATCH, Mr. JOHNSON, Mr. LANKFORD, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. PAUL, Mr. PERDUE, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. TOOMEY, Mr. WICKER, Mr. YOUNG, and Mr. GRAHAM):

S. Res. 381. A resolution designating the week of January 21 through January 27, 2018, as “National School Choice Week”; considered and agreed to.

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

S. Res. 382. A resolution supporting the contributions of Catholic schools; considered and agreed to.

By Ms. DUCKWORTH (for herself, Ms. HARRIS, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Ms. WARREN, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. HEITKAMP, Ms. BALDWIN, Ms. STABENOW, Ms. HASSAN, Mr. KING, Mr. BROWN, Ms. CANTWELL, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. MARKEY, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Ms. HIRONO, Mrs. MURRAY, and Mr. NELSON):

S. Res. 383. A resolution expressing support for the designation of a “Women’s Health Research Day”; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 518

At the request of Mr. WICKER, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 518, a bill to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to provide for technical assistance for small treatment works.

S. 545

At the request of Mr. PAUL, the name of the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 545, a bill to preserve and protect the free choice of individual employees to form, join, or assist labor organizations, or to refrain from such activities.

S. 786

At the request of Mrs. SHAHEEN, the name of the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 786, a bill to establish a grant program relating to the prevention of student and student athlete opioid misuse.

S. 1361

At the request of Mr. CRAPO, the name of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1361, a bill to amend title XVIII of the

Social Security Act to allow physician assistants, nurse practitioners, and clinical nurse specialists to supervise cardiac, intensive cardiac, and pulmonary rehabilitation programs.

S. 1719

At the request of Ms. CANTWELL, the name of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1719, a bill to eliminate duties on imports of recreational performance outerwear, to establish the Sustainable Textile and Apparel Research Fund, and for other purposes.

S. 1922

At the request of Mr. GRAHAM, the name of the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1922, a bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to protect paincapable unborn children, and for other purposes.

S. 2008

At the request of Mrs. SHAHEEN, the name of the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2008, a bill to combat the opioid epidemic and drug sample backlogs.

S. 2065

At the request of Mr. YOUNG, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2065, a bill to establish a demonstration program to provide integrated care for Medicare beneficiaries with end-stage renal disease, and for other purposes.

S. 2121

At the request of Mr. HELLER, the name of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. YOUNG) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2121, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to require reporting of certain data by providers and suppliers of air ambulance services for purposes of reforming reimbursements for such services under the Medicare program, and for other purposes.

S. 2174

At the request of Mr. YOUNG, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2174, a bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct a study on the Veterans Crisis Line.

S. 2311

At the request of Mr. GRAHAM, the name of the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2311, a bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to protect paincapable unborn children, and for other purposes.

S. RES. 376

At the request of Mr. MERKLEY, the name of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. GARDNER) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 376, a resolution urging the Governments of Burma and Bangladesh to ensure the safe, dignified, voluntary, and sustainable return of the Rohingya refugees who have been displaced by the campaign of ethnic cleansing conducted by the Burmese military.

S. RES. 377

At the request of Ms. WARREN, the names of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. PERDUE), the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL) and the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 377, a resolution recognizing the importance of paying tribute to those individuals who have faithfully served and retired from the Armed Forces of the United States, designating April 18, 2018, as “Military Retiree Appreciation Day”, and encouraging the people of the United States to honor the past and continued service of military retirees to their local communities and the United States.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

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

S. 2344. A bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to authorize additional visas for well-educated aliens to live and work in the United States, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss the pressing need to reform our high-skilled immigration system. This is an issue I’ve championed for a number of years and one that becomes only more urgent with each passing season.

It is also an issue that I believe ties in directly with the recent discussions we have been having about merit-based immigration. As I said on the floor last week, high-skilled immigration is merit-based immigration. It is immigration targeted at the best, the brightest, and the most highly educated. It is immigration targeted at individuals who have the skills employers need. If we want to have a discussion about individuals who will add value to our economy, who will bring critical skills to the table, and who will help keep our country competitive, high-skilled immigration is what we should be talking about.

For years, we have had a system for bringing high-skilled workers from other countries to the United States to fill jobs for which there is a shortage of American labor. This system does not replace American jobs. Rather, it supplements our workforce with talent from other countries in industries where there are simply not enough qualified American workers to meet demand.

But the system is badly out of date. To begin with, it caps the number of high-skilled worker visas—also called H-1B visas—that employers can obtain each year at a number that is far below demand. This year, just like last year and the year before, USCIS reached the annual cap on H-1B visas within the first week that visa petitions could be submitted. In fact, during that single week, USCIS received over twice as many visa petitions as there were available visas.

Our laws also lack a straightforward path for companies to hire American-educated students from other countries on a permanent basis after graduation. We educate some of the world's best and brightest here in America and then send them back home because they can't get permanent work in the United States. That makes no sense. In fact, it is just plain stupid.

There is also a significant backlog for skilled professionals and advanced degree holders who want to come to the United States on green cards. These are the very individuals we should be encouraging to come to our country—individuals who have the technical skills our science and technology companies need and who will earn good salaries and contribute meaningfully to our economy—and yet we respire them to wait years and years to obtain a green card. Again, you want to talk about merit-based immigration? These are the folks we should be welcoming to our country with enthusiasm. Instead, we throw up barrier after barrier until many simply give up.

At the same time, a handful of companies have found ways to game the H-1B system to displace American employees with lower paid foreign workers. We have all seen the news stories: American workers told they are being replaced with foreign personnel and that if they want to receive a severance package or a positive employer reference, they better train their replacements. These stories disgust me as they should disgust all Americans. Under no circumstances should an employer be able to use a program that was designed to mitigate workforce shortages to put hardworking Americans out of a job. That was never the intent of the H-1B program, and it must not be allowed to continue.

There are also other problems with the H-1B program that we need to fix. Too often, large employers crowd out small businesses by submitting far more visa petitions than they actually need. This practice can lead to wasted visas and puts small employers at a significant disadvantage in the H-1B lottery.

Another problem concerns H-1B workers who wish to transition to green card status. Because of the significant backlog in employment-based green cards, high-skilled workers who wish to come to the United States on a permanent basis often start out on H-1B visas, and because of quirks in our immigration laws, these workers must stay with their original sponsoring employers until green cards become available, which may take 10 years or longer. During this time, the employee may be forced to accept below-market wages or suboptimal working conditions just to stay in the green card queue. If the employee were to take a higher paying, or better, job at another company, the employee would lose his or her place in the green card line. This creates a power imbalance between H-

1B workers and employers that leads to a whole host of issues.

So there are a number of problems we need to address with our high-skilled immigration system.

That's why today I am introducing my Immigration Innovation Act, or I-Squared, to bring our high-skilled immigration system into the 21st century. This critical legislation contains reforms that will end abuse, provide a clearer path for individuals educated in the United States to stay in the United States, and enable employers more easily to hire the talent they need.

I would like to thank my good friend from Arizona, Senator FLAKE, for co-sponsoring I-Squared. Senator FLAKE and I have worked together for a long time on this issue, and I am grateful for his leadership.

Many of my colleagues are familiar with I-Squared. I have introduced previous versions in the last two Congresses. The version I am introducing today, however, has a number of important changes. In many ways, it is a different bill. Allow me to highlight some of the changes.

Like previous versions, my updated I-Squared bill raises the annual H-1B cap to better meet market demand. In fact, it ties the cap to market demand so that the cap increases and decreases as demand increases and decreases. It also enables H-1B workers to change jobs without losing their H-1B status and allows foreign students attending American universities to declare an intent to stay in the United States following graduation so they can more easily secure full-time employment. Lastly, the bill authorizes the recapture of unused green cards from previous years and eliminates per-country green card caps, which unfairly discriminate against individuals from countries with larger numbers of applicants.

Here is what is new to I-Squared this Congress.

First, and most importantly, the bill creates an express prohibition on hiring an H-1B worker with the purpose and intent to replace an American worker. That was never the intent of the H-1B program and must not be allowed to happen.

Second, the bill creates an express prohibition on conditioning an employee's pay or severance on training an H-1B replacement.

Third, the bill raises the level-1 wage employers must pay to prevent employers from using H-1B workers to undercut labor costs.

Fourth, the bill updates the 1998 law that exempts H-1B employers from certain recruitment and non-displacement requirements if the employer pays its H-1B employees a high enough salary. Specifically, the bill raises the salary threshold to match inflation and eliminates the exemption altogether for particularly heavy users of H-1Bs.

Fifth, the bill imposes penalties on employers who file more H-1B petitions than they need to prevent large, cash-

rich employers from freezing out small businesses. All of these provisions will work to tamp down on the abuses we have seen in the H-1B system.

My updated I-Squared bill will also end the problem of H-1B workers who are on the path to a green card from being locked into their current jobs by enabling such workers to change jobs earlier in the process without losing their places in the green card line, and it creates a new, streamlined green card process for high-skilled workers who wish to come to the United States on a permanent basis to obtain conditional residency without having to use the cumbersome H-1B system.

Many of the problems with our current H-1B program stem from the fact that workers seeking temporary employment and workers seeking long-term employment are funneled into the same system. My updated I-Squared bill will help separate these two employment streams in ways that will benefit both employers and employees.

Finally, my updated I-Squared bill will provide nearly \$1 billion in new funding for STEM education and worker training programs without raising a single cent in taxes. It does this by increasing fees for H-1B petitions and green cards and directing the new funding to State block grants for STEM training.

In many ways, this last piece is the most important provision of I-Squared. The STEM disciplines—science, technology, engineering, and math—are going to be critical to our country's success in the coming decades. Increased funding for STEM education and worker training programs will help ensure that we have the workforce we need to succeed in the global economy. It will help produce more graduates with the computer science and engineering skills high-tech employers require. It will enable workers displaced by globalization and the changing economy to acquire new, in-demand skills so they can restart their careers, and if we're successful, increased STEM funding may even reduce the demand for H-1B and other skilled visas in the first place because it will better align our workforce with employer needs.

I-Squared is supported by a broad coalition of tech commies, trade associations, and other job creators. I ask unanimous consent at this time to be printed in the RECORD a number of letters in support of the bill, including letters from the Information Technology Industry Council and the Semiconductor Industry Association. Other key stakeholders who will be issuing statements of support include Microsoft, Facebook, the Internet Association, and the Software Alliance.

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

ITI,
Washington, DC, January 22, 2018.
Re Immigration Innovation Act of 2018.

Hon. ORRIN HATCH,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR HATCH: On behalf of the 60 members of the Information Technology Industry Council (ITI), I write to express our strong support for your legislation, the Immigration Innovation (I-Squared) Act of 2018. ITI is the voice of the high-tech community, advocating for policies that advance U.S. leadership in technology and innovation, open access to new and emerging markets, protect and enhance consumer choice, and encourage domestic and global competition. Our membership includes companies from all verticals of the technology sector, including semiconductor, network equipment, software, digital services, hardware, mobile device, and internet companies.

We have long advocated for changes to our immigration system that allow employers to attract and retain the world's best and highly-educated employees so that we can continue to innovate and compete in a global marketplace. Our members are committed to growing the U.S. economy and creating jobs for—and protecting—American workers. In fact, in the tech sector, we are producing jobs faster than we can fill them. In 2016, there were approximately 3.3 million science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) job openings posted online. By contrast, in that same year, U.S. universities graduated 568,000 students with STEM degrees. To meet this job demand, it is vital we not only provide STEM education and training to more American students and workers, but that we also ensure U.S.-based employers can recruit the top talent from American universities and from abroad.

The United States is in dire need of a renewed skilled immigration system and the economic benefits of such reforms could not be clearer. For example, over 230,000 additional computer-related jobs would have been created for American workers if not for the 2007 and 2008 H-1B visa petition denials. Furthermore, more than half of the startup companies valued at over \$1 billion in the United States were founded by at least one immigrant, many of whom initially came here on H-1B visas. On average, each of these companies now employs 760 Americans. Yet, our broken immigration system continues to stymie such talent and future innovation.

ITI welcomes the introduction of the I-Squared Act of 2018. This critical legislation would upgrade our immigration system for the 21st century economy in several ways. First, it will reset the number of H-1B visas and allow their availability to adjust to meet market demands. Second, it reforms the green card system in ways that will reduce the current backlog, and enable the most exceptional and highly-skilled foreign-born individuals to innovate, start new companies, and advance their professional development and success in the United States. Third, the legislation reflects our industry's commitment to protect American workers, as well as our support for domestic STEM education and training programs.

The I-Squared Act is much-needed legislation that will enable skilled workers who wish to work in the United States to propel American innovation, engender growth in our economy, and help create jobs here at home. We commend you for your diligence on this important issue and urge both the House and Senate to support this important legislation.

Sincerely,

DEAN C. GARFIELD,
President and CEO.

SEMICONDUCTOR
INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION,
Washington, DC, January 24, 2018.

Hon. ORRIN HATCH,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR HATCH: On behalf of the Semiconductor Industry Association (SIA), I am writing to express our strong support for the Immigration Innovation Act of 2018 ("I-Squared Act").

High-skilled immigration reform is a critical priority for the U.S. semiconductor industry. In order to compete globally, SIA member companies require the talent of the best and brightest scientists and engineers in the world. U.S. colleges and universities attract the best students to America to obtain advanced degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Many of these students significantly contribute to the U.S. innovation ecosystem through federally and privately funded research during their graduate training. Upon graduation, these highly educated STEM graduates very often want to work in the U.S., but are too often compelled to return to their home countries where they compete with U.S. companies. This has the impact of reducing the competitiveness of U.S. companies and restricting growth of our economy.

The I-Squared Act would strengthen the U.S. economy and promote innovation by making important improvements to the H-1B and the green card programs. These necessary reforms will help spur innovation and create thousands of high paying manufacturing and research jobs here in America.

SIA appreciates your leadership on the I-Squared Act, and we look forward to working with you to ensure its prompt enactment into law.

Sincerely,

JOHN NEUFFER,
President & CEO.

COUNCIL FOR GLOBAL IMMIGRATION
AND SOCIETY FOR HUMAN RE-
SOURCE MANAGEMENT,
January 25, 2018.

CFGI AND SHRM APPLAUD IMMIGRATION
INNOVATION ACT OF 2018

THE I-SQUARED BILL IS THE RIGHT SOLUTION
FOR EMPLOYERS AND THE WORKFORCE

ALEXANDRIA, VA.—The Council for Global Immigration (CFGI) and the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) applaud today's introduction of the Immigration Innovation Act of 2018 (I-Squared). The bill includes provisions to modernize the high-skilled employment-based immigration system in a way that would work for all who have a stake in immigration, including employers and the workforce.

The legislation, introduced by Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) and Sen. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.), would establish a voluntary trusted employer program, among other provisions. Consistent with a CFGI proposal, a trusted employer program would make the system more efficient for employers and the government.

"This legislation would ensure that employers acting in good faith have access to the top global talent they need to compete, while providing additional resources to train and educate U.S. workers in high-demand STEM fields," said Lynn Shotwell, executive director of CFGI. "It would also reform the H-1B program with enhanced protections for U.S. workers, an important change that CFGI supports."

"We endorse the bill's provision that would keep today's green card system in place, but provide a more direct path to a green card when there are no able, willing or qualified U.S. workers available," Shotwell continued. "This option would make it easier for profes-

sionals to accept employment with new employers, a key change we support. We will include this legislation in Congress as part of our advocacy efforts to advance fair, innovative and competitive immigration reforms."

The members of CFGI and SHRM are working to create a 21st century workplace that empowers employers and the workforce to compete and win in an increasingly competitive global economy. Building an immigration system that is fair, innovative and competitive is a critical component to realizing this goal.

"We applaud Senators Hatch and Flake for their commitment to invest in the future of the U.S. workforce and modernize our nation's outdated employment-based immigration system in a way that works for the workforce," said Mike Aitken, SHRM's vice president of government affairs.

"This legislation addresses many of the serious challenges facing employers navigating the current maze of immigration laws and regulations, including eliminating green card backlogs and modernizing the H-1B visa system," Aitken added. "These reforms are a critical component to building and supporting a 21st century workplace in which employers and the workforce can thrive."

CFGI and SHRM are eager to work on the bill as it moves forward.

SIIA SAYS I-SQUARED ACT IS CRITICAL FOR
U.S. ECONOMY AND GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS
[Jan. 25, 2018]

WASHINGTON D.C.—The Software & Information Industry Association (SIIA) today welcomed the introduction of the "Immigration Innovation (I-Squared) Act of 2018," by Senators Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Jeff Flake (R-AZ).

SIIA Senior Vice President for Public Policy, Mark MacCarthy, issued the following statement:

"The U.S. IT industry—and the American economy more broadly—has long benefited from the contributions of highly-educated workers, regardless of where they were born. The I-Squared Act will make critical reforms to the U.S. immigration laws to help U.S. companies attract and retain the best and most innovative employees from around the world.

"This bill will greatly enable continued U.S. innovation, job creation, and economic expansion, while preventing abuses of the H-1B program that could harm U.S. workers. The legislation also promotes the American education system by funding state grants to promote STEM education and training in the U.S.

"SIIA thanks Senators Hatch and Flake for co-sponsoring the I-Squared Act, and we look forward to working with them and other congressional leaders to enact this critical legislation."

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, there is a lot of debate about immigration right now. We all know that we need to do something about DACA. I know that as well as anyone. I have been working on a solution for the Dreamer population for a very long time, and we are going to find a solution. We also need to do something about border security and interior enforcement so we don't end up back in the same place 20 years from now.

But we can walk and chew gum at the same time, and I think talking about merit-based immigration is a good thing. It is an important principle.

As we do so, we need to remember that we already have merit-based programs built into our existing immigration laws. The problem is those programs aren't working the way they are supposed to. They are not properly aligned with employer needs, and in their current set-up, there is too much room for waste and abuse.

My I-Squared bill will fix both of those problems. It will help ensure we have the talent in our country that we need to succeed. It will also help equip the next generation of Americans to meet the demands of our increasingly tech-driven economy.

I-Squared will also help put an end to the troubling abuses we have seen in the H-1B program and ensure that the program is used as it was intended—to supplement, not replace, American labor.

I repeat what I said at the outset: High-skilled immigration is merit-based immigration. It is immigration targeted at the best, the brightest, and the most highly educated.

As we debate how to improve our immigration system, let us keep in mind that we already have merit-based programs in our existing laws. Thinking outside the box is important, but it is also important not to overlook what is right here in front of us.

My I-Squared bill will help ensure that we have a high-skilled immigration system that works, that meets employer needs, that keeps America competitive, and that prepares the next generation of Americans to succeed. It is commonsense legislation; it is balanced legislation; and I urge all of my colleagues to support it.

By Mr. CORNYN (for himself, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. BROWN, Mr. CRUZ, Mr. HELLER, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. PORTMAN, and Mr. HATCH):

S. 2345. A bill to amend the DNA Analysis Backlog Elimination Act of 2000 to provide additional resources to State and local prosecutors, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

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. 2345

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Justice Served Act of 2018”.

SEC. 2. PROSECUTION OF DNA COLD CASES.

(a) DEBBIE SMITH DNA BACKLOG GRANT PROGRAM.—Section 2 of the DNA Analysis Backlog Elimination Act of 2000 (34 U.S.C. 40701) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by adding at the end the following:

“(9) To increase the capacity of State and local prosecution offices to address the backlog of violent crime cases in which suspects have been identified through DNA evidence.”; and

(2) in subsection (c), by adding at the end the following:

“(5) ALLOCATION OF GRANT AWARDS FOR PROSECUTORS.—For each fiscal year, not less than 5 percent, but not more than 7 percent, of the grant amounts distributed under paragraph (1) shall, if sufficient applications to justify such amounts are received by the Attorney General, be awarded for purposes described in subsection (a)(9), provided that none of the funds required to be distributed under this paragraph shall decrease or otherwise limit the availability of funds required to be awarded to States or units of local government under paragraph (3).”.

(b) PROSECUTION OF COLD CASES.—Of the amounts made available to the Attorney General under section 2 of the DNA Analysis Backlog Elimination Act of 2000 (34 U.S.C. 40701) for a DNA Analysis and capacity enhancement program and for other local, State, and Federal forensic activities for the purpose described in section 2 of the DNA Analysis Backlog Elimination Act of 2000 (34 U.S.C. 40701) under the heading “STATE AND LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE” under the heading “OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS” under the heading “DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE” in fiscal years 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022 not less than 5 percent, but not more than 7 percent, of such amounts shall be provided for grants for prosecutors to increase the capacity of State and local prosecution offices to address the cold cases involving violent crime, where suspects have been identified through DNA evidence.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 381—DESIGNATING THE WEEK OF JANUARY 21 THROUGH JANUARY 27, 2018, AS “NATIONAL SCHOOL CHOICE WEEK”

Mr. SCOTT (for himself, Mr. ALEXANDER, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. BURR, Mr. CASSIDY, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. COTTON, Mr. CRUZ, Mr. DAINES, Mr. ENZI, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. GARDNER, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. HATCH, Mr. JOHNSON, Mr. LANKFORD, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. PAUL, Mr. PERDUE, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. TOOMEY, Mr. WICKER, Mr. YOUNG, and Mr. GRAHAM) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 381

Whereas providing a diversity of choices in K-12 education empowers parents to select education environments that meet the individual needs and strengths of their children;

Whereas high-quality K-12 education environments of all varieties are available in the United States, including traditional public schools, public charter schools, public magnet schools, private schools, online academies, and home schooling;

Whereas talented teachers and school leaders in each of the education environments prepare children to achieve their dreams;

Whereas more families than ever before in the United States actively choose the best education for their children;

Whereas more public awareness of the issue of parental choice in education can inform additional families of the benefits of proactively choosing challenging, motivating, and effective education environments for their children;

Whereas the process by which parents choose schools for their children is non-political, nonpartisan, and deserves the utmost respect; and

Whereas hundreds of organizations, more than 9,000 schools, and millions of individuals in the United States celebrate the benefits of educational choice during the 8th annual National School Choice Week, held the week of January 21 through January 27, 2018: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates the week of January 21 through January 27, 2018, as “National School Choice Week”;

(2) congratulates students, parents, teachers, and school leaders from K-12 education environments of all varieties for their persistence, achievements, dedication, and contributions to society in the United States;

(3) encourages all parents, during National School Choice Week, to learn more about the education options available to them; and

(4) encourages the people of the United States to hold appropriate programs, events, and activities during National School Choice Week to raise public awareness of the benefits of opportunity in education.

SENATE RESOLUTION 382—SUPPORTING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Mr. DONNELLY (for himself, Mr. TOOMEY, Mr. RUBIO, and Mr. CASEY) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 382

Whereas Catholic schools in the United States are internationally acclaimed for their academic excellence and provide students with more than an exceptional scholastic education;

Whereas Catholic schools instill a broad, values-added education emphasizing the life-long development of moral, intellectual, physical, and social values in young people in the United States;

Whereas Catholic schools serve the Nation by providing a diverse student population from all regions of the country and all socioeconomic backgrounds a strong academic and moral foundation, including 41.4 percent of students from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds and 19 percent from non-Catholic families;

Whereas Catholic schools are an affordable option for parents, particularly in underserved urban areas;

Whereas Catholic schools produce students strongly dedicated to their faith, values, families, and communities by providing an intellectually stimulating environment rich in spiritual, character, and moral development;

Whereas Catholic schools are committed to community service, producing graduates who hold “helping others” among their core values;

Whereas the total Catholic school student enrollment for the 2017-2018 academic year is almost 1,900,000 and the student-teacher ratio is 12 to 1;

Whereas the Catholic high school graduation rate is 99 percent, with 86 percent of graduates attending 4-year colleges;

Whereas in the 1972 pastoral message concerning Catholic education, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops stated, “Education is one of the most important ways by which the Church fulfills its commitment to the dignity of the person and building of community. Community is central to education ministry, both as a necessary condition and an ardently desired goal. The educational efforts of the Church, therefore, must be directed to forming persons-in-community; for the education of the individual Christian is important not only to his solitary destiny, but also the destinies of the many communities in which he lives.”;

Whereas the week of January 28, 2018, to February 3, 2018, has been designated as National Catholic Schools Week by the National Catholic Educational Association and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and January 31, 2018, has been designated National Appreciation Day for Catholic Schools;

Whereas the National Catholic Schools Week was first established in 1974 and has been celebrated annually for the past 44 years;

Whereas while Catholic schools must work hard to maintain enrollment, the demand and enthusiasm for Catholic schools remains strong;

Whereas 30 percent of Catholic schools have waiting lists for admission and new schools are opening across the country; and

Whereas the theme for National Catholic Schools Week 2018 is Catholic Schools: Learn. Serve. Lead. Succeed.: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) supports the goals of National Catholic Schools Week, an event cosponsored by the National Catholic Educational Association and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and established to recognize the vital contributions of the thousands of Catholic elementary and secondary schools in the United States;

(2) applauds the National Catholic Educational Association and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops on their selection of a theme that all can celebrate; and

(3) supports the continued dedication of Catholic schools, students, parents, and teachers across the United States toward academic excellence, and supports the key role they play in promoting and ensuring a brighter, stronger future for the Nation.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 1920. Mr. McCONNELL (for Mr. BLUNT) proposed an amendment to the bill S. 1873, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a program to establish peer specialists in patient aligned care teams at medical centers of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 1920. Mr. McCONNELL (for Mr. BLUNT) proposed an amendment to the bill S. 1873, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a program to establish peer specialists in patient aligned care teams at medical centers of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes; as follows:

On page 2, strike lines 15 through 18 and insert the following:

(1) Not later than December 31, 2018, at not fewer than 25 medical centers of the Department.

(2) Not later than December 31, 2019, at not fewer than 50 medical centers of the Department.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I have 9 requests for committees to meet during today's session of the Senate. They have the approval of the Majority and Minority leaders.

Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standing Rules of the Sen-

ate, the following committees are authorized to meet during today's session of the Senate:

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The Committee on Armed Services is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, January 25, 2018, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing on pending nominations.

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The Committee on Armed Services is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, January 25, 2018, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing entitled "Global Challenges and the U.S. National Security Strategy."

COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING AND URBAN AFFAIRS

The Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, January 25, 2018, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing entitled "CFIUS Reform: Administration Perspectives on the essential elements."

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

The Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, January 25, 2018, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing entitled "This is Not a Drill: An Examination of the Wireless Emergency Alert System."

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, January 25, 2018, at 10 a.m., at the Washington Convention Center, to conduct a hearing entitled "Road to Tomorrow: Energy Innovation in Automotive Technologies."

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

The Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, January 25, 2018, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing entitled "Reauthorizing the Higher Education Act: Access and Innovation."

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

The Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, January 25, 2018, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a hearing on the nomination of Frank T. Brogan, of Pennsylvania, to be Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education, Department of Education.

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

The Committee on the Judiciary is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, January 25, 2018, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing on subcommittee assignments and the following nominations: Kurt D. Engelhardt, of Louisiana, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit, Barry W. Ashe, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Louisiana, Howard C. Niel-

son, Jr., to be United States District Judge for the District of Utah, James R. Sweeney II, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Indiana, and John C. Anderson, to be United States Attorney for the District of New Mexico, Brandon J. Fremin, to be United States Attorney for the Middle District of Louisiana, and David G. Jolley, to be United States Marshal for the Eastern District of Tennessee, all of the Department of Justice.

PERMANENT SUBCOMMITTEE ON INVESTIGATIONS

The Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, January 25, 2018, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing entitled "Combating the Opioid Crisis: Exploiting Vulnerabilities in the International Mail."

VETERAN PARTNERS' EFFORTS TO ENHANCE REINTEGRATION ACT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Veterans' Affairs be discharged from further consideration of S. 1873 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The clerk will report the bill by title.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1873) to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a program to establish peer specialists in patient aligned care teams at medical centers of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

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

Mr. McCONNELL. I further ask unanimous consent that the Blunt amendment, which is at the desk, be considered and agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 1920) was agreed to, as follows:

(Purpose: To modify the timeline for establishment of the program)

On page 2, strike lines 15 through 18 and insert the following:

(1) Not later than December 31, 2018, at not fewer than 25 medical centers of the Department.

(2) Not later than December 31, 2019, at not fewer than 50 medical centers of the Department.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and the Senate proceed to vote on passage of the bill, as amended.

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

If not, the bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall it pass?

The bill (S. 1873), as amended, was passed.

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

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

NATIONAL SCHOOL CHOICE WEEK

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 381, submitted earlier today.

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

The bill clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 381), designating the week of January 21 through January 27, 2018, as "National School Choice Week."

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

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

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

The resolution (S. Res. 381) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

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

SUPPORTING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. Res. 382, submitted earlier today.

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

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. Res. 382) supporting the contributions of Catholic schools.

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

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

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

The resolution (S. Res. 382) 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, JANUARY 29, 2018

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 2 p.m., Monday, January 29; further, that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and morning business be closed; further, that following leader remarks, the Senate resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 2311, with the time until 5:30 p.m. equally divided in the usual form; finally, that notwithstanding the provisions of rule XXII, the cloture motions filed during Wednesday's session ripen in the order filed at 5:30 p.m., Monday.

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

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL MONDAY, JANUARY 29, 2018, AT 2 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 4:01 p.m., adjourned until Monday, January 29, 2018, at 2 p.m.

NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate:

FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION

ROHIT CHOPRA, OF NEW YORK, TO BE A FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSIONER FOR THE UNEXPIRED TERM OF SEVEN YEARS FROM SEPTEMBER 26, 2012, VICE JOSHUA D. WRIGHT, RESIGNED.

NOAH JOSHUA PHILLIPS, OF MARYLAND, TO BE A FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSIONER FOR THE TERM OF SEVEN YEARS FROM SEPTEMBER 26, 2016, VICE JULIE SIMONE BRILL, TERM EXPIRED.

JOSEPH SIMONS, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE A FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSIONER FOR THE UNEXPIRED TERM OF SEVEN YEARS FROM SEPTEMBER 26, 2017, VICE TERRELL MCSWEENEY, TERM EXPIRED.

CHRISTINE S. WILSON, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE A FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSIONER FOR THE UNEXPIRED TERM OF SEVEN YEARS FROM SEPTEMBER 26, 2011, VICE MAUREEN K. OHLHAUSEN.

CHRISTINE S. WILSON, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE A FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSIONER FOR THE TERM OF SEVEN YEARS FROM SEPTEMBER 26, 2018. (REAPPOINTMENT)

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate January 25, 2018:

THE JUDICIARY

JONATHAN H. PITTMAN, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, TO BE AN ASSOCIATE JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA FOR THE TERM OF FIFTEEN YEARS.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

R. D. JAMES, OF MISSOURI, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY.