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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Today's prayer will be offered by Sharad H. Creasman, campus minister and advisor to the president of Brevard College in Brevard, NC.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

We are grateful to stand at the beginning of a new day and a new session. Thank You for the roads we have traveled and for the strength, courage, and fortitude to continue on the roads yet traveled.

Thank You also for the incredible individuals in this space, who have committed themselves to a life of service—women and men who have chosen to use their gifts and their passions to serve their respective constituencies and our Nation.

Help us all on this day to choose courage over fear, benevolence over unkindness, and selflessness over selfishness. Remind us in all of our endeavors that Your energizing and enlivening presence is already with us. And as we continue to press forward through this session and this day, thank You for being the one who has already made the way. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

CONGRATULATING SENATOR COCHRAN

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to start by taking a moment to recognize our distinguished colleague who just marked an impressive milestone in the history of the Senate. Last week, the senior Senator from Mississippi became the 10th longest serving Senator in U.S. history. With over 38 years of service in this body, Senator THAD COCHRAN has proved himself to be a leader and a statesman.

When the Magnolia State sent Senator COCHRAN to the Senate, it was the first time a Republican had won a statewide election in Mississippi in over a century. When he decided to run, Senator COCHRAN didn't falter in the face of long odds. He campaigned hard, and he won. Because of his passionate and dedicated service, the people of Mississippi have sent him back time and again.

Senator COCHRAN has come a long way from his first job as a carhop at Gunn's Dairy Barn near Jackson, MS. Now, he proudly serves the people of his State and helps craft legislation for the entire Nation.

Here in the Senate, we have all had the opportunity to work with Senator COCHRAN. Whether on agricultural issues, responding to national disasters, or negotiating appropriations bills, Senator COCHRAN has played a crucial role on many pieces of legislation. As the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, he has done important work as well.

I know that colleagues on both sides can agree that working with him is always an enjoyable experience. Senator COCHRAN has accomplished a great deal during his years in the Senate. With a conservative philosophy and an affable personality that endears him to both sides of the aisle, Senator COCHRAN has made an important impact.

A few years ago, Senator COCHRAN reached another important milestone when he cast vote No. 12,000 here in the

Senate. At that time, I mentioned that Time Magazine included him on the list of America's "Top 10 Senators." They named him "The Quiet Persuader." We all know that Washington is filled with loud voices, but Senator COCHRAN's manner has served our friend and this institution very, very well.

I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Senator COCHRAN, his wife Kay, and his entire family on this notable occasion.

REPEALING AND REPLACING OBAMACARE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter entirely, I appreciated the opportunity to visit with the President yesterday after his impressive speech before Congress. We had a positive discussion about the upcoming legislative agenda. One important item we discussed was the way forward on repealing and replacing ObamaCare.

Just yesterday, our Members came together for a productive discussion on the next steps toward protecting American families from the broken promises of ObamaCare. Here in Congress, we remain committed to working with the administration to repeal and replace this failed law.

President Trump, in his address to Congress, reaffirmed his own commitment as well. He provided important direction on what the path forward should look like as we transition away from ObamaCare toward truly patient-centered care.

Now, look, we know this transition isn't going to be easy. Providing relief from the disaster of ObamaCare is going to be a challenge. However, the status quo is simply not sustainable. The American people need help, and they need it right now.

That is why we started the process of repealing and replacing this partisan law at the beginning of the year, and it is why we will keep working to make

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



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this right for American families. It is what the people who sent us here have called for, and it remains among our top priorities here in the Senate.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on yet another matter, the Senate has been working to put the President's Cabinet in place with several important agencies that serve the American people. I am pleased to share that, by the end of the week, we will have confirmed even more nominees, including Representative ZINKE, whom we approved yesterday, as well as Dr. Ben Carson and Gov. Rick Perry. Both Carson and Perry received bipartisan support in committee, and I expect to see the same when the Senate votes to confirm them. Once we do, Dr. Carson can begin bringing much needed reforms to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, while Governor Perry can begin leading on smarter policies at the Energy Department.

I also look forward to confirming another important nomination before the Senate. Judge Neil Gorsuch continues to earn praise from both sides of the aisle, including many on the political left. President Obama's legal mentor calls Gorsuch "brilliant."

His former Solicitor General praises Gorsuch for his "fairness."

Alan Dershowitz says Gorsuch is "highly credentialed" and "hard to oppose on the merits."

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg recently had praise for the judge, too, complimenting his collegiality and excellent writing abilities.

Judge Gorsuch has received wide support in his local community as well, with more than 200 Colorado lawyers from across the political spectrum voicing their support for his nomination. Here is what they said in a letter to Colorado's Senators just last week. They wrote:

We know Judge Gorsuch to be a person of utmost character. He is fair, decent, and honest, both as a judge and a person. His record shows that he believes strongly in the independence of the judiciary. Judge Gorsuch has a well-earned reputation as an excellent jurist. He voted with the majority in 98 percent of the cases he heard on the Tenth Circuit, a great portion of which were joined by judges appointed by Democratic presidents.

We all agree that Judge Gorsuch is exceptionally well-qualified to join the Supreme Court. He deserves an up or down vote.

That is from 200 Colorado lawyers.

It is praise that has been reiterated by other Coloradans as well. Here is how the Colorado Springs Gazette put it this week in an editorial supporting the nomination. The paper said:

To vote against Judge Gorsuch would favor . . . party over someone who clearly ranks among the top-qualified nominees in the court's history.

The considerable praise we have heard regarding Judge Gorsuch is not surprising when we consider the reputation he has earned across his State,

in the Federal judiciary, and among those who have worked with him through the years. That includes Judge John Kane, a senior district court judge in Colorado appointed by President Carter. He also shared his view this week on what type of jurist Judge Gorsuch has been, and will continue to be, if confirmed to the Supreme Court. Here is what he had to say. This is a Carter appointee:

[Judge Gorsuch's] opinions, concurrences and dissents are clear, cogent and mercifully to the point. I have been affirmed and reversed by him and in each instance I thought he was right and fair.

Let me repeat what Judge Kane, a Carter appointee, said:

I have been affirmed and reversed by him and in each instance I thought he was right and fair.

Judge Kane added that Judge Gorsuch's "writings indicate a strong respect for tradition and precedent" and, he said, "I don't find his decisions reflecting any sort of ideological bias."

"I am very comfortable with this nomination," Judge Kane concluded, and "I'm not sure we could expect better, or that better presently exists."

Let me say that again. This is a Carter appointee to Federal courts. He said: "I'm not sure we could expect better, or that better presently exists."

In other words, no one is better.

It is high acclaim from someone who not only has professional experience with the nominee before us but also someone who, as a judge himself, has a clear-eyed understanding of the standards a jurist must uphold.

In the coming days, we can expect to see more examples of bipartisan support for Judge Gorsuch. He is an outstanding nominee. He is both well qualified and well respected, and he deserves fair consideration and an up-or-down vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

THANKING THE MAJORITY LEADER

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, let me thank the distinguished majority leader for his generous remarks about my service in the Senate, as has been reflected by the last long number of years. It is heartwarming, and it also reminds me of how important our collective efforts are for the future of our country, our economy, peace in our time, and in helping ensure that we make our time here a positive influence over the opportunities that are available for our citizens to enjoy life, safe and secure, with good leaders and commonsense leaders. That is what our leader is.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Benjamin S. Carson, Sr., of Florida, to be Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be 20 minutes of debate equally divided.

If nobody yields time, the time will be charged equally.

The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I stand this morning just before we vote on Dr. Benjamin Carson as the next Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development to strongly urge my colleagues to support his nomination.

Dr. Carson was advanced in the committee by a voice vote, as Senator BROWN and I worked with the Banking Committee to assure that his nomination moved through smoothly. I thank Senator BROWN for his cooperation and work to help us move this nomination promptly.

Dr. Carson also received numerous letters of support from former HUD Secretaries and housing stakeholders alike. There truly is an excitement for his leadership to be brought to the Department.

As I highlighted yesterday, Dr. Carson has said that once confirmed, he is committed to embarking on a listening tour, where he will hear stories and concerns from housing stakeholders across America. This presents a real opportunity for Americans to weigh in on how housing issues affect them in their local communities—input that can make a lasting impact on HUD policies.

Once Dr. Carson is confirmed, we can begin working on several important issues under HUD's jurisdiction. Homelessness, especially among our Nation's veterans, needs to be addressed. We need to streamline regulatory burdens on local public housing agencies so that they can more efficiently serve the communities that rely on them. Financing arrangements for small and rural affordable housing developments should also be strengthened.

For years, there has been bipartisan interest in a number of these reforms. I look forward to having a strong partner at HUD so that we can tackle these important issues and many others head-on. I am eager to get that process started and to start work with Dr. Carson, with Ranking Member BROWN, and

with other members of the Banking Committee on these critical issues.

Again, I urge my colleagues to vote to confirm Dr. Carson so that this important work can begin.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, the Department of Housing and Urban Development plays a vital role ensuring that all Americans have access to safe affordable housing. Affordable housing should not be a political issue; it is a moral issue. Programs like Section 8 and the Community Development Block Grant, CDBG, Program keep families in their homes and support and maintain affordable housing. That is not up for debate.

I am disappointed that President Trump did not look to our knowledgeable housing advocates across the country to identify a qualified, experienced nominee to serve as Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development and instead nominated Dr. Ben Carson to this important position. In testimony before the Senate Banking Committee, Dr. Carson, like many nominees, said the right things. He made the right promises. I want to believe that he will fulfill those commitments.

Programs administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development keep shelter over the heads of our Nation's struggling and low-income families. They combat homelessness among adults and children alike by building and maintaining affordable housing and helping families buy their first homes. I am proud of the progress we have made in Vermont and across the Nation through programs implemented by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. During his confirmation hearing, Dr. Carson testified to the crucial role of rental assistance programs. He pledged to be an advocate for funding for housing assistance programs. He turned away from his previous call for a 10-percent across-the-board cut to housing programs. I hope that Dr. Carson will fulfill these commitments.

I continue to have concerns regarding Dr. Carson's seeming animosity toward the affirmatively furthering fair housing, AFFH rule, which he called a "failed socialist experiment" in an op-ed in the Washington Times. While Dr. Carson tried to minimize those comments in his hearing, I remain concerned that Dr. Carson doesn't understand the AFFH rule. This rule asks cities and towns receiving Federal dollars to look at their housing patterns to identify racial bias and to take action to rectify any bias they find. Dr. Carson has called it social engineering. I call it social justice and support the examination of policies to promote equality and eliminate discrimination. During his confirmation hearing, he pledged to enforce our fair housing laws. I believe this includes upholding the AFFH.

I am concerned that Dr. Carson lacks the necessary experience to successfully serve as our Secretary of Housing

and Urban Development. He will be confirmed, of that there is no doubt. I hope that Dr. Carson will work with both sides of the aisle to further the mission of the Department, strengthen the successful programs that keep families in their homes, build and support and maintain affordable housing in Vermont and across the Nation, and help first-time home buyers realize their homeownership goals.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, Congress created the Department of Housing and Urban Development in 1965 to create strong, sustainable, inclusive communities and quality affordable homes for all Americans. During last year's Presidential campaign, however, President Trump often called into question his commitment to an inclusive America. Thus, the abilities and commitment of the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development are all the more important.

I voted, along with others in the Banking Committee, to report Dr. Carson's nomination to the full Senate because I wanted to allow the nomination to proceed to the floor for consideration and debate. During that time, I have further examined the nomination. I reviewed the statements and letters that I have received from organizations and individuals who are directly impacted by the work of HUD.

Dr. Carson is a gifted neurosurgeon, but nothing in his experience indicates that he is prepared to run an 8,400-employee government agency. Armstrong Williams, a business manager and close friend of Dr. Carson's, told Reuters in November, "His life has not prepared him to be a Cabinet secretary." Mr. Williams told CNN, "He's never run an agency and it's a lot to ask. He's a neophyte and that's not his strength." And Mr. Williams told The Hill newspaper, "Dr. Carson feels he has no government experience, he's never run a federal agency."

Moreover, Dr. Carson's past statements have questioned the mission of the agency that he would lead. He has implied that housing assistance provided by the Department is harmful. He has characterized it as if it were calculated to create dependency, ignoring the real world needs of people who rely on this important safety net. Dr. Carson was dismissive when, during his confirmation hearing, I noted that so many millions of people who receive housing assistance are seniors or people with disabilities, and I asked Dr. Carson about his past advocacy of abolishing Medicare and Medicaid. Dr. Carson's testimony in committee did not show understanding of the importance of these safety net programs to seniors or people with disabilities.

Dr. Carson has also made several statements that call into question his view of the role of the Department in ensuring fair housing for all. Specifically, he has said disparaging things about housing desegregation efforts. In July of 2015, Dr. Carson wrote in the Washington Times that the Depart-

ment of Housing and Urban Development rule designed to desegregate housing, the "affirmatively further" rule, was a "social experiment" and he likened it to "failed socialist experiments."

Dr. Carson likened housing desegregation to "what you see in communist countries." After HUD issued a letter declaring that the city of Dubuque's implementation of the section 8 housing voucher program was intentionally discriminatory against Black applicants from Chicago, Dr. Carson told Iowa radio show host Jan Mickelson, "This is what you see in communist countries, where they have so many regulations encircling every aspect of your life that if you don't agree with them, all they have to do is pull the noose."

Dr. Carson has also shown a lax attitude toward holding accountable those who triggered the housing crisis and financial collapse.

In the February 2016 CBS Republican Presidential debate, Dr. Carson seemed to question the penalty that the Justice Department and the New York Attorney General extracted from a big New York bank for contributing to the mortgage crisis. The Wall Street Journal's Kimberly Strassel asked Dr. Carson: "This week Morgan Stanley agreed to pay a \$3.2 billion fine to state and federal authorities for contributing to the mortgage crisis. You have a lot of Democrats out saying that we should be jailing more executives, so two questions. Should financial executives be held legally responsible for financial crisis, and do you think fines like these are an effective way to deter companies from future behavior like that?"

Dr. Carson replied: "Now, the—as far as these fines are concerned, you know? Here's the big problem. We've got all these government regulators, and all they're doing is running around looking for people to fine. And, we've got 645 different federal agencies, and sub-agencies. Way, way too many, and they don't have anything else to do. I think what we really need to do is start trimming the regulatory agencies rather than going after the people who are trying to increase the viability, economic viability of our society."

While criticizing the Justice Department for its work to hold Wall Street accountable, Dr. Carson also advocated for a policy that would have made housing less affordable. His campaign website called for "privatizing housing giants Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac." Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac play an important role providing liquidity to the nation's mortgage finance system. A large number of advocacy groups, academics, and industry stakeholders alike agree that some form of government backstop is necessary to ensure a stable housing market and to maintain the 30-year fixed-rate mortgage.

I am also deeply troubled by statements made by Dr. Carson that indicate intolerance. When, in September

2015, Chuck Todd of NBC's Meet the Press asked Dr. Carson whether he thought Islam is consistent with the Constitution. Dr. Carson answered, "No, I don't, I do not." Dr. Carson's remarks revealed a fundamental misunderstanding about the First Amendment and religious liberty. And Dr. Carson's remarks about the LGBT community also raise concerns about tolerance.

Because of all the concerns that I have raised, I will not be able to support Dr. Carson's nomination for this post. However, should he be confirmed, I will do everything possible to help make his tenure successful. Specifically, I was heartened by Dr. Carson's statements about wanting to address the hazards of lead paint. I was pleased that, at his confirmation hearing, Dr. Carson agreed that he would urge President Trump to continue the White House task force that President Obama created after the Freddie Gray tragedy in Baltimore to help Baltimore by trying to break down some of the silos among different Federal agencies. We have a lot of work to do in Baltimore and throughout Maryland.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON).

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

The result was announced—yeas 58, nays 41, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 77 Ex.]

YEAS—58

Alexander	Cornyn	Graham
Barrasso	Cotton	Grassley
Blunt	Crapo	Hatch
Boozman	Cruz	Heitkamp
Brown	Daines	Heller
Burr	Donnelly	Hoeven
Capito	Enzi	Inhofe
Cassidy	Ernst	Johnson
Cochran	Fischer	Kennedy
Collins	Flake	King
Corker	Gardner	Lankford

Lee	Risch	Tester
Manchin	Roberts	Thune
McCain	Rounds	Tillis
McConnell	Rubio	Toomey
Moran	Sasse	Warner
Murkowski	Scott	Wicker
Paul	Shelby	Young
Perdue	Strange	
Portman	Sullivan	

NAYS—41

Baldwin	Gillibrand	Nelson
Bennet	Harris	Peters
Blumenthal	Hassan	Reed
Booker	Heinrich	Sanders
Cantwell	Hirono	Schatz
Cardin	Kaine	Schumer
Carper	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Casey	Leahy	Stabenow
Coons	Markey	Udall
Cortez Masto	McCaskill	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Menendez	Warren
Durbin	Merkley	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murphy	Wyden
Franken	Murray	

NOT VOTING—1

Isakson

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote on the nomination, and I move to table the motion to reconsider.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion to table.

The motion was agreed to.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be 10 minutes of debate, equally divided.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I yield back the time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, all time is yielded back.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of James Richard Perry, of Texas, to be Secretary of Energy.

John Boozman, Chuck Grassley, Johnny Isakson, John Cornyn, James Lankford, James M. Inhofe, Michael B. Enzi, Roger F. Wicker, Pat Roberts, Lamar Alexander, Bill Cassidy, John Barrasso, Orrin G. Hatch, Jerry Moran, David Perdue, John Thune, Mitch McConnell.

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

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of James Richard Perry, of Texas, to be Secretary of Energy shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 62, nays 37, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 78 Ex.]

YEAS—62

Alexander	Flake	Perdue
Barrasso	Gardner	Portman
Blunt	Graham	Risch
Boozman	Grassley	Roberts
Burr	Hatch	Rounds
Capito	Heitkamp	Rubio
Cardin	Heller	Sasse
Cassidy	Hoeven	Scott
Cochran	Inhofe	Shelby
Collins	Johnson	Stabenow
Corker	Kennedy	Strange
Cornyn	King	Sullivan
Cortez Masto	Lankford	Tester
Cotton	Lee	Thune
Crapo	Manchin	Tillis
Cruz	McCain	Toomey
Daines	McCaskill	Udall
Donnelly	McConnell	Warner
Enzi	Moran	Wicker
Ernst	Murkowski	Young
Fischer	Paul	

NAYS—37

Baldwin	Gillibrand	Nelson
Bennet	Harris	Peters
Blumenthal	Hassan	Reed
Booker	Heinrich	Sanders
Brown	Hirono	Schatz
Cantwell	Kaine	Schumer
Carper	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Casey	Leahy	Van Hollen
Coons	Markey	Warren
Duckworth	Menendez	Whitehouse
Durbin	Merkley	Wyden
Feinstein	Murphy	
Franken	Murray	

NOT VOTING—1

Isakson

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 62, and the nays are 37.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of James Richard Perry, of Texas, to be Secretary of Energy.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I will speak briefly, as I know the distinguished senior Senator from Alaska is waiting to speak.

I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

CALLING FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF A SPECIAL COUNSEL

Mr. LEAHY. Every day we learn more about the troubling connections between the Russian Government and both President Trump's administration and his campaign, but last night kind of topped everything—a revelation that Attorney General Sessions met with Russian officials during the height of the Presidential campaign, which raises a new level of alarm.

One of the reasons is, we now know the Attorney General, under oath, misled the Senate Judiciary Committee in response to my direct question about his contacts with Russian officials. I asked then-Senator Sessions if he had

been in contact with anyone connected to any part of the Russian Government about the 2016 election. His answer was unequivocal. He said no. He provided a similarly misleading response to Senator FRANKEN, saying that he was “not aware” of any connections between the Trump campaign and the Russian Government.

Especially those of us who are lawyers, and who have had a chance to serve as attorney general or as prosecutors in our States, know it is an egregious breach of public trust that Attorney General Sessions has not recused himself from this investigation. I think everybody would agree he has to recuse himself. Of course, as this goes on, the question now arises: Has he perjured himself?

In response to these reports, the Attorney General claims that he “never met Russian officials to discuss issues of the campaign.” That is a wholly inadequate response. The Attorney General was a top adviser to the Trump campaign. He took a private, undisclosed meeting with the Russian Ambassador during the height of concerns about Russian involvement in our election. Think about it. There are reports everywhere about concerns about Russian involvement in the election of the United States, and he has an undisclosed meeting with the Russian Ambassador.

He also met with the Russian Ambassador during an event at the Republican National Convention. One would think, at the Republican National Convention, it is possible that politics might be discussed. Now, if the Attorney General thinks his explanation is sufficient after he misled Congress about these contacts, of course, he is mistaken. I don’t say that as a Democrat. I think everybody would agree to that. What I worry about is that the Attorney General is only the latest Trump administration official who has attempted to mask his contacts with the Kremlin.

The President’s first National Security Advisor lied to the Vice President about his communications with the Russian Ambassador. He only resigned after the media reported how he had lied to Vice President PENCE, and even that was weeks after the President had been informed. He had to leave only when it became public. The President’s Chief of Staff attempted to use the FBI—which, of course, would be in violation of Justice Department policies—to suppress news reports about Russian contacts. I have been here through seven previous Presidents—Republicans and Democrats. You would assume they would play by the rules. This administration seems to want to make up the rules.

My concern is not just what the administration might be doing; my concern is about Russia. We are, I believe strongly, the greatest democracy history has known. We are the longest existing democracy in history, and now we have Russia meddling and trying to

undermine our democracy. Every American should worry about that. Every American should be frightened, not just concerned but frightened. It is an attack on our democracy. This is one of the most disturbing national security challenges facing our country. Russian President Putin ordered a multifaceted campaign that was aimed at helping Donald Trump win and undermining public faith in our election. That should alarm and outrage everybody no matter what party one belongs to.

We didn’t hear a word about it in the President’s speech on Tuesday during the joint session of Congress. In fact, the President’s only reaction has been to disparage American investigators, to disparage the intelligence community, to cast journalists who report on this as “enemies of the American people.” Journalists are not enemies of the American people. Russia is the enemy of the American people. Putin is the enemy of the American people. Do not cast our journalists, do not cast our investigators, do not cast our intelligence people, do not cast those who dare speak out as being enemies of America. Point to the real enemies—Vladimir Putin and those he controls.

It is about time we take this seriously. I have been here 42 years. I have never seen such a perfidious threat to our democracy than what we are seeing in Vladimir Putin, and my concern is the administration does not call it out for what it is. We Americans deserve to know the facts. We deserve a full and fair investigation. We deserve one that is free from any political influence.

I have repeatedly called on Attorney General Sessions, who was one of President Trump’s top advisers during the campaign, to recuse himself and appoint a special counsel to conduct the investigation. Earlier this week, he said: “I would recuse myself on anything that I should recuse myself on.” This morning, he said he would recuse himself “whenever it’s appropriate.” This would be a ludicrous response from a law clerk at the Department of Justice. From the Attorney General, it is dissembling.

Recusal is not optional here. It is required by very clear Justice Department regulations. It is required to maintain at least a semblance of integrity in this investigation. The Attorney General has to recuse himself because, as stated clearly in Department rules, he is obviously “closely identified” with the President due to his “service as a principal adviser.” That is the rule, and that is the rule whether it is a Republican or a Democratic administration. It describes his relationship with the President.

The investigation has to be led by someone who, in reality and in appearance, is impartial and removed from politics. That does not describe someone who was in the trenches of a political campaign with the subjects of the investigation while they were allegedly engaged in the very activity under in-

vestigation. It does not describe somebody who misled Congress—who misled the Republican-led Senate Judiciary Committee—about his own activities that have been implicated in the investigation.

This is not a close call. We know Russia is doing everything to undermine our democracy. Let’s stand up for America. Let’s do what is best for our country. The Attorney General should start by stepping aside. Then what we need is an independent investigation, and we need answers.

I thank the distinguished senior Senator from Alaska for her indulgence.

I yield the floor.

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

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, the matter pending before the Senate this morning is the nomination of Rick Perry to be Secretary of Energy, and I have come to the floor to speak to that nomination.

As with Representative ZINKE, whom we confirmed to be Secretary of the Interior just yesterday, I am equally proud to support Governor Perry’s nomination. I know colleagues from both sides of the aisle will be joining me as we make statements in support of this individual to our new President’s Cabinet.

Before that though, here’s a little bit on Governor Perry’s background. He is one who has devoted his life—literally decades of his life—to public service. After graduating from Texas A&M, he joined the U.S. Air Force. He piloted C-130 tactical airlift aircraft in Europe as well as in the Middle East. He has served as a State representative, agriculture commissioner, Lieutenant Governor, and of course Governor of Texas.

During his time as Governor, Rick Perry showed that economic growth and environmental stewardship cannot only survive and coexist, but that they can really thrive. Over the course of 14 years, Texas added 2.2 million jobs, saw its population grow by more than 6 million people, and at the same time he had this robust growth within his State’s population, the State reduced its carbon dioxide emissions by 17 percent, reduced its sulfur dioxide emissions by 56 percent, and reduced its nitrous oxide emissions by 66 percent. So in most States where you have a considerable plus-up in your population and a growing economy, you also see growing levels of impact, growing levels of emission. However Governor Perry dealt with this head-on, and we saw the results over the course of 14 years in the State of Texas.

He led an effort to decommission older and dirtier power plants. He prioritized the development of emerging and innovative technologies, including carbon sequestration and capture. As a result of his leadership in the State of Texas, that State now leads our Nation in producing more wind energy than all but five other countries.

Coming from the State of Alaska, as the Presiding Officer and I do, we recognize that we are labeled as an oil State. Well, Texas certainly has been labeled as an oil-producing State. Yet under Governor Perry's leadership, we have seen Texas lead the Nation in producing more wind energy than all but five other countries. For those who may come to the floor and suggest that, somehow or another, Governor Perry is anti-environment or bring up the issue of climate change and suggest that he does not support care for our environment, that is simply not the case, and clearly in his case, actions speak louder than words.

As Texas's longest serving Governor, Rick Perry guided a large, diverse and very complex State government to economic success. Again, when we are talking about States, Alaska is always out there bragging about our size, but if Texas were its own country, it would be the 12th largest economy in the world. So it is one thing to talk about size just by way of geography, but I think it is important—when we are talking about economic contribution, the size of Texas as the 12th largest economy in the world is pretty significant.

What happened in the State of Texas? Not only did the people of Texas give their endorsement to Governor Perry to ask him to serve again as Governor, they gave him their endorsement for his work by reelecting him to office not once but twice—14 years. Governor Perry is a principled leader, and that will serve him well as he takes the helm at the Department of Energy.

DOE has a very important mission, ranging from the maintenance of our nuclear weapons stockpile to the research and development of new energy technologies. At the same time it is also a department, a bureaucracy, something that I think we recognize. It is large. It is cumbersome, with tens of thousands of employees and contractors. I think the example Governor Perry showed as the State leader of Texas is an example that will do well at the Department of Energy—capable of really setting a good direction for the Department.

It has been suggested that he is not one of them in the sense that he is not an award-winning scientist, but, as I mentioned at his hearing before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, you do not necessarily need to have a scientist to lead other scientists; you need to have somebody who is a good, strong, competent, capable manager. That is what Governor Perry has demonstrated, and that is what the Department of Energy needs. He will hold his employees and contractors accountable. We know he will be a responsible steward of taxpayer dollars.

I think he will work to continue to break down the research silos that have frustrated the Department and work to find ways where there can be greater collaboration, greater working together.

I am also confident that he will pursue policies that will ultimately provide us with more energy, more stable sources of energy for us where—unfortunately, we have great sources of energy, but it is high cost. We need to be working with the Department of Energy. We need collaboration there to do what we can to reduce the cost of energy, as well as reduce the amount of energy we consume. By supporting basic research, encouraging scientific exploration, and fostering innovation, the Department will increase access to energy, make it more affordable, and continue to improve its environmental performance.

We have 17 National Labs. We are very proud of them. These National Labs are at the heart of those efforts. I have had good conversations with Governor Perry. He reaffirmed in our committee hearing that he clearly recognizes and values the work done by the men and women at our National Labs.

One area, which we do not cover within our Committee on Energy and Natural Resources but which is a big part of DOE's mission, is the maintenance and the protection of America's nuclear weapons. Governor Perry recognizes the importance of that mission, and he is committed to working with experts at the NNSA to maintain a proper stockpile stewardship program.

I believe Governor Perry will also put his management experience to work on a challenge that has really vexed the Department and affected States for a long period of time. He recognizes that we must clean up the legacy wastes that have been left behind by our nuclear weapons programs, particularly at the largest of these sites in Washington State. My hope is that, through his leadership, the Office of Environmental Management can finally move off of GAO's high-risk list. I know these conversations have been had with many members on the committee. It has been pressed as a priority. But, again, ensuring that we deal with these legacy waste sites has to be a priority.

I will reiterate that my hope is that Governor Perry will help address the crisis of rural energy prices in Alaska, as well as in other parts of the country where unfortunately we face high energy costs.

The Department must do a better job of partnering with institutions. In our State of Alaska, we have the opportunity to work with DOE collaboratively. We have been the incubators of good ideas, whether it is in energy microgrids or in some of the other pioneering way, we have done it because of necessity. We have no other options. We look to our institutions to find these good ideas, build on them, and work to bring down the costs and transition our many remote communities that are still relying on diesel power. Far too many of our communities are still dependent on diesel and that is just not right.

So working with Alaska—allow us to be that proving ground for the Depart-

ment of Energy. Allow us to be that place where we can first deploy some of these new ideas, these innovative ideas, these projects to help lower the costs and really make a difference in people's lives.

Again, I am proud to be here to support Governor Perry's nomination. I believe he has the management experience we need in the Department of Energy right now to help pursue scientific discovery and to promote innovation, to maintain and safeguard our nuclear weapons stockpile, to make progress on the cleanup of legacy waste, and to partner with States like Alaska that suffer from high energy costs.

I think we recognize that he has his work cut out for him, but we are counting on him to fulfill those responsibilities and to keep the Department of Energy as one that we look to for true leadership not only here in the United States but around the world.

Governor Rick Perry has a strong record of results based on his public service in the State of Texas. He is a proven leader, and I am confident he will do a good job for us leading the Department of Energy in this new administration. I will be supporting his nomination, and I certainly urge my colleagues to do the same.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TEXAS INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, today is Texas Independence Day—a day that inspires pride and gratitude in the hearts of all 28 million Texans.

Before I came to the floor, I asked the Presiding Officer, who hails from the great State of Alaska, to remind me—and he did—that Alaska is 2½ times the size of Texas in terms of landmass, not in terms of population. But today commemorates the signing of the Texas Declaration of Independence, when Texas declared itself a republic and independent from the Nation of Mexico.

Here in the Senate, we remember the sacrifice of those who came before us and laid the foundation for our State by reading a letter written by William Barret Travis, a defender of the Alamo. That tradition goes back to 1961, when then-Senator John Tower started that tradition. I am told my colleague Senator CRUZ will read that letter in full later today, perhaps around 12:30, carrying on this great tradition. So today I wish to express my gratitude for these Texas patriots, many of whom would later serve in the U.S. Congress, including Sam Houston, whose Senate seat I am honored to now occupy.

Sam Houston came from his farm outside Huntsville, TX, in 1846. It took

him about 3 weeks to get to Washington, DC. Of course, he didn't have a modern mode of transportation, but I always marvel at the fact that it now takes me about 3 hours to get home, where it took old Sam 3 weeks just to make a one-way trip.

U.S.-MEXICO BORDER

Mr. President, on another matter, last week I had the great privilege of hosting a number of my congressional colleagues at the Texas border. At a time when so many people are talking about the border of the United States and Mexico, I thought it was important to bring colleagues who were willing to come to learn and listen about the impact of trade, border security, and our relationship with Mexico on my State and on the United States. Of course, this border is so important on all of those issues—security, trade, the economy. It is important to see where they intersect. I am glad they had a chance to come to listen and learn last week.

We did receive a number of very important and useful briefings from Customs officials, Border Patrol agents, and other Federal partners in three major areas along the border, including the Rio Grande Valley. We were in McAllen, TX, Laredo, and Del Rio. I think what my colleagues discovered—if they didn't already know it—is how varied each part of the border is. This is not just true in Texas. It is true in San Diego. It is true in Arizona. It is true in New Mexico. When anybody suggests that we can attain a goal that we all share, which is border security, by just one solution, I think it is important to examine that conclusion and to test it because, frankly, I think what the Border Patrol will tell you is that what we need is infrastructure, yes. We need technology, yes. Then we need people.

That is the formula—personnel, technology, and infrastructure. In my own view, border security is a question of political will. The previous administration did not have that political will. I believe this administration does, and it has been long overdue. I welcome that.

We are going to be working with our State and local officials to make sure that they have the resources they need in order to get the job done. At the same time, I think what we were able to demonstrate to some of our friends from out of State is that we have an important trading relationship with Mexico. As a matter of fact, 5 million American jobs depend on binational trade with Mexico.

We went to one of the largest land ports in the country. I think, maybe, it is the largest port of the country—Laredo, TX—where some 15,000 trucks enter the United States every day. It is a huge influx of cargo and, fortunately, businesses all up and down and along the border have worked with the law enforcement agencies, with Customs and Border Protection to make sure that we can expedite the flow of legal trade into the United States. At the same time, we police for the entry of il-

legal drugs and for people illegally entering the United States without proper authority.

One reason why my State has done pretty well relative to the rest of the country in terms of our economy is because of our business-friendly attitude. We believe in lower taxes, reasonable regulation, and a welcoming attitude when it comes to people who make investments and who want to come to our State and start businesses or grow businesses.

We all know that roughly 70 percent of job growth in this country comes not from the Fortune 500 companies but from those small and medium-sized businesses. We work very hard to be a business-friendly State. Why? It is not just because we care about businesses but because we care about the workers who work at those employers.

As one of my former colleagues likes to say, you can't claim to be worker-friendly if you are hostile to the businesses that employ them. That is an inconsistent approach. You need to be consistent.

In addition to the issue of illegal entry into the United States by individuals who come without regard to our immigration laws, we also have a tremendous influx of illegal drugs into the United States. I think one of the things I was reminded of that we all should be cognizant of is that when we focus on the illegal drug activity in Mexico, Central America, or South America, we need to look in the mirror as a nation because the only way those cartels exist and make the money they make and commit the mayhem and violence they commit is because of demand in the United States.

I was very encouraged to hear Secretary John Kelly—former Marine Gen. John Kelly. He is still a marine, always a marine, but now he has taken off the uniform and assumed the responsibility of Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. He previously served as the commanding general in the Southern Command, as the Presiding Officer knows, which covers the combatant command from south of Mexico down to Central America and South America. So he is very familiar with the region. He made the point, before his confirmation hearing, that there is one thing he would like to see the United States do—effect a major societal and cultural change to deal with the demand for illegal drugs, which fuels all of the cartels and the transnational criminal organizations which plague our security situation along the border and in our neighbors to the south.

I want to say that I am appreciative of our colleagues who joined us on the trip—Senators TILLIS and HELLER, Congressman ROUZER from North Carolina, and my colleagues from Texas, Congressmen JOHN CARTER and MIKE CONAWAY.

I also wanted to say how much I appreciate Speaker RYAN coming to Texas and the Rio Grande Valley last

Wednesday for, unfortunately, a short period of time, but we are all grateful that he came at all—I think, at the invitation of people like Congressman MICHAEL MCCAUL, chairman of the Homeland Security Committee in the House of Representatives. I think it is going to take all of our efforts working together to effect and implement the President's vision of border security, a goal we all share.

I think what we all were reminded of is that it is more complex than some people assume, and it is going to take a combination of approaches, including personnel. We need to plus-up the Border Patrol because it doesn't do you any good if you identify somebody illegally bringing a shipment of drugs or illegally entering the United States if you don't have a Border Patrol agent to stop them. Also, the very useful border infrastructure—fencing and walls, for example, in the Hidalgo County area—were actually implemented as a way to improve their levee system when the Rio Grande river floods. They have actually created a dual-use structure that actually satisfies the Border Patrol's need for physical infrastructure along with levee improvements in a win-win situation.

I believe that consulting with local officials and local stakeholders, we at the Federal level can come up with more of those win-win solutions. The point is that we have learned a lot, particularly in our military, about how to use technology to keep us safe—whether it is unmanned aerial vehicles or ground sensors or radars. Actually, they have several new aerostats, or balloons, up in the sky that are basically the eyes in the sky, or radar, which do a tremendous job helping to identify people illegally entering the United States and equipping the Border Patrol and law enforcement authorities with the sort of early notice they need in order to interdict people illegally entering the country.

I will close by saying that one of the always surprising things I learn when I go to the Rio Grande Valley and talk to the Border Patrol is this. I ask them: How many different countries are represented by the people whom you detain illegally entering the United States? Obviously, the majority of them come from our neighbors to the south, not as much from Mexico as you might suspect anymore, because the Mexican economy is doing better and people are finding more opportunities there. But right now, the majority of the flow of people illegally entering the United States is from Central America.

Unfortunately, the tragic situation there where mothers and fathers worry about their children—whether they are going to be killed by gangs or whether they are going to be forced to join gangs—and somehow make the very painful and difficult choice of turning their children over to human smugglers to try to make their way up the backbone of Mexico and into the

United States, to be deposited on our doorstep in the United States.

Last week when the congressional delegation was in McAllen, we went through the processing area where some of these immigrants from Central America were being processed. I asked a young boy there, who was in the process of being processed—through my regional director, because he spoke only Spanish—how old he was, and he said he was 6 years old. He wasn't unaccompanied in that trip from Central America, but his mother and father thought it was important enough to get him out of that ravaged part of the world, where the prospects are not very good, and to turn him over to a human smuggler to make his way up into the United States, only to find himself at a Border Patrol processing unit in McAllen, TX.

My point is that I also met a young man from India, and I asked him: How much did it cost you to get to the United States from India?

He said: About \$6,000.

I said: How did you get here?

He said: I took a plane from India.

He went through Moscow, he said, and ended up in Central America, where he worked his way up with the help of human smugglers into the United States.

I mention that only to point out that we have a vulnerability there where anybody determined enough or with enough money can find their way into the United States. We generally assume these people are economic migrants—in other words, looking for opportunity. We all understand that. Those same vulnerabilities create potential danger for our Nation and our local communities when people with unknown motives exploit those same vulnerabilities to come into the United States.

The last point I will make, again, to emphasize the global nature of illegal immigration into the United States is this. We saw that the Border Patrol has several rescue beacons in Brooks County, TX. This is about 70 miles from the U.S.-Mexico border. What happens is that the human smugglers will transport people into the United States and across the river. They will put them in stash houses, really in terrible conditions. As a matter of fact, we went to one of these stash houses. They found 18 migrants in the stash house waiting to be transported up the highway into the heartland of America.

One of the checkpoints there is at Falfurrias, about 70 miles away from the border. What happens is that the smugglers will have people packed into a van or some vehicle, and before they get to the checkpoint, they will tell the immigrants to get out. If it is hot, they will give them a gallon jug—a milk jug—full of water and they will say: I will see you on the other side. They go around the checkpoint, out through the very difficult ranchland, and meet up on the north side, and then are transported off.

In Brooks County, TX, we went by a cemetery where a number of unknown and unnamed migrants have been buried because they have died due to exposure. Some of these immigrants coming from Central America come up through Mexico. You can imagine the conditions they have been exposed to, and in the heat of the summer, they have been kicked out of a car and told “meet us on the north side,” with a gallon jug of water, and some of them don't make it. Of course the smugglers don't care about people. You are just a commodity. You are just a paycheck. So they will leave stragglers behind. Many of the ranchers said they found as many as 100 different dead bodies on their property over an unspecified period of time.

But there is a rescue beacon that the Border Patrol has down there that is in three languages. It is in English, Spanish, and Chinese. You might ask, why in the world would you need Chinese written on a rescue beacon where somebody thinks “OK, I am not going to make it; I need help” and goes and presses the button on the rescue beacon—that you need English, Spanish, and Chinese. Well, because they have had Chinese immigrants come through that border region, as well, like the young man from India whom I mentioned earlier. And we have had people from Cuba and from literally all around the world, including some nations that are hosts to terrorist organizations.

This is not only an economic situation. This is not only a law enforcement problem when it comes to drug interdiction. It is a humanitarian crisis, as well. But it is also a national security issue, I think all the leaders of the intelligence community will concede, given the fact that people from 60 different countries have been detained coming across the southwestern border just in the last year by the McAllen sector of the Border Patrol.

We have a lot of work to do. I hope we will be able to work with the President and this administration and in a bipartisan way to come up with the tools we need in order to secure our border. We need to enforce our immigration laws. Of course, 40 percent of illegal immigration in this country occurs not from people entering the country illegally, it is from people entering legally and overstaying their visa. We may not catch up with them until they commit a serious crime and they are arrested by local law enforcement. I think this is what causes so many people to be angry at the Federal Government for not enforcing our laws. And many of our colleagues, me included, would like to do more to fix our broken immigration system generally, but until we regain the public's confidence that we are actually serious about securing our border and enforcing our laws, I don't believe we can have that conversation. I don't believe we are going to be successful, which I would like to see us be.

I think the first thing we need to do is to work with the administration in order to accomplish the goal of securing the border. Again, in the matter of political will, we know how to do it. We just need to have the desire to get it done. And then once we have regained the public's confidence that the Federal Government is once again living up to its responsibilities, then I think we can have that more expansive conversation about what our immigration system should look like.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I want to talk a few minutes about the challenges so many of our Cabinet members face trying to restore our infrastructure, to maintain our park system, and to create the public-private partnerships the President mentioned earlier this week in his vision for infrastructure reform.

Certainly Governor Perry, whose nomination we are debating right now, will have many opportunities in Energy to do that, in the research components of Energy and the partnership components that can be there.

We just confirmed a new Secretary of Interior, RYAN ZINKE. One of our great assets as a nation is the Federal park system. We are now entering the second hundred years of that Federal park system, and that second hundred years is going to be defined by partnerships in ways the first hundred years weren't.

The park system is a great way to enjoy the blessings we have and the rich geography, the scenic beauty—some of these parks really reflect the great challenges people faced as they settled the country—and also there are historic parks that reflect the history. Sometimes our parks do both of those things.

I think all of my colleagues are aware of the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, one of the most visited national parks, the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial there celebrating President Jefferson, celebrating the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, and really celebrating that long movement as people moved west—eventually really west and really northwest, Mr. President, where you live in Alaska. But the Gateway Arch is visited often. It opened in 1967, and so now we are 50 years into that particular part of our system. The original park itself needed a lot of restoration, but 50 years later, you look at that park and you look at how it has been used and decide how it could be better used.

What most of my colleagues probably aren't aware of is that right now, it is the biggest investment the National Park Service is making in the system at this moment, trying to connect the Gateway Arch to the Old Courthouse in St. Louis, the Federal courthouse where the Dred Scott case was tried—they are trying to connect that park to

the rest of the city in ways that—when it was built, it was separated by an interstate highway, so you would go see the park, but you wouldn't get to the rest of the national park side there very often.

Rethinking that is important, but what is maybe even more important is this is the biggest park project in the history of the country where private donors provided more of the money than the government did. This is not easily done. If for 100 years you have been doing something one way, it is not easy to immediately begin to say: We are going to do it another way from now on.

If you are in charge, like Secretary Jewell was put in charge of this project—and by the way, I think she has done a good job, as has her regional director, understanding that if you are going to do things differently, they have to be different.

It would be great if the city and private donors—the city even voted a tax just for this project, to provide millions of dollars that the project would be spending. Of course, I think initially the Park Service would think: Isn't that great? We now get this money from private donors, and we now get this money from a city tax, in addition to a portion of the money we are still getting appropriated by the Congress, and we will just spend it the way we have always spent it, as if we had no partners. But that didn't work out very well at all. The partners in the project actually wanted to be partners in the project.

As we look at the next hundred years of this great National Park System, I think we have to understand that for that to work and for that to work in a new way, we have to treat it differently. We are seeing that in St. Louis. We are seeing the three different groups come together in ways that have provided the funding. But, frankly, they also need to be at the table when you talk about how you are going to spend the funding.

We changed the law in Congress just a couple of years ago so that private money, if it is being held by the Federal Government, as it has been on that project, if there is any interest to be earned, if there is any benefit from that money, it also goes to the project rather than going into general revenue.

The goal here would be to do everything we can, if we are going to have a different park system for the next hundred years, to really encourage the next group of people to step up and say: We want to provide—as in the case in St. Louis, MO—more than half of the money, but we would like to have some input on how that is going to be used and how this is going to meet the needs of the community.

But also everybody who visits there, as they connect with the community uniquely in that St. Louis park—Missouri has a great park system. I think we are rated as one of the top four park systems in the country, our State sys-

tem. In fact, right now we are looking at one of those State parks at Ste. Genevieve, which was a part of our State that was first settled by French settlers. The number of buildings there dating right back to the turn of the 19th century—1801, 1804—is reflective of how French settlers built buildings, which is different from how other settlers did.

There is a lot to learn about how we come together as a people in so many of our parks, as well. So when Secretary Zinke takes that job, one of the new opportunities is to build on what is already started in places like St. Louis and figure out how we can have those kinds of partnerships when the President talks about infrastructure expansion and how we are going to look for new ways to do that. As you look at new ways to do that, you have to really be willing to think of how you approach this in a way that encourages partners to be part of it.

Clearly, infrastructure—one of the great benefits of where we are located is where we are located. We have an ocean on two sides. We have a river that runs up the middle of the country, that connects the country in unique ways to all the water travel of the world. We have these coasts on each side that are beneficial to this if we connect ourselves in the right ways.

So the President's view that the road system, the airport system, the port system all need to work in a way that links us up to be better competitors and links us up in a way that allows us to create economic opportunities and better jobs for families is important.

So that kind of partnership, the partnership the park system is in—I think we are seeing the mold established, the model established for how that would work in St. Louis right now at the Arch. In the next couple of years, that project will be completed. It will be different than it was 50 years ago because people want to see things differently than they did 50 years ago.

With Secretary Perry, who should be confirmed today—I think clearly will be confirmed today—his opportunities at Energy to look for partners who add to what we can do there in ways we haven't thought of before—just like we use research money now, take that research money in health research and research money in ag research to bring other people into this discussion that creates opportunities for who we can be.

As we move slowly and in a way that has really made it difficult to take advantage of this new administration, we are apparently going to be able to confirm two nominees to the Cabinet today. But we are still way behind, by any measure, the history of the country in working with a new administration to let them take responsibility. There are going to be 500, 1,000 nominees—I think there are about 1,000 Deputy Secretaries and Under Secretaries who come once we are done with the Cabinet. I hope we can all find a way to

get this done, with an understanding that whether or not you agree with the election, the election was held and the new administration has the responsibility for government. It is the job of the Senate and the Senate alone to be sure that those Cabinet officers and the people who support those Cabinet officers and departments are put in place early, as well.

Looking at the park system, looking at partnership, and looking at how important it is that we are willing to do things in a different way is something we ought to be thinking about in this week that we confirm the Secretary of Commerce, the Secretary of Interior, and, later today, the Secretary of Energy.

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.

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

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

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I come to the floor to speak on the nomination of Rick Perry, Governor of Texas, to be the Secretary of Energy. I just heard my colleague talking a little bit about the nomination process and hearings and the Cabinet. I want to emphasize that we have never seen a Cabinet quite like this—with their connections to the private sector, their financial holdings, a variety of other things.

The American people deserve for us to do a good job of digging into the backgrounds of the various nominees so that the people know who exactly the President has chosen to run these important government agencies. We are going to continue this process both for Cabinet-level nominees and also those nominated to serve in sub-Cabinet positions.

I am here today to speak about the nominee to serve as Secretary of Energy—Governor Rick Perry of Texas. Most people probably remember Governor Perry for his famous quip during a Presidential debate during which he announced he wanted to get rid of three agencies, but could not remember that the Department of Energy was one of them.

So he became famous for forgetting that he wanted to abolish the Department of Energy. In some ways, this allowed everyone to focus on exactly how important the Department of Energy is to our Nation. The Department's vital missions not only help us with the R&D of the future, but also with our national security. The national laboratories that are overseen by the Department drive our leadership in a global economy. They are based on innovation and play a vital role across the Nation for people who rely on affordable and efficient energy to heat their homes, run their appliances, and connect to the internet.

The Department of Energy safeguards our nuclear arsenal. It also is responsible for cleaning up the waste generated by our nuclear weapons complex facilities that helped us win World War II and the cold war. The Department also plays a key role in protecting our energy infrastructure from cyber attacks. It also makes important contributions to our understanding of climate science, enabling the collection and management of data needed to understand our changing environment and is a major driver of innovation.

Before Mr. PERRY was even nominated, the transition team was already targeting Department of Energy climate scientists. The transition team sought a list of those Department employees and contractors that had worked on climate change issues during the Obama Administration. This came across as an attempt to try to shut down those climate scientists and target them in a Trump Administration.

Silencing scientists is outrageous. We need an Energy Secretary who is not only going to protect the scientists who work at DOE no matter what their responsibility is but who is also going to make sure we use that important data for research and for mitigating the impacts of climate change on our coastal communities and pristine areas. Climate change is already producing significant impacts in the State of Washington and throughout the West. We need scientists working on this issue to get our States and local governments the best data and information possible.

As I previously mentioned, the Department of Energy is also an important driver of innovation. There is so much happening in the areas of smart buildings and modernizing our grid and resiliency and energy efficiency.

The thing that concerned me most about Governor Perry was his unwillingness to commit wholeheartedly to preserving the Electricity Office and the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy within the Department. We need these offices and their R&D so that the U.S. can continue to create jobs in our growing energy economy.

Continued aggressive research and development is necessary if we are going to become more energy efficient and consumers are going to have access to reliable and affordable electricity. We need a Secretary who is going to emphatically push the Trump administration in the proper direction. That is exactly what we wanted to hear from Governor Perry in the Energy committee. Four members of the committee asked about his commitment to these programs. Unfortunately, the nominee dodged the questions. I followed up with Governor Perry after his confirmation hearing, and he still failed to provide a commitment to fight for these important programs. So I regret that I will not be able to support this nominee.

We need to make sure that the United States will continue to support the R&D, the scientists, the investments in electric grid modernization, and the investments in cyber security that are going to help make our Nation safe and our economy strong. I urge my colleagues to oppose this nomination, and I hope that we can move forward on making sure that we have an aggressive energy strategy for the future.

With that, I see my colleague from Washington. I would like to yield some time to her.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Washington State, who has made a really important case. I want to be here today to add my opinion, as well, because over the past 2 months we have heard a lot about President Trump's plan to drain the swamp, which is to reject special interests and the corporate elite and, instead, fight for workers across our country.

There are a whole lot of claims, a whole lot of promises—all great. Fighting for workers is what this Congress should be doing, but the President's actions speak a lot louder than his words. I find it telling that we are here again debating yet another Cabinet nominee sent over from the White House—this time Gov. Rick Perry—whose interests have been more closely aligned with those of Big Oil and corporations rather than advancing our country's energy challenges or fighting for the working families we represent.

So let me be clear. If confirmed to head up the Department of Energy, Governor Perry would join the ranks of other unqualified candidates chosen by this President to lead critically important agencies with very specific and complex functions. It is a big job. I believe that getting the top spot at the Department of Energy—or anywhere else in the President's Cabinet—should not simply be a prize for demonstrating loyalty during an election.

Getting the job should be borne of a solid understanding of the agency, a respect for the tens of thousands of workers they would lead, and, most importantly, a commitment to putting families across the country first. So as a voice from my home State of Washington, where DOE's presence is extremely important, I will vote no on Governor Perry's nomination. I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Washington State is home to the Hanford nuclear reservation near the Tri-Cities. Nearly 75 years ago, this region underwent a dramatic transformation, practically overnight and under top-secret conditions, to help the United States win World War II and later the Cold War.

Families and workers in this region of our State sacrificed immensely for the good of our country and the safety of our world. To this day, there is a massive environmental impact in the Tri-Cities created by decades of nu-

clear weapons production. Now this cleanup effort is vital, not only to the health and safety of families and workers and the economy in Central Washington but also for communities along the Columbia River.

As I have told anyone elected as President, whether Democrat or Republican, it is the Federal Government's moral and legal obligation and responsibility to clean up Hanford. I know that is not an easy feat, but it is essential. It requires a very deep understanding of a very large and complex cleanup project and a great deal of respect for the workers who show up each day to make progress on this massive project. I remain deeply concerned that Governor Perry and this administration fail to grasp what is at stake.

I am also concerned that they don't get the importance of another national asset not far from Hanford, the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory. For more than 50 years, the men and women at PNNL have been on the forefront of scientific discovery. It was originally created to support research and development at Hanford, but PNNL has become DOE's premiere chemistry, environmental sciences, and data analytics national lab, tackling some of our Nation's most complex and urgent challenges.

PNNL is a leader in atmospheric research, nuclear detection and non-proliferation, and the Nation's electric grid. Its researchers have taken on everything from high-performance computing to advanced biofuels to analyzing lunar samples from NASA. These are critically important functions that advance our Nation.

I have worked hard with the entire Washington State congressional delegation, not to mention a whole host of leaders at the local and State level, to support this vital research and development hub and its incredible workforce. Just like the workers at Hanford, they also deserve leaders in this administration who respect and value their work. So, if President Trump were truly looking out for workers across our country, he would take this nomination to the Energy Department very seriously.

I understand Governor Perry gave his word during his confirmation hearing that he would work with us and even come to Washington State to visit Hanford and PNNL. If he is confirmed by the Senate, you can bet I will hold him to that because one I thing I have learned in the short 40-plus days of this administration is that we do get a lot of words. But it is the action that truly matters.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I thank my colleague for coming to the floor and for her statement on this important issue. She and I are partners in making sure that Hanford waste is cleaned up. We so much want to continue to make progress on this important issue for our State. Having dealt

with previous Energy Secretaries, we know that it is always a fight to make sure that Hanford gets the priority it deserves, so I thank her for that.

I want to resume my comments about the key functions the Department of Energy performs and why it is vitally important that the agency succeeds in its missions, rather than be dismantled by a President who may not understand the significance of the work the Department does.

I am speaking specifically about the Department of Energy's programs to enhance our energy efficiency, promote renewable energy innovation, mobilize, modernize and bolster the security of our electricity grid, and continue to make significant advancements in science. I have spoken to Governor Perry on a couple of occasions, but, as I mentioned earlier, I failed to hear him commit to these essential DOE programs.

Our Nation's energy sector is undergoing an unbelievable transformation from fossil fuels. These changes are giving consumers more choice and lower energy bills and producing a more robust job-creation environment.

There are now 2.2 million Americans who work in the energy efficiency industry alone. In fact, energy efficiency accounted for 14 percent of all new jobs created in this country last year. That is an incredible number. We need to continue making investments in smart cars and smart buildings and homes of the future and how they are going to be integrated to reduce energy use and lower bills.

We just had a hearing this morning in the Commerce Committee and talked about broadband and white space and the continued development of the mobile economy and how we need to continue to take advantage of those advancements, particularly in rural communities.

The solar power workforce is also growing at a rapid rate. Last year, 1 out of every 50 new jobs in the United States was from solar power. The solar industry now employs more people than the oil and gas extraction or coal mining industries. These are important economic sectors.

In the last administration, the Energy Department's Quadrennial Energy Review estimated that 1.5 million new energy jobs will need to be filled, many of which will be in emerging energy technologies that will help define our clean energy economy. There are approximately 60,000 people in my home State of Washington who are employed in the clean energy sector. In fact, clean energy employment is growing twice as fast as the overall job rate in the State of Washington.

We have made too much progress, we have come too far in continuing to advance these important technologies to reverse course now. These advancements are going to help drive more savings and efficiency for consumers and businesses so they can be competitive. We must have leadership at the Depart-

ment of Energy making sure that progress continues.

I take Governor Perry at his word that he has now been fully briefed and he no longer believes the Department of Energy should be abolished. But his testimony raised questions about whether he will fight to protect the Department's essential programs from ideologues in a Trump administration that want to defund and eliminate these programs.

To better understand these challenges, let's briefly review the history. Just before the President was elected, the transition team's energy group sent a memo outlining 14 energy and environmental initiatives the new administration would be pushing. The memo pointed out that the Trump administration was going to eliminate and rescind and relax several Obama administration initiatives that are important to energy efficiency, important to reducing greenhouse gases, and require agencies to take the costs associated with climate into account. Shortly afterwards, the transition team sent an unprecedented questionnaire to the Energy Department, targeting scientists and civil servants who worked on these issues and asked the Obama administration to identify them.

The morning of Governor Perry's hearing, we awoke to news that the President's team was working on a proposal to eliminate the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy and the Office of Electricity. So all those jobs I previously mentioned that are key in my State, key in the United States, and, I guarantee you, key to the U.S. economy's competitiveness in the future, would be at risk. Driving down the cost of electricity and keeping our businesses competitive is key to our Nation's economic strategy. I know that as a Senator who comes from a State with very affordable electricity. It has built our economy over and over and over and over again.

If you think about how our manufacturers have to compete in a global economy and look at where some of the manufacturing has gone or where our competition exists, these issues of cost-effective and efficient energy are key to our competitiveness as a nation.

We have seen in the State of California unbelievable results from energy efficiency. It is far cheaper to save a kilowatt of energy than it is to produce one, and this key factor is what has made California the leader in our Nation in energy efficiency and helped California businesses to be competitive. So we do not want to eliminate the Office of Energy Efficiency or the Office of Electricity.

As I said earlier, we tried to get Governor Perry to take a solid stance on these issues and commit wholeheartedly to fighting any attempt to do away with these important offices, but he failed to make a commitment.

During the President's very first hour in office, the administration announced it was going to eliminate the

Obama administration's climate action plan. This plan even included a program started by President George H.W. Bush—the Global Climate Research Initiative to assess and predict the impacts of climate change in the future.

This is not a partisan issue. President George W. Bush called on Congress to enact energy efficiency legislation, which he subsequently signed into law, and based on bipartisan energy legislation passed in 2005 and 2007, we improved lighting efficiency by 70 percent and increased fuel efficiency standards for automobiles. So I don't understand why the Trump administration is apparently so hostile to energy efficiency.

The Energy Department's energy efficiency programs are expected to save American consumers \$2 trillion on their utility bills by 2030 and reduce carbon emissions by 7.3 billion tons over the same period. That is equivalent to taking 1.6 billion cars off the road. The fact that businesses could save \$2 trillion by reducing their utility bills in the future is something we should all be passionate about. Our manufacturing base needs to remain competitive.

In addition, the Bush administration worked to get the United States and China—the two biggest greenhouse gas emitters—to work together on clean energy solutions. President Bush also chose in his State of the Union Address to be an advocate for energy efficiency, electric vehicles, biofuels, R&D, and a clean energy economy. I now appreciate even more now how much he advocated for those programs. It seems strange now to see a new Republican administration that seems so single-mindedly against these important energy advancements that are going to help our economy.

The Department of Energy also plays an essential role in protecting the electric grid from cyber and physical attacks. The Office of Electricity plays a very key role for our Nation, and, as we know, there is a full-throated debate about what cyber security attacks can do to the United States of America.

These issues about how some regime could undermine our U.S. democracy are critical. We need to address it, and we need to be aggressive as a nation about it.

The Office of Electricity plays a key role, and we want the Department of Energy to be aggressive in asserting its leadership on cyber security. If you are not committed to the Office of Electricity, if you are not committed to these vital programs, how are you going to be committed to protecting us on cyber security?

It should not have been difficult for Governor Perry to speak more urgently about these programs or to say he disagreed with the administration's reported desire to cut them. For instance, he spoke eloquently about energy diversification and pointed us to his record as Governor. But, as I looked

back at his record, I noticed that he tried to add 11 new coal plants, 8 of which were subsequently canceled after a court overturned his executive order expediting the coal permitting process. This is the kind of leadership we cannot afford at the Department of Energy. That is not about holding on to the past; we need a plan for the future.

Finally, I want to mention President Trump's recent Executive order regarding the National Security Council. While it is within the discretion of the President to structure his National Security Council as he sees fit, the Secretary of Energy is a member of the National Security Council by virtue of statute. The President's Executive order removed the Secretary of Energy from the principals committee and what under the Obama administration was called the senior interagency forum for considering policy issues that affect the national security interests of the United States.

I can guarantee you that energy is an issue of national security. We need leadership out of the Department of Energy to be strategic on electricity, transmission, and cyber security.

The Department of Energy's technical expertise is vast and is not limited to the implementation of the Iran deal. The Department plays a key role on nuclear security issues.

I take the Governor at his word that he will come to Hanford, that he will look for funding to make sure that cleanup happens, and I take him at his word that he does want to work with Members of Congress.

Unfortunately, his unwillingness to commit to critical offices at the Department that are responsible for important scientific research, giving our government and our communities more data and information about climate science, making the investments we need in our electricity grid of the future, is something that concerns me about his nomination. I cannot support Governor Perry.

I know so much will get boiled down to this sound bite of him being the nominee of an agency that he said he wanted to abolish and then, at the same time, could not even remember the agency. I guarantee you, the Energy Department is a vital, functioning program not just for today's energy needs, but as the quadrennial review said, for our future energy needs.

So we could have an Energy Secretary who is going to help us with the transformation, protecting us on cyber security, making sure our businesses reap the benefits of greater energy efficiency, and, when it comes to the electricity grid of the future, making sure we plan for those 1.5 million jobs that are going to be needed. But those aren't the commitments we have had from Governor Perry.

I hope my colleagues will recognize that this nomination is not the direction the Department of Energy needs to go in and oppose Governor Perry for the Department of Energy.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. FISCHER). The Senator from Hawaii.

Ms. HIRONO. Madam President, as recently as 2006, Hawaii relied on imported fuel for 92 percent of our energy needs. This was bad for our economy and bad for our environment, and it needed to change. Today, Hawaii has the most ambitious renewable energy goals in the country, and we are working toward becoming 100 percent energy self-sufficient for electricity by 2045. In order to meet this ambitious goal, we are investing in a renewable energy future. It means cleaner air and water to enjoy, and it is driving a lot of local innovation. Let me give you a few examples.

Last Friday, I attended a blessing for a new biofuel project in Maui's central valley. Pacific Biodiesel, run by Bob and Kelly King, is repurposing 115 acres of land previously used for commercial sugar cultivation in order to test the energy potential of different sunflower varieties for biofuels. If they are successful, this project could grow to provide hundreds of jobs on the island and help Hawaii on its path to energy self-sufficiency.

Bob and Kelly got their start in repurposing used cooking oil. They have grown their company to run the Nation's first commercially viable biodiesel distillery on Hawaii Island, and they employ 80 people. Along the way, they have received support and funding through the Hawaii Military Biofuels Crop Program, which has allowed them to experiment, learn from their mistakes, and, ultimately, succeed.

Yesterday, I met with Naveen Sikka, the founder and CEO of TerViva, which is a startup that grows pongamia trees that produce an oil seed that can be used for biofuels. In working with Hawaii's Energy Excelsator, TerViva is already growing pongamia trees on 200 acres on Oahu and is looking to expand its operations across the State.

TerViva and Pacific Biodiesel are working together to explore how to help Hawaii achieve its renewable energy goals.

In 2015, I met with Global Algae Innovations, a company that is pioneering the production of algae for use in biofuels on Kauai. Funding from the Department of Energy, or DOE, has been instrumental in its research. Support from the Department is vital in helping them and other algae biofuel companies finish scaling up commercial production at competitive prices.

These stories provide a compelling counternarrative to the President's belief that we should prioritize fossil fuel extraction over renewable energy development. These stories also demonstrate the role government can play in encouraging energy innovation.

During the Obama administration, our country made significant progress in confronting the challenge of climate change, investing in clean energy research and development, and growing our renewable energy economy. Unfor-

tunately, by nominating Rick Perry to serve as Secretary of Energy, the President is sending a clear signal. Instead of continuing the progress we have made, he wants to take us backward.

During his confirmation hearing, Governor Perry insisted that he believed in an "all of the above" energy strategy. So far, it does not seem that the President shares his commitment.

During the transition, a disturbing report leaked in the media that outlined the President's plans to make dramatic funding cuts at the Department of Energy. This extreme plan included eliminating the DOE's Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy, which focuses on the transition to American energy generation that is clean, affordable, and secure, not to mention sustainable. The plan would eliminate the DOE's Office of Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability, which ensures the Nation's energy delivery system is secure, resilient, and reliable. This office works to strengthen the resiliency of the electric grid. The plan would also eliminate the DOE's Office of Fossil Energy, which focuses on technology to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

It is hard to see how it would be possible to pursue an "all of the above" energy strategy if so much of the Department's "all of the above" capabilities are eliminated.

I asked Governor Perry, during his confirmation hearing, whether he supported those proposed cuts and program eliminations within the Department that he was nominated to head. His response was telling. Governor Perry said: "Well, Senator, maybe they'll [meaning the Trump administration] have the same experience I had and forget that they said that."

Remember, Governor Perry had originally said that the Department of Energy should be eliminated. Governor Perry's "oops" answer got a laugh at the hearing, but it failed to convince me that he has the willingness and fortitude to stand up to the Trump White House on its energy policies.

I also asked Governor Perry if Hawaii could count on his support in our efforts to become energy independent and a leader in the clean energy economy. Again, Governor Perry said yes, but in the same transition memo, the Trump White House proposed eliminating the DOE's Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy entirely, as I mentioned before. It is unclear how Governor Perry could keep his commitment to the State of Hawaii and to me if the entire office that is responsible for renewable energy is eliminated.

Many of my constituents share my concerns about Governor Perry. Charlotte from Wailuku wrote to me:

Please do not confirm Rick Perry for US Secretary of Energy. He is not a visionary leader. In Hawaii, we have committed to being 100% carbon emission free by 2045.

Rick Perry is not the person who can help provide innovation, funding or the tools needed to make this happen.

I share Charlotte's concerns. We have made so much progress over the past 8 years in embracing a clean and renewable energy future, and Governor Perry and the Trump administration will work to reverse this progress and take us backward.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this nomination.

I yield the floor.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I want to explain my opposition to the nominations of Ryan Zinke to be Secretary of the Interior and Rick Perry to be the Secretary of Energy. I have closely reviewed their records, testimony, and responses to questions for the record.

CONFIRMATION OF RYAN ZINKE

Madam President, the Secretary of the Interior is one of the most important jobs in the Federal Government and has a far reach when it comes to coordinating our Federal policy in the 50 States and U.S. Territories for our public lands, parks, and cherished natural resources. The Secretary and the Department of Interior are tasked with using sound science to manage and sustain America's lands, water, wildlife, and energy resources, while honoring our Nation's vital obligations and responsibilities to tribal nations. The Secretary of Interior also coordinates Federal assistance to the Freely Associated States of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau under the Compacts of Free Association. There are few Cabinet positions with such a wide range of management and organization.

Any nominee for this position should be selected for their commitment to protecting our precious resources, as well as their dedication to uphold and enforce our environmental laws.

After reviewing Mr. Zinke's record, there is little doubt that he is dedicated to public service and that he has a strong connection to the outdoors. However, the Secretary of the Interior has a great responsibility as the leading steward of our majestic public lands, the champion of our great tribal nations, and the manager and defender of our diverse wildlife. I fear that Mr. Zinke may not be fully prepared to set aside some of his personal views on the management of our resources and consider the views of all Americans as we debate critical natural resources issues.

I enjoyed learning that Mr. Zinke is an admirer of President Teddy Roosevelt, a point that has been repeated countless times, and I was pleased that he agrees that, yes, President Roosevelt did get it right when he placed millions of acres of lands under Federal protection. However, I hope that Mr. Zinke will not only study the work that President Roosevelt did to instill a conservation ethic in this country, but will look more broadly at other individuals whose steadfast commitment and dedication to conservation and historic preservation have left their mark in Vermont and across the country.

For instance, Laurance Rockefeller made significant contributions to the American conservation movement that had a lasting impact on the American landscape. The Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park in Woodstock, VT, honors not only Rockefeller's dedication to conservation, but is also the first national park to tell the story of conservation history and the evolving nature of land stewardship in America. Conservation of the environment and recreational development was a passion to which he dedicated his life. In addition to his work in Vermont, he was instrumental in the creation and development of the Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming and the Virgin Islands National Park on the island of St. John. These three national parks could not be more different, but they are each spectacular pieces of our natural heritage. This heritage that would not exist today and be available for the public to enjoy, had it not been for the vital work of Laurance Rockefeller and the Federal investments that have been made in these important public lands.

I hope Mr. Zinke will also study and hopefully visit the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, which carves its way not only through Vermont, but 13 other States as well. This trail is an amazing footpath for the people that traverses over 2,100 miles through wild forests, towns, valleys, and mountaintops, and connects a myriad of through-hikers and day hikers to our scenic landscape. All of them are able to enjoy the important Federal investments in this trail, which is maintained by the countless hours of work done every year by devoted volunteers like the Green Mountain Club in Vermont.

Work to build and maintain the Appalachian Trail is not static, nor is it complete. There continue to be important investments needed through the Land and Water Conservation Fund, LWCF, to acquire land and conservation easements to safeguard the trail. There is much needed trail maintenance that should be included as part of any infrastructure bill the Senate considers. This work is shovel-ready and will have a considerable impact in supporting our outdoor economy on which Vermont is so dependent.

Mr. Zinke should also seek out expertise and guidance from the past Secretaries of the Interior who have dedicated their lives to this work. I hope he will study the exit memo that Secretary Jewell prepared on the Department's Record of Progress and the moral imperative the Department has to positively impact our American economy, our rural communities and cities, and ultimately, the well-being of our planet.

As Secretary of Interior, Mr. Zinke will oversee a number of ongoing debates concerning our fragile public lands, the protection of endangered species, and how we respond to climate change. I know that there is no single

solution that can answer the different land management issues facing each region of our country. Many stakeholders are constantly engaging the Interior Department and the Senate with a wide variety of views on how we should protect, access, and use our natural resources. In Vermont, we are deeply concerned about the pressure being placed on our natural resources from rapid growth and climate change.

I heard from hundreds of Vermonters concerned about Mr. Zinke's nomination and worried that our environmental standards and laws will not be enforced for our lands, air, water, and threatened species under his leadership. His record has shown an opposition to policies that protect valuable rivers and streams from polluting coal runoff and a willingness to weaken historic laws such as President Teddy Roosevelt's Antiquities Act. He even authored a bill that sought to obstruct efforts by the Department of the Interior to review and modernize management of our Federal energy resources and ensure that taxpayers are fairly compensated for their sale. Taxpayers deserve a Secretary of the Interior who will work to support the protection of our shared Federal resources 100 percent of the time, not one who will actively work to weaken or dismantle the powers of protection invested in this Department.

Based on that record, I voted against his nomination. Nonetheless, now that Mr. Zinke is the Secretary, I want him to know that I am committed to working closely with him on a variety of issues that are important to Vermonters and all Americans. I will work with him to foster consensus not only in New England, but throughout the country. As the Vice Chairman of the Appropriations Committee and a member of the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, I am committed to working with him to ensure that we protect our Federal lands and continue the important conservation ethic of Teddy Roosevelt to permanently protect our beautiful and fragile natural resources, while also addressing new challenges posed by climate change.

Madam President, with respect to the nomination of Rick Perry to be the Secretary of the Department of Energy, hundreds of Vermonters have written to me in opposition. They were concerned that under his leadership we will halt the forward progress we have made towards a responsible energy strategy for the future of our country. Not only did Governor Perry make headlines for famously proposing to abolish the Department of Energy, he lacks a background or any true experience on the complex scientific and technical issues in the Department of Energy's portfolio. This agency must be focused on addressing our energy and environmental challenges through transformative science and technology solutions; yet Mr. Perry expedited the permitting of coal-fired electric generating plants and filed suit challenging

the Environmental Protection Agency's finding that greenhouse gases significantly endanger public health. How can we trust him to lead the Energy Department?

I was pleased that, during his confirmation hearing, Governor Perry apologized for suggesting that the entire Department of Energy should be abolished. However, he has yet to say that he will fight to maintain important offices within the Department, such as the Office of Electricity and the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy. I find it hard to see how we can pursue an "all-of-the-above" energy strategy called for by the administration if so much of the Department's capabilities are targeted for elimination. By supporting research around wind, solar, and efficiency, offering loan guarantees for innovative demonstration projects, and providing expertise and support to the private sector in commercializing new research we can create American jobs and grow the national economy. Conversely, if we turn our back on the future, we are ceding these important and fast growing fields of research and production of renewable energy technologies to China, the European Union, and other countries at a critical time. That would be a monumental mistake to haunt our economy for many years.

Earlier today, I had the chance to talk to a Vermont company that is closely watching the work of the Energy Department to advance America's clean energy revolution. Northern Power Systems in Barre, VT, has been designing and developing wind turbines for almost 40 years and offers support services for energy generation needs around the world. Last year, they received an award for their increase in exports, but rather than selling to an international market they would rather see their sales here in the U.S. take off so that they can create more American jobs to manufacture American-made wind turbines. Turbines that should be installed here to utilize this reliable, abundant, and free resource to lower energy costs for Americans.

It is troubling that Mr. Perry has taken such an aggressive stance against the Department of Energy and dismissed large parts of its mission. I hope that he will devote himself to learning everything he can about the diverse work of the Department and surround himself with some of the best public servants and technical experts he can find.

The last Secretary of Energy, Dr. Ernest Moniz, prepared two documents that I am hopeful Mr. Perry will study closely. First, the Quadrennial Energy Review provides a broad review of federal energy policy in the context of economic, environmental, occupational, security, and health and safety priorities. The Department also prepared an extensive suite of analyses to accompany the Quadrennial Energy Review that I know would serve Mr. Perry well as he tries to understand

the wide array of issues that will come before him at the Department.

I would also recommend that he review the exit memo Secretary Moniz prepared, which highlights the responsibilities and opportunities for the Department's enduring service to the Nation as our leading science, technology, and innovation agency. The Department has an extraordinary span of responsibilities from energy and the environment, to cyber security, science and national security, and it must collaborate with other agencies like the Defense Department and our intelligence community.

I remain committed to supporting and protecting the essential mission of the Department of Energy in order to move us forward with 21st century jobs and make needed investments in our electricity grid, clean energy, and energy efficiency that will save American consumers and businesses money.

Mr. REED. Madam President, I am strongly opposed to the nomination of Rick Perry to be the Secretary of Energy.

While Governor Perry has a long record of public service, he is the wrong choice to lead the Department of Energy. He does not possess the technical expertise or necessary qualifications. Moreover, his past statements calling for the elimination of the Department and questioning the science behind climate change, coupled with his reported lack of understanding about the scope of the Department's responsibilities, call into question his ability to lead an agency that is so critical to our national and economic security.

What Governor Perry learned during this confirmation process is that the Secretary of Energy not only oversees our country's energy initiatives and strategies, but is also the steward of our nation's nuclear weapons stockpile. The National Nuclear Security Administration, or NNSA, a part of the Department of Energy, ensures the safety, security, and effectiveness of our nuclear weapons. The NNSA brings together exceptionally dedicated men and women from our Armed Forces to work alongside some of our best scientists and engineers to provide expert advice in nuclear nonproliferation and counterterrorism. The Secretary of Energy must understand their work and advise the President on our nuclear arsenal capabilities and national security issues. Governor Perry has no experience in these areas and is not qualified to lead the agency tasked with maintaining our nuclear deterrent.

The Department of Energy also protects our Nation's security by strengthening the electrical grid's resilience in the face of natural disaster and cyber attacks. Its Office of Electricity works with other Federal agencies, State and local governments, and utilities to protect the electrical grid; yet the Trump administration has reportedly proposed eliminating this office, something which Governor Perry has not sought to dispel.

The Department of Energy leads the country and the world in renewable energy generation and energy efficiency. For my home State of Rhode Island, renewable energy from the wind, sun, and ocean is not just a path to local energy production, but also a source of well-paying jobs ranging from steelworkers to scientists. Last year, Rhode Island became the first State to build an offshore wind farm, off the coast of Block Island, proving that offshore wind can be a viable renewable energy source for the United States.

This technological feat could not have been accomplished without the science, engineering, and policy research supported by the Office of Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency. This office drives the research in wind, solar, geothermal, and ocean energy that has made affordable renewable energy a reality. However, Governor Perry, in his written responses, refused to comment on reports that the administration would cut funding, or even worse, eliminate this vital department. Failure to invest in this department and its research risks our future as an energy-producing nation.

We need a Secretary of Energy who also can effectively manage the Office of Science and the National Laboratories, programs that have made the United States a global leader in scientific advancement since the Manhattan project. The National Laboratory system hosts equipment far beyond the capabilities of most universities or companies—such as massive particle accelerators, powerful supercomputers, and high-temperature laser ignition facilities—that are vital to expanding our knowledge base and technological advancement.

The future of many of these energy science programs in the new administration is of great concern to the scientific community. The same budget recommendations that would eliminate the Office of Electricity also showed plans to cut supercomputing research, even as China is making large investments to become the world leader in this area. Advanced computing is vital to national defense and economic competitiveness. Shortsighted budget cuts here, or in any of our basic research programs, threaten our Nation's future security and prosperity. Governor Perry has not pledged to protect or prioritize any of these programs.

The Department of Energy's leadership in atmospheric science and climate change is also threatened. The Trump administration has gone beyond merely ignoring the threat of climate change; it has proposed cutting off funding to the critical programs that monitor our planet. It has also cast doubt that climate data will be accessible and available to the public and other researchers. We have already seen an unprecedented attempt by the Trump transition team to collect the names of scientists who study the consequences of carbon dioxide emissions. It appears that, for the first time in

the history of the agency, its scientists are worried that honestly reporting their findings may be a career-ending decision.

This is an alarming assault on the integrity of American science. The Secretary of Energy must be someone who understands science and will protect the government scientists who work in the national interest. The Secretary must understand and be able to present to the President the overwhelming scientific consensus that the climate is changing and that human activities are responsible. All Governor Perry committed to do in this and other areas is to learn more about the science.

This is not sufficient.

We have been fortunate that recent occupants of this post were not learning basic science on the job. Both Presidents Bush and Obama filled this post with experts possessing a deep understanding of science and technological issues. President Bush appointed Dr. Samuel Bodman, who served as a member of MIT's faculty before moving into business and government. President Obama appointed a Nobel prize winner in physics, Dr. Steven Chu, and a MIT physicist, Dr. Ernest Moniz. The result is that, for the past 12 years, the Department of Energy has been well equipped to respond to challenges in national security, energy, and science.

We need a Secretary of Energy who can build on that legacy. We need a Secretary of Energy who has the technical expertise to oversee our Nation's nuclear stockpile, the integrity to protect basic science from political attacks, and the willingness to fight for a secure grid and renewable energy technology. I am not convinced that Governor Perry has those qualifications.

For these reasons, I cannot support his nomination. I urge my colleagues to join me in voting no.

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I will vote against confirming former Texas Governor Rick Perry as Secretary of Energy. There are too many policies he promoted while he was governor that cause concern. He refuses to accept scientific consensus regarding human causes of climate change. His support for clean energy and energy efficiency seems tenuous, at best, and he is in lock-step with the Trump administration's desire to boost fossil fuel production at the expense of human health and the environment.

Governor Perry, while campaigning for the Republican nomination for President in 2012, proposed abolishing the agency he has now been nominated to run. I appreciate his candor and honesty in repudiating that position and acknowledging that he really didn't understand the Department of Energy's mission at the time. He has served our Nation and Texas as an Air Force pilot, a member of the Texas House of Representatives, the Texas Agriculture Commissioner, and the Lieutenant Governor and Governor of Texas.

A key part of DOE's mission has been to promote clean and advanced energy

technologies, via grants for research and development, and through the work of 17 national laboratories. In response to growing global demand for clean energy solutions, DOE under the leadership of Secretaries Steven Chu and Ernest Moniz launched initiatives to expand the global reach of DOE's clean and advanced energy missions.

In 2009, then-Energy Secretary Chu announced that he would host the first Clean Energy Ministerial, CEM, to bring together ministers with responsibility for clean energy technologies from the world's major economies and ministers from a select number of smaller countries that are leading in various areas of clean energy.

The CEM is a high-level global forum to promote policies and programs that advance clean energy technology, to share lessons learned and best practices, and to encourage the transition to a global clean energy economy. Previous CEMs have yielded remarkable national pledges from both the United States and foreign governments to develop and deploy clean energy technologies which in the aggregate have played a significant role in improving the global market competitiveness of clean and renewable energy technologies.

DOE also serves as the linchpin of the U.S. pledge to Mission Innovation, a global initiative involving 20 nations aimed at doubling public clean energy research and development.

The program, spearheaded by President Barack Obama and French President Francois Hollande with private sector support from Bill Gates via the Breakthrough Energy Coalition. The current U.S. Government investment portfolio of more than \$5 billion spans the full range of research and development activities—from basic research to demonstration activities, RD&D. The U.S. Government investment portfolio includes programs at 11 agencies, with the largest investment at DOE. These programs address a broad suite of low carbon technologies, including end-use energy efficiency, renewable energy, nuclear energy, electric grid technologies, carbon capture and storage, advanced transportation systems, and fuels.

At DOE, these programs are implemented through a number of mechanisms including cost-shared projects with the private sector research and development activities at the National Laboratories, grants to universities, and support for collaborative research centers targeted to key energy technology frontiers. The next planned phase for Mission Innovation, as envisioned by former Energy Secretary Moniz, was developing an international clean energy consortia, based on the principle of sharing institutional and technological resources to deploy shared energy solutions across international boundaries. The goal was to bring countries of all sizes together to develop, produce, and deploy clean energy solutions, with our 17 National

Research Laboratories at the center of this results-oriented partnership.

Unfortunately, all of this investment and America's ability to lead and profit from the clean energy revolution is in jeopardy. There is no credible reason to believe that former Governor Perry or President Trump appreciate the U.S. interest in growing clean energy research and cooperation. President Trump deliberately ignores the significant growth of solar energy in the U.S. Human health, the environment, and America's global competitiveness will suffer as a result of this backwards ideological outlook on U.S. energy research, development, and production.

There were significant investments in wind energy in west Texas while Mr. Perry was Governor, but he also tried to fast-track 11 new coal-fired power plants in the State, a plan the courts ultimately scrapped.

During Mr. Perry's two unsuccessful runs for the Republican Presidential nomination in 2012 and 2016, he consistently recited popular tropes coined by climate change denialists. For instance, in his book, "Fed Up" former Governor Perry called the science behind climate change a "contrived, phony mess." During his 2012 campaign, former Governor Perry accused climate scientists of manipulating data in order to receive funding for their projects. While he was Governor, his administration deleted all references to climate change from a report about sea level rise in Galveston Bay.

I am also concerned that, during the Perry administration, Texas dropped from 11th down to 27th in the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy's ranking of State energy efficiency policies. Under his watch, Texas filed suit in 2012 challenging the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's finding that greenhouse gases significantly endanger public health.

Under his watch, Texas sued EPA a dozen times between 2008 and 2011.

According to press reports, the Trump administration may eliminate several DOE offices, including the Office of Electricity and the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy.

Former Governor Perry was asked about these reports during his confirmation hearing but didn't commit to fighting for the offices or the vital programs they administer.

Former Governor Perry was also an active member of the Outer Continental Shelf Governors Coalition, OCSGC. While the OCSGC supports offshore wind development, its primary purpose is to promote oil and gas production on OCS lands, including the mid-Atlantic, and expand revenue sharing for interested States. So States to the south of Maryland may push for OCS oil and gas production and reap increased benefits from it at the expense of all taxpayers. But if there is an oil spill that hits Maryland's coastline and enters the Chesapeake Bay, it will be our fishing and tourism industries that suffer.

For all of these reasons, I will vote against confirming former Governor Rick Perry as Secretary of Energy.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam President, I oppose the nomination of Governor Rick Perry to be Secretary of the Department of Energy, a Department that he called for eliminating in 2011. After briefings on the Department's mission and programs, Governor Perry came to "regret" that position, but his short education on his prospective job is not enough to prepare him for its complexity and importance.

The Department of Energy is a home of innovation and, critically, the Federal agency that manages the safety and reliability of our nuclear arsenal. The last two Secretaries of Energy were physicists.

According to the Dallas Morning News: "In all of the department's missions, science is front and center. But during his 14 years as governor, Perry built a questionable record when it comes to science. He has a pattern of supporting offbeat medical theories while dismissing the established science on climate change. And his record of using public funds to boost technology and research in Texas is littered with poor management and allegations of cronyism."

In one example, a 2010 Dallas Morning News investigation discovered mismanagement and political influence in the Texas Emerging Technology Fund, which Governor Perry established to provide funding to high-tech startups. The Dallas Morning News reported that the fund awarded more than \$16 million to companies with connections to large campaign donors. A company in which an old college friend and donor invested received \$2.75 million. Another company, where an investor had given more than \$400,000 to Governor Perry's campaigns, received \$1.5 million. A company founded by a former Perry appointee got \$4.5 million.

The Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, and the Texas House Speaker made the Emerging Technology Fund's decisions based on input from an advisory committee that operated in secret and did not take minutes. Its recommendations to the Governor were not public. This unusual decision-making process, with ultimate power vested in elected officials rather than technical experts, is deeply troubling. As Secretary of Energy, Governor Perry would be charged with managing a number of grant and loan programs aimed at developing the next generation of energy technologies.

Governor Perry has also failed to commit to funding for ARPA-E and the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy. These programs are essential to ensuring that the United States is a leader in the 21st century energy economy and confronts the critical challenge of climate change.

I am deeply concerned by Governor Perry's limited experience with our Nation's nuclear program. While he did advocate a low-level nuclear waste re-

pository in his State, he has no experience with nuclear weapons. His inexperience is particularly problematic when the President he would serve has also appeared confused by issues surrounding the nuclear triad and has inaccurately said that the United States has "fallen behind on nuclear weapons capacity."

The United States is engaged in a \$1 trillion program to refurbish our nuclear weapons systems, a process that should be tightly controlled. We should be reducing, not expanding, the number of nuclear weapons in the world. President Trump has questioned the New START Treaty, a critical tool to decrease nuclear weapons in both the United States and Russia. He glibly and irresponsibly called for "an arms race," even though the United States and Russia already control 95 percent of the world's nuclear weapons and each have enough to destroy the world many times over.

The Secretary of Energy needs to have a clear vision to manage our nuclear arsenal and ensure that the President fully understands our capabilities and their implications for national security and international peace. There is nothing in Governor Perry's record or testimony that indicates that he is prepared for this job.

Governor Perry may have considered the Department of Energy insignificant enough to forget during his Presidential run, but its mission is essential to the safety and security of the American people. Between our national labs and research and loan programs, it fosters greater economic competitiveness and discovers new technologies to drive energy independence and solutions to climate change. I do not believe that Governor Perry is prepared to manage the Department and provide thoughtful counsel to the President, and thus I must vote against his nomination today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). The Senator from Georgia.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

Mr. PERDUE. Mr. President, I rise today to speak in defense of a dear colleague of ours who is now the Attorney General of our Nation, Jeff Sessions. He is my friend. More importantly, he is a former colleague of this very body. He is a man of integrity. He is a man of principle. I trust him, and I take him at his word.

Furthermore, he has repeatedly said just today that he will, in fact, recuse himself if and when it becomes appropriate. In my opinion, it is not appropriate right now, but if it ever were to become appropriate, he has said, without hesitation, that he would.

I have really never witnessed anything quite like this in my brief time here in the Senate. The last 2 years have been very interesting, but never have I seen the hypocrisy that we see going on around this one issue.

It is increasingly clear that the minority party is singularly focused on sabotaging this new administration at

every turn, and today is no exception. They have exercised procedural rules in the Senate time and again, beyond the intent of the Founders' design, in order to stop President Trump from even getting his team in place—his very Cabinet. Our President today, as we stand here in this well, cannot have a staff meeting because he doesn't have all of his Cabinet members in place.

As for the Cabinet members who have been confirmed, the minority party seems equally fixated on finding any red herring they can ultimately find to undermine the individual's character. We have literally reached the point where Members of this body are slandering former colleagues for having and taking the same opportunities afforded to them.

This morning, my colleague, the senior Senator from Missouri, tweeted that she had never, "EVER" met with or taken a call from the Russian Ambassador. But her own Twitter account proved that she has at least twice in the last 4 years.

Thirty Members of this body, as a matter of fact, met with a Russian Ambassador and Ambassadors from other nations in 2015 for a sales pitch on President Obama's deal with Iran. Many of them, including the senior Senator from Missouri, were open supporters at that time of candidates in the President's race.

In the process of this hypocrisy, the minority party is prohibiting us from taking action on legislation that would solve many of the problems that have manifested themselves over the previous 8 years.

Make no mistake, Russia is a traditional rival whose actions pose a definite threat to global security and even our own security here at home. Their actions over the last 8 years have helped destabilize Eastern Europe and the Middle East. It was the inaction and refusal to lead of the past administration—a policy that the minority party followed hook, line, and sinker—that created a power vacuum around the world and allowed this Russian resurgence.

I have said this repeatedly, and I am going to continue to do so. Until there is definite proof that Russians changed a single vote from Hillary Clinton to Donald Trump, I will be focused on one thing; that is, doing exactly what the American people sent us here to do. I encourage my colleagues to do the same, which is to not engage in political theater for the sake of partisan politics, but to work together to get America back to work.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

TEXAS INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize Texas Independence Day.

One hundred eighty-one years ago, 59 delegates met in Independence Hall at Washington-on-the-Brazos to risk everything to make freedom a reality for generations of Texans to come.

Today, I continue on a tradition started by the late Senator John Tower and carried on by Members of the Texas delegation to read the words of a 26-year-old Lieutenant Colonel, William Barret Travis, who at the time was under siege by the forces of Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna.

On February 24, 1836, Travis penned the following immortal letter:

To the People of Texas & All Americans in the World—Fellow Citizens & compatriots—

I am besieged, by a thousand or more of the Mexicans under Santa Anna—I have sustained a continual Bombardment & cannonade for 24 hours & have not lost a man—The enemy has demanded a surrender at discretion, otherwise, the garrison are to be put to the sword, if the fort is taken—I have answered the demand with a cannon shot, & our flag still waves proudly from the walls—I shall never surrender or retreat. Then, I call on you in the name of Liberty, of patriotism & of everything dear to the American character, to come to our aid, with all dispatch—The enemy is receiving reinforcements daily & will no doubt increase to three or four thousand in four or five days. If this call is neglected, I am determined to sustain myself as long as possible & die like a soldier who never forgets what is due to his own honor & that of his country—Victory or Death.

Signed:

William Barret Travis.

That same love of “life, liberty, and property of the people” that spurred the Texans at the Alamo and throughout the revolution still lives in each Texan today.

I think it is particularly appropriate that right now this body will be confirming former Texas Gov. Rick Perry to be the Secretary of Energy. That is fitting to the spirit of freedom and independence of Texans.

Texans fought for it, they died for it, and we owe it to their sacrifice to carry the torch of freedom for future generations, and we will.

To all Texans: Happy Independence Day.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is reminded that it is a violation of rule XIX of the Standing Rules of the Senate to impute to another Senator or Senators any conduct or motive unworthy or unbecoming of a Senator.

The Senator from Florida.

REMEMBERING DOUG COE

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, America lost one of our best friends, well-known to us in the Washington, DC, area.

Doug Coe, a disciple of a fellow named Abraham Vereide, over a half century ago came from Oregon to minister the Gospel to the Government of the United States. He has been doing that for over a half a century.

Doug, well-known to us in the Congress for so many years, always was bringing other people to the fore, and he always stood in the back. He encouraged so many of us to have fellowship together, to meet with each other, especially to have a meal together, to enjoy each other, and to do this in the Spirit of the Lord, and particularly the Spirit of Jesus. Because of that, he made so many friends all over the world.

This was a man whose religion brought people together across religions, not dividing us, as is so often the case. In Doug's spirituality, he could bring people of all faiths together in unity and understanding through the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth.

I have just come from the cemetery where Doug has been laid to rest. He is so well-known around here in the spirit of President Eisenhower's suddenly calling up a couple of his friends in the Senate and saying: Please come down here and visit with me; this is the loneliest house in America. That started the annual Prayer Breakfast, and, of course, that Prayer Breakfast has been held ever since, once a year, with the President, the Congress, the President's Cabinet, the Vice President, the Joint Chiefs, the diplomatic corps. Now over 150 nations attend that annual National Prayer Breakfast. It is really an international Prayer Breakfast.

Just this past one that was held in the first week of February indeed had a couple of heads of state, including His Majesty King Abdallah of Jordan. You wonder, how could a Muslim, who traces his roots all the way back—his lineage—to the Prophet Mohammed come to a group celebrating a Prayer Breakfast that generally identifies with the Christian faith? Well, that is the unique unity of all of these Prayer Breakfasts that are handled and held all over the world.

The Abrahamic faiths coming from the original single God, from which the seed of Abraham had not only the Jewish religion, the Muslim religion, and the Christian religion—in that, Doug Coe found unity. So all of these years he spent organizing the National Prayer Breakfast.

Doug lived through this last one. He wasn't able to attend, but he was holding court over in Northern Virginia as so many of the international guests came to Washington for that annual celebration.

We just laid Doug to rest today. Tomorrow, there will be a memorial service for him at a huge megachurch to try to accommodate the size of the audience that will be there out in Northern Virginia.

When this Senator first came to Congress many, many years ago, Doug Coe was the one who came to me and said: What I want you to do is I want you to get two Democrats and two Republicans, and I want you all to come together each week—breakfast or lunch—meet faithfully, read the Scriptures, enjoy each other's company, and then pray together.

We did that faithfully for 10 of the 12 years I was in the Congress. One of our Members was elected to the Senate at the time, and therefore he arranged for us to have one of the hideaways. As a matter of fact, it was Senator Mark Hatfield's hideaway that we would meet in and have the luncheon so that if we had to go vote, we were close to the Senate Chamber for him or close to the House Chamber for us.

Over the years, what has happened is these little groups that meet in the House on Thursday morning and the Senate on Wednesday morning, faithfully, they have gone across the globe and started other Prayer Breakfasts. That is why there are over 150 nations that now come annually to the National Prayer Breakfast. That is all because of our friend Doug Coe.

Doug Coe was never up front speaking. It was the President and a guest speaker who was not a religious person. This year, we made an exception. The Senate invited the Senate Chaplain Barry Black to give the main address, other than the President's address. You never saw Doug Coe at the dais. Doug was always quietly in the background meeting, extending the hand of friendship, extending his love, representing the values he spoke.

The Good Book tells us a lot of stories about those values. It also indicates that as someone put it in the street language of today, I would rather see a sermon than hear one any day.

By the example Doug Coe lived, he taught us how to live. God bless you, Doug Coe. You have done so much for so many.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

REMEMBERING SHERIFF RALPH E. OGDEN

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, I rise with a heavy heart to mark the passing of a pillar of the Arizona law enforcement community. When people think of the Old West, they often picture a Stetson-wearing lawman sitting astride his horse, keeping watch over his community.

For generations of residents in Southwestern Arizona, that lawman was Yuma County Sheriff Ralph Ogden. With his towering frame and trademark mustache, Sheriff Ogden looked every bit the part. Despite having an imposing physical presence, Sheriff Ogden was a kind, compassionate man, beloved by his deputies and celebrated by his community.

After 4 years of distinguished service in the U.S. Marine Corps, Ralph Ogden began his 42-year law enforcement career as a dispatcher and a jailer in Parker, AZ. A dedicated public servant, he would eventually serve as chief deputy for 12 years. Ralph would go on to be elected to five consecutive terms as sheriff, with his 20-year tenure the longest ever in Yuma county history.

Sheriff Ogden always understood the importance of getting to know the community he served. He encouraged his employees to get involved in charities, religious groups, and service organizations. He valued teamwork. He recognized that no one can succeed on

their own. This philosophy of always having some other person's back was something he carried with him throughout his time in the sheriff's office, and it was reflected in the way he treated those around him.

I was fortunate to get to know Ralph over the last few years and learned a lot of what I know about the border and about law enforcement from that great man.

Sheriff Ogden was known to write personal birthday and anniversary cards for each of his employees, just to show that he valued their service and their friendship and to show they were important to him.

When asked about the benefits of serving law enforcement, Sheriff Ogden said that when you go home tired and beat after a long day, you sleep well knowing that you did some good. Sheriff Ralph Ogden did a lot of good. I know he is resting well.

I yield back my time.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at 1:35 p.m. all but 10 minutes of postcloture time, equally divided in the usual form, be considered expired on Executive Calendar No. 9, the nomination of Rick Perry to be Secretary of Energy, and that following the use or yielding back of time, the Senate vote on the nomination with no intervening action or debate.

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

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, let me just say briefly, I couldn't be happier that my friend, the former Governor of the State of Texas, Rick Perry, will be confirmed here shortly as the next Energy Secretary.

I know, personally, as do 28 million Texans, that Rick Perry has dedicated his life to public service. He is best known perhaps for serving our State as Governor for a record 14 years. Before that, he served in the Air Force. He served as a State representative in the Texas Legislature. He was elected as our Agriculture commissioner, then served as Lieutenant Governor. As you can tell, the man was born to lead.

During his governorship, Texas became known throughout the country as the economic engine that could pull the train of the U.S. economy and could weather even the toughest national economic downturn. Under Governor Perry's leadership, the State promoted cutting-edge innovation and sensible regulation in order to foster an "all of the above" energy strategy that revolutionized the Texas energy landscape and the Texas economy. The

State became not just an oil and gas powerhouse but the top wind-producing State in the country. We really do believe in an "all of the above" strategy when it comes to energy.

In short, Rick Perry created an environment where all energy producers could not just succeed but really prosper, and that continues to serve the people of our State well.

Texans still benefit from policies that continue to create more energy options for families across our State. Put it another way, Governor Perry has a very strong track record when it comes to promoting energy in a way that makes everybody better off. I have no doubt Governor Perry will take to the rest of the country these same principles that led to the Texas success story, opening America to a new energy renaissance.

I look forward to voting to confirm him in just a few minutes.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

CALLING FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF A SPECIAL COUNSEL

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, in the minutes remaining before this vote, I want to briefly call attention to an impending constitutional crisis we are facing in this Chamber and in this country as a result of recent revelations coming to our attention, literally within the last 24 hours, about contacts between now-Attorney General Jeff Sessions, our former colleague, and the Russian Ambassador.

Nearly 2 months ago, my Judiciary colleagues and I were told by then-Senator Sessions—and the Presiding Officer is on the Judiciary Committee. We were told in no uncertain terms that he "did not have communications with the Russians," and we took him at his word.

Last night, we learned that Senator Sessions' statement was inaccurate. These inaccurate, possibly intentionally false, statements misled us. They misled me, personally, and I feel they failed to provide the whole truth about his communications with and ties to the Russians, likely on behalf of the Trump campaign. These contacts were in the midst of an unprecedented attack on our democracy, an act of cyber warfare against our democratic institution that not only violated our law but subverted our electoral process.

The potentially false statements on this topic by then-Senator Sessions were not only deeply relevant and critically important in their own right, but they leave us with the question: What else is missing or misleading in that testimony, and the consequential questions about his fitness to lead the Department of Justice must be answered.

Unless Attorney General Sessions can provide a credible explanation, his resignation will be necessary. Senator Sessions' false statements heighten my deep concern about credible allegations

that the Trump campaign, the transition team, and the administration officials have colluded with the Russian Government, not only in actions prior to the election but possibly since then in what may amount to a coverup. Unless the whole truth is uncovered—and if there is a coverup, truly the adage will be fulfilled that the coverup is as bad as the crime. The only way to deter Russian aggression and continued cyber attacks on our democracy is to uncover the truth and deter this kind of aggression in the future.

At the time of his meetings with the Russian Ambassador, Senator Sessions was chairman of the Trump campaign's National Security Advisory Committee. Ambassador Kislyak is, of course, the same individual whose repeated covert contacts with former LTG Michael Flynn, President Trump failed to disclose both to the American public and to his own Vice President. General Flynn's failure to make those disclosures led to his own termination as National Security Advisor.

Contacts between these two men would raise concerns under any circumstances, but Senator Sessions' decision to, in effect, conceal them makes them even more troubling. I use that word with regret because I sat in the committee hearing as he answered those questions, and, personally, I can reach no other conclusion than to say he must have intended to conceal them and hide them from us as committee members.

The Attorney General, who is the most important law enforcement official in our country, must be held to an even higher standard. The sudden disclosure that he met repeatedly with the Russian Ambassador after denying under oath any such contact, gives us all the more reason—indeed compelling evidence—that a special counsel is necessary, and necessary now, to investigate Russian ties and contacts with the Trump campaign.

I have called for such a special counsel or prosecutor for weeks now and led a letter with more than 10 of my colleagues asking that Attorney General Sessions designate such a special prosecutor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak 2 more minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I reserve the right to object.

I want to make sure we do have locked in at 1:45 a vote on confirmation of Rick Perry to be Secretary of Energy.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We do.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. As long as I still have about a minute prior to that vote, I have no objection.

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

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. I will end my remarks within a minute.

In short, over the past weeks, I have called repeatedly for a special counsel. My view is that now-Attorney General Sessions must be brought back before the Judiciary Committee and provide an explanation. The lack of a credible explanation makes his resignation necessary, and his denial of contacts raises serious and troubling questions about the process that led to his confirmation. Absent swift action by a special counsel, evidence of this troubling conduct will be at high risk of concealment by the very agency, the Department of Justice, entrusted by the American people to seek and uncover the truth. An impartial, objective, comprehensive, and thorough investigation by a special prosecutor is unquestionably necessary now, and I hope we will have bipartisan support for it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, as we near the vote on the nomination of Governor Rick Perry to be our next Secretary of Energy, I want to again reiterate my support for his confirmation.

As I mentioned earlier, Governor Perry has devoted his life to public service. During his 14 years as Governor of Texas, he championed an "all of the above" energy strategy, and led his State to tremendous economic growth. He was a good steward of the environment as he worked to find ways to grow the economy and worked toward achieving major reductions in emission levels in the State of Texas.

As I said this morning, Governor Perry is a principled leader. He will set a good direction for the Department of Energy. I am confident he will pursue scientific discovery, promote innovation, be a good steward of our nuclear weapons stockpile, and make progress on the cleanup of our legacy sites, which we recognize are very important. He will help us build the infrastructure we need to become a global energy superpower and partner with States, like my State of Alaska, that suffer from very high energy costs.

He has a strong record. Governor Perry gets results. He is a competent manager and I think a proven leader. I am pleased to be able to support his confirmation. I know Members from both sides of the aisle agree. I think he will be a good addition to our new President's Cabinet, and I would urge that all Members support his nomination.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, speaking in opposition to the Perry nomination, I would say this: We need an Energy Secretary for the 21st century, one who will help protect us by fighting for an electricity grid that will make our entire Internet economy more reliable and safe from cyber attacks. We need someone who is invested in an energy efficiency strategy

that will save our businesses money and make them competitive.

The last two Presidents made energy efficiency a key priority—President Bush by advocating for plug-in vehicles and energy efficiency legislation and President Obama, who made a major investment in the smart grid and made energy efficiency and creating clean energy jobs a top priority for the Nation.

Governor Perry has not committed to those same principles, to move us forward into the 21st century energy economy. We don't want this part of our economy to be left behind to our international competitors.

I encourage my colleagues to oppose his nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time is expired.

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON).

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

The result was announced—yeas 62, nays 37, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 79 Ex.]

YEAS—62

Alexander	Flake	Perdue
Barrasso	Gardner	Portman
Blunt	Graham	Risch
Boozman	Grassley	Roberts
Burr	Hatch	Rounds
Capito	Heitkamp	Rubio
Carper	Heller	Sasse
Cassidy	Hoeven	Scott
Cochran	Inhofe	Shelby
Collins	Johnson	Stabenow
Corker	Kennedy	Strange
Cornyn	King	Sullivan
Cortez Masto	Lankford	Tester
Cotton	Lee	Thune
Crapo	Manchin	Tillis
Cruz	McCain	Toomey
Daines	McCaskill	Udall
Donnelly	McConnell	Warner
Enzi	Moran	Wicker
Ernst	Murkowski	Young
Fischer	Paul	

NAYS—37

Baldwin	Gillibrand	Nelson
Bennet	Harris	Peters
Blumenthal	Hassan	Reed
Booker	Heinrich	Sanders
Brown	Hirono	Schatz
Cantwell	Kaine	Schumer
Cardin	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Casey	Leahy	Van Hollen
Coons	Markley	Warren
Duckworth	Menendez	Whitehouse
Durbin	Merkley	Wyden
Feinstein	Murphy	
Franken	Murray	

NOT VOTING—1

Isakson

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote on the

nomination, and I move to table the motion to reconsider.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion to table.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

DISAPPROVING A RULE SUBMITTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, THE GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION, AND THE NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to H.J. Res. 37 and ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY) and the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) are necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 51, nays 46, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 80 Leg.]

YEAS—51

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

NAYS—46

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

NOT VOTING—3

Isakson Leahy Schatz

The motion was agreed to.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

DISAPPROVING A RULE SUBMITTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, THE GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION, AND THE NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the joint resolution.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (H.J. Res. 37), disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of Defense, the General Services Administration, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration relating to the Federal Acquisition Regulation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I rise today to ask my colleagues to support H.J. Res. 37, a resolution disapproving of the Federal Acquisition Regulation issued by the Department of Defense, the General Services Administration, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

As is the case in so many of these rules and regulations, it has a really nice name. It sounds really good—the fair pay and safe workplaces rule—but the bottom line is, because of the substance of this rule, it has become commonly known as “the blacklisting rule.” Had it been up to me, I would have called it “the blackmailing rule.” Let me explain why.

It requires contractors and subcontractors submitting bids on Federal Government contracts to disclose any proven or alleged violations within the last 3 years of 14 different labor laws, plus “equivalent State laws.”

Now, that may sound reasonable, but it is not. And it is entirely unnecessary. Any competent purchasing manager—again, I come from the private sector, and there are a lot of competent purchasing managers—could readily obtain the information required by this regulation. And, of course, any competent purchasing manager should also always be evaluating the qualifications, integrity, and the past performance record of any kind of potential suppliers.

This rule also has the very real potential of subjecting perfectly innocent contractors to blackmail and extortion tactics during union contract negotiations.

In case anyone thinks I am overstating this threat, listen carefully to the following quote from one union describing an “ideal message” their union president should convey to a general manager of a business negotiating a union contract:

Putting it plainly: unless you settle this strike within the next few days, and the union withdraws its charges—

Those would be those allegations; unless the union withdraws those charges—

you are likely to be marked as a “repeat labor law offender,” one of the highest cat-

egories of wrongdoing under the President’s Order. Check this out with your hotshot legal team.

This union message goes on:

Counting all of its divisions, this corporation has federal contracts in the hundreds of millions. Do you really want to jeopardize this pot of gold to save a few hundred thousand dollars to the union contract?

This is the kind of negotiating tactic that illustrates exactly how this regulation would be used as a form of federally sanctioned blackmail. There would be no due process for contractors wrongly accused. There would be no way for them to defend themselves or avoid being blacklisted.

As if the blackmail potential of the rule isn’t bad enough, the Obama administration admitted that the final rule would cost at least \$398 million to comply with every single year. And except for the benefit that extortion leverage provides to unions, I can think of no financial benefit to taxpayers or our economy—and neither could the Obama administration, as they were unable to quantify any financial benefit for this rule in their regulatory filings.

In addition to the \$398 million annual regulatory cost, the agencies themselves detailed the following regulatory burdens:

The rule will affect over 24,000 contractors. Industry estimates are even higher.

The rule imposes costly reporting requirements on small businesses that many simply cannot bear.

And it also reduces the availability and increases the price of much needed supplies and services, including to our military.

Others have pointed out even more problems with the rule. For example, it does not define what the “equivalent State laws” are that have been included in the disclosure requirement. Also, the definition of a violation that is reportable is incredibly broad. It is not limited to government contracts and includes pending and other nonfinal disputes—in other words, mere allegations of wrongdoing.

This, in particular, is a slippery slope. For example, in fiscal year 2016, the National Labor Relations Board received over 21,000 unfair labor practice charges, but more than half of those were withdrawn or dismissed, and less than 6 percent resulted in a formal complaint by the NLRB. Also in fiscal year 2016, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission received over 91,000 complaints but issued a “determination of reasonable cause” in only 3,113—about 3.4 percent of those—and filed enforcement suits in only 114—about 0.1 percent of the 91,000 complaints that were filed.

Various studies report that it costs \$2 trillion per year to comply with Federal Government regulations. That is \$14,800 per family per year. Of course, no one writes a check for \$14,800. Instead, those costs are realized in reduced opportunities, higher prices to

consumers, and stagnated wages and benefits for hard-working Americans.

Economic growth is the primary component of a solution for many of our country’s problems, yet Washington continues to stifle growth by adding layer upon layer of regulation. The blacklisting rule is just one harmful example.

Fortunately, last October, the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas issued a nationwide preliminary injunction the day before this rule was set to go into effect. The judge issuing the order noted there was merit to the claims that this rule violates statute, exceeds Executive authority, and is unconstitutional. The court found that letting this rule go into effect would cause “irreparable harm.” But the case is still pending. Until we act to decisively repeal this rule, a significant burden hangs over our country’s contractors and suppliers.

Through the use of the Congressional Review Act, we have the opportunity to reduce that regulatory burden and repair a small portion of the damage done by President Obama’s regulatory overreach.

We owe it to the American people and American businesses to start providing them with regulatory relief.

I urge my colleagues to vote yes to disapprove and repeal this very harmful, very costly, and completely unnecessary rule.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I thank the Chair.

RUSSIA AND THE PRESIDENT’S ADDRESS TO CONGRESS

Mr. President, on Tuesday night, along with my colleagues, I listened to the President of the United States address the joint session of Congress. As the ranking Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I was particularly interested to hear what the President would be saying about American foreign policy.

I heard him say during the speech that American foreign policy would be based on the respect of the sovereign rights of nations, which is something that I strongly believe in. I then thought I would hear the President talk about one of our greatest challenges from a country that is not respecting the sovereign rights of the United States of America, that country being Russia. But the President didn’t mention Russia at all in his State of the Union address, which really surprised me.

When we look at Russia’s most recent conduct and know what they did in regard to their attack on the U.S. democratic election system, it is beyond dispute that they wanted to interfere with our free elections, they wanted to affect the credibility of our democratic election system, and they wanted to influence the outcome of the election. That is pretty clear from the evidence that we have seen to date. Yet

the President did not mention that at all—a country that had attacked us as recently as just a few months ago. There was no mention in the President's State of the Union address.

It wasn't an isolated attack by Russia on the United States. We knew that before that, when we saw Russia's influence in regard to Montenegro's elections and how they tried to impact their parliamentary elections to influence Montenegro's decision to join NATO. We know that Russia is attempting to influence the elections in Western Europe.

So we have a country that is trying to bring down our democratic system of government by using our democratic system of government, and the way that we conduct open elections, to compromise our system.

But that is not the only thing Russia has done that is contrary to the U.S. national security and our foreign policy objectives. We know that they have physically incurred into other countries. They have physically incurred into Ukraine. Today, Russia has annexed Crimea—something we will never recognize. Crimea is part of Ukraine. Russia is continuing to support the separatists in the eastern part of Ukraine, compromising Ukraine's sovereignty.

The President did not mention that in his State of the Union address.

We know that Russia is in Georgia, in Moldova, and other sovereign countries; once again, no mention of that.

And then Russia is very much engaged in the Middle East. We know that Russia's footprint in the Middle East is growing. They have their military presence in Syria, backing the Assad regime, facilitating Iran's participation in Syria.

We also know that the type of conduct that has been conducted under Russian support, where civilians have been targeted, humanitarian convoys have been attacked, amounts to war crimes—a situation where Russia has culpability; yet, we don't hear anything about that.

So we have a role. Congress has a role to play in making sure that we protect our national security interests.

First and foremost, we have to know what is going on. We have to know what Russia was doing. We have to know what Russia's intentions were when they compromised our cyber security and used that information to try to influence our elections. We have to know what Russia's intentions are all about regarding the contacts they have made with Americans in their effort to influence this campaign. We have to understand what Russia's intentions are as they relate to democratic countries.

We saw in General Flynn's case that a contact was made, and as a result of not coming forward with that, General Flynn has left the Trump administration. And then we find out yesterday that the Attorney General, as a U.S. Senator, had contact with the Russian

Ambassador, and that information was not made available during the confirmation process.

The timing of that meeting in Senator Sessions' office is concerning. It is concerning because it was right at the time that Russia was the most active in trying to get information that they could use to influence our elections. So this is an important aspect for us to understand.

We need to understand why that meeting took place and what was involved in that meeting. There have been calls by Members on both sides of the aisle that we get that type of information.

But I will add one more dimension to this: Why was the Russian Ambassador interested in meeting with Senator Sessions during the campaign period? Was this part of an overall strategy by Russia to try to influence the election? We need to get the answers to that.

The only way we are going to be able to get a complete account of what has happened by Russia's attack on the United States is by setting up an independent commission. Russia may not have used MiGs to attack America. They may have used a mouse. But it was an attack. And when we were attacked on 9/11, Congress did right thing—they set up an independent special commission to understand what happened, how we were so vulnerable to an attack, so that we could take steps to protect ourselves from future attacks and hold those responsible accountable. That was a bipartisan effort by the Congress of the United States, setting up an independent commission, a commission where the members could devote their entire full time to the assignment, because that is how serious being attacked is. There was no limit on their jurisdiction. They could go where the facts led. They could give a report to the American people so there would be credibility that we, the policymakers, are going to have independent information in order to act to protect the national security of the people of this country. That is what that independent commission meant. That independent commission met. They made many recommendations on eliminating a lot of the stovepiping of intelligence information and combining agencies together. Congress acted on those recommendations. As a result, we are safer today than we were prior to 9/11.

We need to be safer tomorrow than we are today from the attacks of Russia. The only way we are going to be able to get that objective information with the credibility so that we can act in the best interests for the people of this Nation is to have a nonpartisan, independent commission take a look at what Russia was doing, get all the facts, find ways and recommendations to make us safer, give the credibility to the American people, and then Congress needs to act in order to protect our national security. I know we have some committees looking at this. I

know the Senate Intelligence Committee is doing some very important work. I support that.

We have our responsibilities in Congress to take steps within the jurisdictions of our committees. I am for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee looking into what Russia was doing in order that we can protect the jurisdiction of our committee to do a better job in our bilateral relationship with Russia, or what Russia is doing in Europe or in other parts of the world that affects our national security under the jurisdiction of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. We need to do that work. The Intelligence Committee needs to do their work. Armed Services needs to do their work. Judiciary needs to do their work.

But we need one central investigation that includes the broad jurisdiction that can get to answer why the Russian Ambassador may have wanted to see a U.S. Senator who was active in one of the campaigns that close to the elections, that has an opportunity to understand why Russia was so active in their cyber attacks in America, getting so much information, so much political information, why Russia was trying to understand our election system. There is no evidence that they tried to manipulate individual votes. That didn't happen—at least we don't believe that happened—but we know they were looking into how we do that. Was that for some future use? We need to understand that to protect our democratic system of government. That is what an independent commission will allow us to be able to receive.

I urge my colleagues to respond to the national security challenge of Russia, and let's establish an independent commission.

There are other things we need to do. There are two bills I filed with my Republican colleagues to make it clear that it is not going to be business as usual with Russia. There are going to be consequences to what they have done to the United States and our national security interests.

One bill that I filed, of which Senator GRAHAM is the principal sponsor, is to make sure that Congress carries out its responsibility of oversight in regard to our bilateral relationship with Russia. It is the Russia Review Act, which would require the President of the United States to submit to Congress for review any attempt to eliminate or modify the current sanctions against Russia. He would be required to submit that to the Congress of the United States, hopefully working with us and consulting with us before he makes decisions but giving us an opportunity to weigh in before that decision could take effect.

For my colleagues who remember the Iran nuclear agreement, it sounds very familiar. Senator CORKER and I, Senator MENENDEZ, Senator KAINE, and others worked on the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act. It passed nearly unanimously in the Congress. It required a President to submit that

agreement to us before it could take effect. It made the negotiations much more transparent. As a result, I believe we had a stronger agreement, but we also had a more open process, and Congress had a chance to carry out its responsibility. In a similar vein, it is important that we pass the Russia Review Act so that we can carry out our responsibilities, preventing the President from taking unilateral action without consulting with us. This is bipartisan; we have Democrats and Republicans working on this. I hope we will be able to pass this bill in a timely way.

The third bill I want to bring to my colleagues' attention as it relates to Russia's activities in the United States is legislation that I have filed with Senator McCAIN and many others. We have a large number of Democrats and Republicans who have cosponsored this bill that would increase the sanctions against Russia because of their attack against us. It would expand the options for imposing sanctions to different sectors that could affect Russia's energy, that could affect the ability of Russia to finance their sovereign debt, that could affect Russia's ability to privatize their industries by making it clear that we are not going to allow Americans or companies to help finance these activities because in reality they are financing activities against our interests, such as the cyber attacks, as we saw last fall.

This legislation is comprehensive. It deals more than just with sanctions; it deals with another major problem that we have found. Through NATO and U.S. leadership, we have made it clear that we will defend the countries of NATO, and we have deployed troops to make it clear to Russia that they better not try to compromise the territorial integrity of the member states.

This initiative has been well received by Europe and has countered Russia's attempts to cause a fracture within the European community. We need a similar initiative on democracy, a democracy initiative, because not only is there a threat against Europe from their geographical boundaries, there is a threat against Europe in regard to their democratic institutions. We know that. We saw that here in America. It is being challenged in Europe. So this democratic initiative would allow us to participate in strengthening the democratic institutions in Europe so that we don't allow Russia to use the democratic institutions to try to bring down the democratic institutions.

There is another part of this legislation which I think is extremely important. We are all getting to better understand the tactics being used by Russia, this fake news—inventing news and then using the social media to make it look like it is the hottest news in town. We know they are good at that. We also know they are very good at propaganda, and they go in directions that we, prior to this election, thought we would never see in our own country. We are now seeing it more frequently.

Part of this legislation is for us to develop a capacity to be able to counter this propaganda and fake news so that Russia's deployment of it will not compromise our national security.

I think all three bills will be considered shortly and favorably by this body—setting up an independent review commission; requiring the President to submit any changes in the Russian sanctions to the Congress for review before they could take effect; and strengthening our sanctions regime against Russia for its conduct, including strengthening our commitment to democratic institutions and fighting this new cycle of fake news.

I also listened to the President during the State of the Union Address when he said that our foreign policy calls for a direct, robust, and meaningful engagement with the world. That is another statement I happen to agree with. And then I thought about what I had heard a little earlier that day: that the President's budget was going to have about a 30- to 35-percent cut—it wasn't exactly clear, but it was a large number—to the State Department.

I said: How are you going to have a robust and meaningful engagement in the world if you cut our diplomacy budget, you cut our development assistance budget? This is how we keep the world safe. This is how we get our goals accomplished globally.

We have had so many hearings in our committee where there is a much greater need. We need to do more in Africa in promoting democracy. We need to do more in the Middle East in promoting good governance and inclusive governance so we don't have to have as many wars. We need to do things in our own hemisphere. We heard today in a hearing what is happening in Venezuela. There is a lot of work for America to do. A 30-percent cut? Is that a more direct, robust, and meaningful engagement within the world? It didn't sound that way to me. I was concerned about that and how we are going to be able to gauge.

It was Secretary Mattis who said: If you don't give the Secretary of State the resources, you better give me more soldiers.

And they are more expensive. We have the best fighting force in the world, and we are going to support our fighting force. The way we show respect for our soldiers is to use them only as a matter of last resort. Diplomacy is critically important for America's national security.

A strong, credible Office of the President is equally important if we are going to be able to be the type of country that influences our values globally, and the President of the United States has put that at risk. That is why I am reintroducing my resolution to try to avoid a constitutional crisis. I introduced it before President Trump took the oath of office, and I am introducing it again to avoid a constitutional crisis. It deals with the emoluments clause of the Constitution of the United States.

Every modern President of the United States prior to President Trump, in order to avoid conflict, in order to do what is ethically right and to comply with the Constitution of the United States—the emoluments clause—has either divested their financial holdings or has set up a blind trust. Some have done both. That is the way that the ethics officers tell us you can comply with not just the Constitution but with the highest ethical standards so that there are no real conflicts and you don't have any perceived conflicts, which can be just as damaging to the credibility of a public office holder.

President Trump, by not divesting, by not setting up a blind trust, has put the Office of the Presidency, our country, in a compromising position.

Let me give some specific examples, if I might. I will mention three countries. I could mention more.

Saudi Arabia. Very interesting country, Saudi Arabia. In August 2015, the Trump organization filed eight separate business companies to do business in Saudi Arabia. As we all know, the President's Executive order that was originally issued that excluded immigrants from seven Muslim countries from visas did not include the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia even though, as we all know, many of the participants in the 9/11 attack against the United States originated from the country of Saudi Arabia. President Trump has vast business interests in Saudi Arabia.

Let me quote President Trump:

Saudi Arabia, I get along with all of them. They buy apartments from me. They spend \$40 million, \$50 million. Am I supposed to dislike them? I like them very much.

It is not a question, Mr. President, of whether they like you or they don't like you; under our Constitution, they cannot give you any favor. If they give you a business favor, that is an emolument and violates the Constitution of the United States and violates your oath of office.

In regard to Turkey, Turkey has two large-scale developments in the country that are under the Trump organization. The Trump organization has a partnership with a luxury furniture company, Dorya International, to build pieces to be sold under the Trump Home Collection brand and a multi-million-dollar branding deal with the Dogan Group—the Dogan Group is run by one of the most politically influential families in Turkey—for a two-tower complex in Istanbul. According to President Trump's May 2016 financial disclosure, he received as much as \$1 million in royalties from the first venture and as much as \$5 million from the second venture.

Because President Trump has not properly divested himself from his business, he will presumably continue to receive royalties from both ventures, and these business arrangements are not unknown to Turkey's leadership. President Erdogan presided over the opening ceremonies of Trump Towers, Istanbul.

Shortly after the election, President Trump held a phone call with President Erdogan in which he praised his business partners. There are substantial business interests known by the Turkish Government that Mr. Trump has in their country. Mr. Erdogan is not shy about talking about and using the Trump Towers. He has bragged about it. We have a lot of foreign policy decisionmaking that affects Turkey. We need to know that when the President is making those decisions, it is America's interest which is at the front and center, not the Trump Organization's interests that are affecting those decisions. That is why we have the emoluments clause, that is why we believe in avoiding conflicts, and that is why President Trump needs to divest of his interest or set up a blind trust.

I will mention one other country, if I might. That country is China. For a decade, the Trump organization has been trying to get a trademark of its brand in China. I am going to quote from Mr. Trump on February 7, 2011, when he wrote to the American Ambassador in China. This is what Mr. Trump said: "I spent hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal fees to secure my own name and globally recognized brand for Chinese individuals who seek to trade off my reputation."

For 10 years he was fighting to get that trademark protection. It was granted on February 14, 2017, a few weeks after President Trump took the oath of office, shortly after President Trump stated that he would support the One China policy, something the Government of China strongly wanted him to say.

We don't know connections. We can't draw connections. We don't know that. That is why the emoluments clause is in the Constitution, so you cannot accept any favors from another country. It is against our Constitution. Yet we have concerns as to whether the President is acting under that interest. That is just wrong and it needs to stop. What the President has done is established a circumstance where there is an appearance of conflict, where it looks like foreign governments are trying to influence his decisions.

He has affected America's standing to advance good governance and corruption. I want to underscore that point. He is compromising America's moral authority on the values we hold so dear. Our Western democratic values are being compromised because leaders of autocratic countries, corrupt leaders, can say: If it is all right for the President of the United States to keep his business holdings while he is President, what is wrong with me having an interest in some of our entities here? It takes away our effective ability to use diplomacy to solve problems or advance our goals. We are being compromised. The current arrangement is simply inadequate.

President Trump announced he is going to let his two adult sons handle his businesses, but he still maintains

his financial interests. He gives a couple of different other things he is going to do. I will just go over one or two of them.

He says he is going to donate the profits from his foreign hotels to charities. That sounds good.

Let me just quote from Steve Carvell, a professor at the Cornell University School of Hotel Administration, who said:

It's a monumental task to constantly run this down. Even if the company is trying its hardest and making its very best effort, it will be difficult to fulfill that goal.

Let's get serious about this. The arrangements he set out will not solve the conflict. It will not comply with the Constitution of the United States. The Office of Government Ethics said on the President's proposal it is "wholly inadequate." That is the Office of Government Ethics. They go on to say: "The plan the [President] has announced doesn't meet the standards that the best of his nominees are meeting and that every President in the last four decades has met."

I am a lawyer but would not claim to be a constitutional expert. Let me quote, if I might, from constitutional experts. Richard Painter, Norm Eisen and Laurence Tribe have written a comprehensive study of the constitutional provisions, concluding that "since emoluments are properly defined as including 'profit' from any employment, as well as 'salary,' it is clear that even remuneration fairly earned in commerce can qualify."

Richard Painter, the chief ethics officer for President George W. Bush, stated it in a blunter fashion. He said:

This is a for-profit hotel. [Trump] is making profits over dealing with foreign governments. Same with the loans from foreign government-owned banks. Those are for a for-profit business. That is prohibited under the Emoluments Clause of the Constitution.

Let me just conclude with this. This is not about any one person. This is about the Office of the President. This is about our constitutional form of government that depends upon the Office of the President being respected. It is bigger than any one person. The Framers of our Constitution went on to say: We recognize it. We know the faults of men. That is why we set up the Constitution, to protect against the frailties of individuals.

This is about the Office of the President of the United States, not about any one person who may occupy it 4 to 8 years. We need to protect the Office of the President, and that is why we need to act now to avoid this constitutional crisis of the President of the United States, who has put our Nation at risk because of his personal conflicts and because of his violation of the Constitution of the United States.

I call upon President Trump to live up to the values of the Constitution. Give the American people the transparency they deserve and completely sever his relationship with the Trump Organization before we are embroiled

in an ethical and constitutional crisis that will not serve the best interests of the President, Congress or the American people.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NOMINATION OF NEIL GORSUCH

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, in a little more than 2 weeks, the Judiciary Committee will open its hearing on the nomination of Judge Neil Gorsuch for the U.S. Supreme Court. This is the 14th Supreme Court confirmation process in which I have participated. Over that time, while some things have changed, others have stayed the same.

The conflict over judicial appointments, especially to the Supreme Court, remains at its core a conflict over the proper role of judges in our system of government. The two sides of this conflict want two very different kinds of judges. Some of my colleagues, joined by their liberal allies, instead want judges who owe their fidelity to a particular political agenda.

For them, the judiciary is simply a backup plan for achieving political objectives. If the legislative branch does not deliver, they go to the executive—as they often did in the previous administration. If that does not work, they figure that the courts offer a second or third bite at the political apple.

This vision is fundamentally inconsistent with the way our system of government was destined, designed, and intended to be. Instead, the Framers devised the role of the judiciary on the wisdom of Montesquieu, who posited:

Were the power of judging joined with the legislative, the life and liberty of the subject would be exposed to arbitrary control. . . . Were it joined to the executive power, the judge might behave [as] an oppressor.

That was Montesquieu. Reflecting this wisdom, the Constitution endows the judge with the role of saying what the law is, rather than what he wishes the law would be.

Alexander Hamilton rightly observed: The people's liberty cannot be endangered by the judiciary "so long as the judiciary remains truly distinct from both the legislature and the executive."

The stakes in this conflict over judicial power are really enormous. The choice determines whether the people or unelected judges will govern the country and define the culture. Our system of government and the liberty it makes possible allow only one answer. The confirmation process allows us to determine which kind of judge Neil Gorsuch is and which kind of Justice he will be.

The dynamics of the confirmation process often reveal what kind of judge Senators and interest groups really

seek. Those who want political judges, for example, use a variety of strategies to determine how a judicial nominee, especially to the Supreme Court, will rule on issues and cases they care about. In fact, most of the time it seems that the policy consequences of how a judge will rule is the only thing that some Senators and advocates really care about.

For example, when President Bush nominated Chief Justice John Roberts in 2005, one Democratic member of the Judiciary Committee said that the real question was this: "Whose side is Judge Roberts really on, on the really important issues of our time?"

Another Democratic Senator said: "Before we vote, it is important to know where Judge Roberts stands on key issues."

Another said that she needed to know whether "Judge Roberts will stand with us and with our families or be on the side of major special interests."

Now, something is seriously wrong when the confirmation process for a Supreme Court nominee sounds more like an election campaign for a Senator or a Senate seat. Unfortunately, the same thing is happening again today regarding Judge Gorsuch. If a corporation won a case before him on the Tenth Circuit, for example, those groups claim that he is a champion of corporate interests, no matter the legal grounds of the decision, the facts, or anything else.

If another decision's result does not sufficiently advance the feminist agenda, they say that he is anti-woman. This radical approach seems to say that judges are free to decide every case based on the political popularity of the result and, therefore, that the judge personally intends every outcome. These advocates do not distinguish between the commands of the law and the personal preferences of the judge.

In this view, statutes and the Constitution mean whatever judges want them to mean, making unelected, unaccountable, lifetime appointees the master of the people. Political judges take away from the people the power to govern themselves and undermine their liberty. Using political or theological litmus tests in the quest for such political judges, demanding that they take sides and insisting that they make commitments to certain policy agendas before even taking office, poses a similar threat to the independence and impartiality of the judiciary.

There is nothing mainstream about political judges and nothing mainstream in the tactics used to appoint them. In contrast, impartial judges are consistent with the principles on which our system of government is based and the independence that judges must have. When Judge Gorsuch took his seat on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit in 2006, he took the oath required by title 28, section 453, of the United States Code. He pledged to

administer justice without respect to persons and to faithfully and impartially discharge his judiciary duties.

Now, I want to suggest that my colleagues try an experiment. Ask your constituents whether judges should make up their mind on a case before hearing all of the evidence and arguments. Ask whether judges should take positions on issues before those issues even come before them in court.

I know what Utahns would say. The ABA Model Code of Judicial Conduct, for example, twice states this principle:

A judge shall not, in connection with cases, controversies, or issues that are likely to come before the court, make pledges, promises, or commitments that are inconsistent with the impartial performance of the adjudicative [functions and] duties of judicial office.

State codes of judicial conduct include the same commonsense protection for judicial impartiality. The California code, for example, prohibits statements, whether public or not, that "commit the judge with respect to cases, controversies, or issues that are likely to come before the courts."

Now, this has been the consistent practice of judicial nominees before the Judiciary Committee. Elena Kagan came before the Judiciary Committee in June 2010, after being nominated by President Obama to replace Justice John Paul Stevens. On June 29, 2010, she said that it would not be appropriate for her to comment on an issue that could come before the Court.

Samuel Alito—Justice Alito—came before the committee in January 2006, after being nominated by President Bush to replace Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. On January 11, 2006, he said:

But the line I have to draw, and I think every nominee, including Justice Ginsburg, has drawn, is to say that when it comes to something that realistically could come before the Court, they can't answer about how they would decide that question. That would be a disservice to the judicial process.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Justice Ginsburg appeared before the Judiciary Committee in July 1993, nominated by President Clinton to replace Justice Byron White. On July 20, 1993, she said this: "A judge sworn to decide impartially can offer no forecasts, no hints, for that would show not only disregard for the specifics of the particular case, it would display disdain for the entire judicial process."

Antonin Scalia came before the committee in August 1986, after being nominated by President Reagan to replace Justice William Rehnquist. On August 5, 1986, he said that taking positions in a hearing on issues that could come before him was not just a slippery slope but, in his words, a precipice. He said: "I just cannot do it, and I think the only way to be sure that I am not impairing my ability to be impartial in future cases . . . is simply to respectfully decline to give an opinion."

Let me reach even further back. Justice Abe Fortas came before the Judiciary Committee in July 1968, after being

nominated by President Johnson to replace Chief Justice Earl Warren. The committee sent the nomination to the full Senate and said these words in its report:

To require a Justice to state his views on legal questions or to discuss his past decisions before the committee would threaten the independence of the judiciary and the integrity of the judicial system itself. It would also impinge on the constitutional doctrine of separation of powers among the three branches of Government as required by the Constitution.

Judge Thurgood Marshall came before the committee in July 1967, nominated by President Johnson to replace Justice Tom Clark. The committee sent the nomination to the full Senate and its report noted that the nominee had said he would "wisely and forthrightly decline to give a judicial opinion on hypothetical questions."

Just 2 years earlier, when the committee reported the nomination of Abe Fortas to be an Associate Justice, its report said: "We have always felt it would be unfair to ask any nominee for any judicial office to give a legal opinion on the basis of a hypothetical question."

I think the point is obvious. Every nominee, of either party, for decades has taken the same position, and it is the right position. It reflects a commitment to judicial independence, to impartiality, and to the integrity of the judicial branch of government.

If my Democratic colleagues and their liberal allies believe that Justices Kagan, Alito, Ginsburg, Scalia, Fortas, and Marshall were all wrong, they should say so. If they believe that judges should prejudice cases by committing to particular outcomes, then they should make that case. If they believe that the oath of judicial office and code of judicial conduct are all misguided, then, it seems to me, they should be upfront about it. I, for one, believe that judges should be impartial, that they should follow the law, and that they should stay within their designated role.

America needs impartial, not political, judges. I don't care which party you are in. If you are an attorney, you have to appreciate judges who are impartial, especially if you are an honest attorney.

We need judges who will follow, rather than lead, the law. The Constitution, after all, is the primary way that the American people set rules for government, and that includes—God bless it—the judicial branch. The Constitution cannot control judges if judges control the Constitution.

Yesterday the Judiciary Committee received a letter signed by more than 30 prominent members of the Supreme Court bar. In combination, they have argued more than 500 cases before the U.S. Supreme Court. Though they hold different political and legal views, they are united in strongly supporting Judge Gorsuch's nomination. They

write that he is fair-minded, principled, and “has the unusual combination of character, dedication, and intellect that would make him an asset to our Nation’s highest court.”

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that this letter be printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of my remarks.

I believe the record demonstrates that Judge Neil Gorsuch is an impartial judge and will, when confirmed, be an impartial Supreme Court Justice. He will take the law as he finds it and apply it “without respect to persons,” just as the oath commands. With him on the bench, the law—made by the people’s elected representatives—will determine winners and losers. In doing so, he will be exactly the kind of Justice America needs.

Judge Gorsuch has a tremendous reputation on the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals, supported by Democrats and Republicans alike. Judge Gorsuch is a brilliant lawyer and an even more brilliant judge.

He is a person of impeccable reputation and integrity. He is exactly the type of person you would want deciding your case if you had a case before the Supreme Court. He is exactly the type of person whom other judges could emulate and follow, so he is exactly the type of person we want on the Supreme Court.

I have heard some ugly rumors that some of my colleagues in this body might, because of political concerns and political pressure, want to vote against Judge Gorsuch. I would caution them not to do that.

I think Judge Gorsuch will basically please almost everyone in this body over the years that he serves as a Supreme Court Justice. He is a really fine man. He is a fine family man. He is a very fine lawyer and a fantastic court of appeals judge.

He will make a great Justice on the U.S. Supreme Court. So I urge my colleagues on both sides to vote for him and help us fill this void so that the Court can continue to act as the Court should.

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

MARCH 1, 2017.

Hon. CHARLES E. GRASSLEY,
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.
Hon. DIANNE FEINSTEIN,
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN GRASSLEY AND RANKING MEMBER FEINSTEIN: We write to express our strong support for Judge Neil Gorsuch’s nomination to be an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. The undersigned are members of the Supreme Court bar with substantial experience before the Court. Collectively, we have argued more than 500 cases before the Court. Many of us, moreover, worked with Judge Gorsuch (or litigated against him) when he was in private practice; served alongside him in the Justice Department; or have appeared before him in the Court of Appeals. We hold a broad range of political, policy, and jurisprudential

views. But we are unified in offering our support of Judge Gorsuch’s nomination.

Fairminded, dedicated, smart, and unfailingly polite, Judge Gorsuch is someone all of us would be pleased to appear before. He is principled in his approach to the law, but also keenly aware of practical consequences. He is a thoroughly kind and decent person. Respectful of colleagues and counsel alike, Judge Gorsuch has the unusual combination of character, dedication, and intellect that would make him an asset to our Nation’s highest court.

We hope this information will be of assistance to the Committee in its consideration of Judge Gorsuch’s nomination. We thank you for your time and attention, and urge you to support his confirmation.

Very truly yours,

Lisa Blatt, Richard P. Bress, Michael A. Carvin, John P. Elwood, Roy Englert, Miguel A. Estrada, Mark Evans, H. Bartow Farr, III, David C. Frederick, Dan Himmelfarb, William M. Jay, Peter D. Keisler, Michael K. Kellogg, Jeffrey A. Lamken, Christopher Landau, Maureen E. Mahoney, Ronald Mann, Roman Martinez, Deanne E. Maynard, Matthew D. McGill, Eric D. Miller, Glen D. Nager, Aaron M. Panner, Mark A. Perry, Carter G. Phillips, Richard H. Seamon, Stephen M. Shapiro, Mark T. Stancil, Kathleen M. Sullivan, Amir C. Tayrani, Christopher J. Wright.

Mr. HATCH. I yield the floor.

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

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

CALLING FOR AN INDEPENDENT, BIPARTISAN COMMISSION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, the highlight of the week, of course, is President Trump’s speech to the joint session of Congress, the first major public speech he has given since his inauguration. The Chamber of the House of Representatives was filled with Members of both the House and Senate, the Supreme Court Justices, the Cabinet, and many other dignitaries for the speech. It went for about 60 minutes, which is reasonable under Presidential standards. Many have gone much longer, and I listened carefully to the statement by the new President to really glean his priorities, in terms of his administration and what he hopes to see happen in this country.

There were many issues that he touched on, but there was one he didn’t. He didn’t say a word—not one word—about the Russian intervention in our last Presidential campaign. This is not speculation. It is a reality that 17 different U.S. intelligence agencies have told us that Vladimir Putin and the Russian Government were attempting to subvert and undermine our Presidential election. To our knowledge, that has never happened at any time in the history of the United States. It is the first time a sovereign nation has tried to literally launch a cyber inva-

sion of the United States of America to try to change the outcome of the most important electoral choice under the Constitution—the choice of President of the United States. It is a major issue. It is one President Trump cannot ignore.

During the course of that speech, he never once mentioned the word “Russia.” He never raised this issue as to whether it was worthy of investigation. He described it as a ruse. He has dismissed it and basically has paid no attention to it whatsoever and wants the rest of America to forget it as well.

That is not going to happen because the investigation about this Russian cyber invasion continues. We know the Federal Bureau of Investigation is deep into an investigation. I don’t know what it will find. I don’t know if they will find any complicity with anyone in the United States, anyone in the Trump campaign. It is only after we have an independent, complete, and credible investigation that we may know the facts.

We also have an investigation underway by many of our intelligence agencies, which are looking at the involvement of the Russians trying to change the outcome of our election. Those investigations are underway.

One element came up last night that has changed the conversation in Washington about this whole issue. Even before last night’s news, we knew Attorney General Jeff Sessions needed to recuse himself from any Justice Department investigation into Russia’s efforts to influence the 2016 election in support of the Trump campaign.

The Department of Justice standard for recusal—that is, the removal of the Attorney General from an investigation—is pretty clear. It requires recusal by someone who has “a personal or political relationship with any person or organization substantially involved in the conduct that is the subject of the investigation.”

The Department of Justice regulations define “political relationship” to include service as a principal adviser to a candidate or campaign organization. Well, that certainly covers Attorney General Jeff Sessions and the Trump campaign. Attorney General Sessions was named in March 2016 as chairman of then-Candidate Trump’s National Security Advisory Committee. Steve Bannon, formerly of Breitbart News and now a close adviser to the President, described Jeff Sessions to the Washington Post as follows: “Throughout the campaign, Sessions has been the fiercest, most dedicated, and most loyal promoter in Congress of Trump’s agenda, and has played a critical role as the clearinghouse for policy and philosophy to undergird the implementation of that agenda.”

Attorney General Sessions close relationship with the Trump campaign creates a compelling basis for his recusal from any investigation of Russian involvement in that campaign.

So far, to this day, to this moment, Jeff Sessions has refused to recuse himself from this investigation. He refused when I asked him about it during the course of the hearing, and he has refused since he was named Attorney General. Now it is clear that his unwillingness to recuse himself is no longer tenable or acceptable or even explainable.

Last night, the Washington Post reported that then-Senator Jeff Sessions spoke with Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak twice during the Presidential campaign—in July at a Heritage Foundation event near the Republican National Convention and in September in a private conversation in the Senator's office. These communications came as a great surprise because until last night, Attorney General Sessions did not disclose them.

During his hearing in January, in preparation to become Attorney General, Jeff Sessions, then Senator, was asked by Senator AL FRANKEN of Minnesota: "If there is any evidence that anyone affiliated with the Trump campaign communicated with the Russian government in the course of this campaign, what would you do?"

Jeff Sessions' answer under oath included this statement: "I did not have communications with the Russians."

Senator PATRICK LEAHY of Vermont also asked Attorney General Sessions in writing: "Have you been in contact with anyone connected to any part of the Russian government about the 2016 election, either before or after election day?" Attorney General Sessions' response was "No."

It is hard to understand why Attorney General Sessions has not been more forthcoming and upfront with Congress and the American people about communications which we now know in fact did take place. If he thinks there was nothing wrong with these communications, why would he conceal them? It is deeply troubling.

The reality is, the Attorney General has compromised his credibility when it comes to investigating Russia's cyber invasion of America's election. His recusal is no longer an option, it is a necessity.

People say: Oh, of course, a Democratic Senator is saying that the Republican Attorney General should recuse himself. This morning, it has been reported that a number of top Republicans in Congress have called for the Attorney General's recusal, including House Majority Leader KEVIN MCCARTHY and House Oversight Chairman JASON CHAFFETZ.

It is imperative that career Justice Department professionals be allowed to follow the facts in this investigation to discover the truth. We may need a special counsel, but these steps alone are not sufficient. I believe we need an independent, bipartisan commission, led by Americans of unimpeachable integrity, to get to the bottom and get to the facts on this attack on our democracy.

I know the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence is also conducting an investigation. The House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, which, incidentally, is chaired by Representative DEVIN NUNES, who served on the executive committee of President Trump's transition team, agreed to the parameters of an investigation yesterday.

The Intelligence Committees cannot, by their very nature, provide the transparency and accountability that an independent commission would bring to this issue, and the chairmen of those two committees—House and Senate—have already raised serious questions about their own impartiality by calling on the media organizations at the behest of the White House to challenge news stories on this issue.

How could you possibly maintain objectivity if the elements of an investigation are compromised before the investigation even starts?

I am particularly concerned that Chairman NUNES has already publicly expressed views of the outcome of his committee's investigation before it has even started. That is not a professional, honest, or credible way to approach this.

We need an independent, bipartisan commission to get to the truth, and that may include taking a hard look at the Attorney General's communications with the Russians and at his refusal to disclose those communications. We also need to point out the obvious, which is that when it comes to investigating Russia's involvement in helping the Trump campaign, we have to follow the money, and that includes reviewing President Trump's tax returns, which, unlike any other Presidential candidate in modern times, he has refused to share with the American people.

Yesterday, Senators STABENOW, WYDEN, and a number of my colleagues sent a letter to the chairman of the Finance Committee, Senator ORRIN HATCH, of Utah, urging him to allow committee members to review the President's tax returns in a closed executive session. That is something the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee has the authority to do. The letter pointed out that this oversight is essential given the media reports about Russia as well as the possible unconstitutional emoluments being accepted by President Trump's vast business empire.

I support this request from my colleagues. It is imperative that President Trump level with the American people about his business's foreign entanglements, especially those involving Russia.

This issue is not going away. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join me in pursuing all of the facts about last year's Russian attack on our democracy.

It was just a few weeks ago that the President's National Security Advisor, General Flynn, resigned. Do you re-

member why? He misrepresented to the Vice President and the American people conversations which he had had with the Russians. He ended up giving up his position as the No. 1 person in national security in the White House.

Now questions have been raised about the credibility of the Attorney General—the No. 1 person in the Trump administration when it comes to the administration of justice. What is the issue? It is the same issue as with General Flynn—conversations with the Russians which were not disclosed to the American public.

This is an issue that is going to continue to be in the forefront, as it should be, until we can bring the facts to the American people. The only way to reach that point is by having the Attorney General recuse himself from any investigation, appointing as a special prosecutor—or someone in that capacity—someone who is credible who can pursue this matter and then initiating an independent, bipartisan investigation by a national commission with credible chairs who have no political agenda and care enough for the United States to view this invasion by Russia as absolutely unacceptable.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CONGRATULATING SENATOR COCHRAN

Mr. WICKER. Madam President, earlier today, during his opening remarks, the distinguished majority leader paid tribute to my senior Senator, THAD COCHRAN, upon the occasion of his becoming the 10th longest serving Senator in the history of our Republic.

If you think about this—I just checked with the cloakroom—the Senate first convened in March of 1789 in New York City. In the 228 years of the United States Senate, THAD COCHRAN, of Mississippi, now becomes the 10th longest serving Senator in history. Quite a milestone.

I was chairing a subcommittee hearing this morning and was not able to be on the floor during the majority leader's remarks, and so I take a moment to now pay tribute to Senator COCHRAN at this milestone in his career and in the history of the Senate.

Most Senators do not know Senator COCHRAN and I were born in the same small town. We are both natives of Pontotoc, MS. We are alumni of the same university. We are both Ole Miss Rebels. We also share the same political lineage in Mississippi of being early pioneers in the development of the Republican Party. I was the first Republican Member of the House of Representatives in my congressional district, the First District of Mississippi, back in 1994. Senator COCHRAN

blazed an even more significant trail by becoming the first popularly elected Republican Senator from Mississippi back in 1978—in over a century. He succeeded former President pro tempore Jim Eastland, of Mississippi.

I have been able to watch him and be somewhat of a teammate over the decades, and I just want to pay tribute to THAD COCHRAN as being a trailblazer for quite some time. This is a milestone, and it is a testament to the proven record that Senator COCHRAN has built over 38 years in this Chamber. He served for 6 years in the House prior to that, so he has been around a long time. He has always been a good public servant. He has always been a strong American. He has always been a good member of the troop.

He is chairman of the Appropriations Committee, and a lot of funds are distributed through that committee. He is part of the team, and his committee is part of the team. Again, a lot of our colleagues do not realize this, but we set budget numbers—the House and Senate. We come to an agreement, and we set those spending levels. Then the Appropriations Committee, under the leadership of THAD COCHRAN, does the hard work of figuring out how to abide by those budget caps, and they do it year in and year out. With leadership like Senator THAD COCHRAN's, usually, the numbers are crunched, and they make it work on a bipartisan basis. Many of the votes in the Appropriations Committee last year, under the leadership of Chairman COCHRAN, were unanimous votes or virtually unanimous votes.

At the same time, he has been able to, within the constraints of those budget caps, take care of the needs of our country and certainly the needs of our State of Mississippi at some very dark moments in the history of our State. Hurricane Katrina—the worst natural disaster in recorded history ever to hit the North American Continent—was visited upon our State, and we were certainly fortunate to have the leadership of Senator THAD COCHRAN, and I was glad to be his partner in that regard. After Deepwater Horizon, the entire gulf coast region—and in fact the entire Nation—benefited from the leadership of Senator COCHRAN.

He makes us proud, and he has made us proud for years and years now. He was called by someone the “quiet persuader,” and that nickname has stuck and has been appropriate for quite some time. Throughout his time in Congress, indeed, THAD COCHRAN has been the quiet persuader. Not a lot of demagoguery, not a lot of arm-waving, not a lot of rhetoric comes from this desk in front of me—but leadership and resolve and taking care of business on behalf of the United States of America.

Before he was a Congressman, THAD COCHRAN was a successful young lawyer, and before that, he was a member of the Navy. He served our country well. Before that, he was perhaps the most outstanding law student with per-

haps the highest grade point average ever in the history of the “Ole Miss” law school. So he has made us proud in so many ways.

Although I was not able to be on the floor at the moment when Senator MCCONNELL made this recognition, I did want to come, now that I have a moment or two, and add my words of encouragement and congratulations to THAD COCHRAN, but also my words of appreciation on behalf of a grateful State and a grateful Nation for the many ways in which THAD COCHRAN has made us a better and a stronger country.

Thank you, Madam President.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TRIBUTE TO JOYCE MCCOMBS

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I have been coming to the floor for the past several weeks to highlight my State and the great people who live in it. As the Presiding Officer and everybody in this room and those watching on TV probably know, Alaska is a breathtaking place. In fact, there is no place like it in the world—mountain ranges that seem to go on for eternity, salmon-filled waters and rivers, streams, massive glaciers. People save up their whole lives to come to visit my State. We welcome them. We want them all to come.

As I have also been saying, it is the people who make Alaska truly special, the Alaskans, people throughout my State banding together to form warm communities in cold climates. In Alaska, where the conditions are often extreme, we depend on each other—communities do—sometimes even for survival.

Today I would like to recognize Joyce McCombs, the director of the community library in Delta Junction, AK, as the Alaskan of the Week. On March 9, Joyce will be celebrating 30 years as the library director—30. She was also recently named by the Alaska Library Association the Audrey P. Kolb Public Library Service Award winner and received the Public Library Roundtable Certificate of Appreciation for her “significant, innovative activities” to improve her library. That award is named after Audrey Kolb, who is a legend in the library world in Alaska, and Joyce has that award as well as our award.

Delta Junction, where she lives, is a beautiful community of about 1,000 residents, surrounded by 3 spectacular mountain ranges. The community is about 150 miles from Fairbanks, in Alaska's interior. It gets cold there in the winter. As a matter of fact, this

morning in Delta Junction, it was 26 below zero. And it is home to Fort Greely, which is the cornerstone of our Nation's entire missile defense system, protected by 300 brave soldiers, part of the Alaskan National Guard.

For many in Delta Junction, the library—recognized by the Library Journal as one of the best in the State—is the place where people converge and find warmth and community. It is open 6 days a week, and it only closes when it gets below 40 below zero. They are tough people in Delta Junction.

Joyce, with the support of so many in Delta Junction, including Fort Greely, which supports the library, has made sure that this library stays one of the best in the State and in the country. In her words, Delta's library is the “community living room.” In a small town like Delta Junction, such spaces are rare and, indeed, special. Joyce brings all sorts of services and learning to the library, including bands, authors, cooking classes—“what the community wants and needs,” she said. Sometimes those needs entail sitting someplace warm and reading a book. Sometimes it means Skyping a spouse who might be serving overseas in Afghanistan or Iraq or applying for a job or getting the right form to file their tax returns. Joyce said: “We're open 6 days a week serving everybody from nursery schools to nursing homes.”

One Delta resident told Joyce on Facebook:

Your assistance to the literary education of now two generations of children has been an invaluable contribution to our community that will be paying dividends for years to come. This statewide honor is only a larger recognition of what we already know here in Delta—that you are a great librarian.

After 30 years as the director of the library, Joyce still loves her job, saying she learns something every day from her patrons. Thankfully for all of us, she has no plans to leave.

Congratulations on your award, Joyce. Happy birthday to your grandson, Trek. And thank you—and to the many librarians across our State and across our Nation—for your efforts to provide a warm learning space for all Alaskans and all Americans.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

THE CHABAD ORGANIZATION

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, with all the division and conflict in politics today, it would take something truly compelling to unite all 100 Senators, including Republicans and Democrats, conservatives and liberals. Well, it has happened. This week I sent to Secretary of State Rex Tillerson a letter, signed by all 100 Senators, asking that it be conveyed to Russian President Vladimir Putin. The letter supports the decades-long quest by Agudas Chasidei Chabad of the United States to recover from Russia its collection of sacred religious texts and manuscripts.

Chabad was established in the 18th century in Russia and is today the largest Hasidic Jewish organization in the world. The organization's past leaders, or rebbes, accumulated this collection of sacred texts, which includes a library and an archive and is central to Chabad's religious life. The Soviets took control of the library in 1920 and in 1927 arrested the sixth rebbe and sentenced him to death. He was allowed to leave Russia later that year but had to leave the library behind. In 1933, the sixth rebbe and the archive moved to Poland.

In 1940, after both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union invaded Poland, the sixth rebbe fled to the United States without the archive. It was confiscated, first by the Nazis and then by the Soviets. Chabad has since worked to reclaim both the library and the archive.

It is important to place the letter we sent this week in its full context because this is only the latest in a long series of actions by all three branches of the U.S. Government to support Chabad's quest. Members of Congress, for example, began calling for the return of these works in the 1930s. Just weeks before the Soviet Union dissolved on Christmas Day 1991, both President Mikhail Gorbachev and a state arbitration panel ordered that the library be returned to Chabad. On January 24, 1992, the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe wrote President Boris Yeltsin, urging him to carry out the court's order and return the collection.

Unfortunately, both President Gorbachev's directive and the court's order were effectively nullified when the Russian Federation replaced the Soviet Union. Within a few months, however, the U.S. State Department expressed "strong support" for returning the full collection to Chabad. On May 31, 1992, all 100 Senators signed a letter to President Boris Yeltsin urging the collection's "quick release."

On February 20, 2005, all 100 Senators signed a letter to President Putin, again urging that the collection be returned to Chabad. The letter said this: "The religious texts that Chabad seeks to retrieve consist of rare and irreplaceable books, archives and manuscripts on Chabad philosophy, Jewish religious law, prayer and tradition. . . . We urge you to return these sacred re-

ligious texts, archives, and manuscripts to Chabad, which would be a significant example of your government's commitment to justice, human rights, and religious freedom."

Chabad filed suit against Russia in Federal court. During this litigation, the United States filed statements of interest reiterating its "strong support" for returning the collection to Chabad. On July 30, 2010, the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia ordered Russia to return both the library and the archive to Chabad.

I am truly grateful to all of my colleagues for your support of Chabad and their effort to recover this important component of their religious life. As striking as this unity is, I hope my colleagues also see it as part of a much longer story of extraordinary faith and commitment in the face of loss and persecution. I hope and pray that such efforts will be successful and that Russia will respond favorably to Chabad's request. It would indeed be a demonstration of their commitment to justice, human rights, and religious freedom.

I ask unanimous consent that the text of the 1992, 2005, and 2017 Senate letters to which I referred be printed in the RECORD.

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

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, May 31, 1992.

Hon. BORIS YELTSIN,
President of the Russian Republic,
Moscow, Russia.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: We understand that you have personally committed yourself to secure the return of the Lubavitch texts, and we appreciate your having taken a stand on behalf of an act of justice.

When the Senate was in recess, the U.S. State Department issued a statement (copy attached), with which we now wish to associate ourselves. In particular, it is our hope and expectation that you will fulfill your commitment decisively through the quick release of the Schneerson-Agudas Chabad collection.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, February 24, 2005.

Hon. VLADIMIR PUTIN,
President, Russian Federation.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: We, the undersigned members of the United States Senate, respectfully request your assistance in returning the Schneerson collection from the Russian State Library and the Russian State Military Archive, to its rightful owners in the United States: Agudas Chasidei Chabad of United States (hereafter referred to as "Chabad").

The religious texts that Chabad seeks to retrieve consist of rare and irreplaceable books, archives and manuscripts on Chabad philosophy, Jewish religious law, prayer and tradition. The first portion of the Schneerson collection was seized by the former USSR around the time of the Bolshevik revolution and placed in the Russian State Library, where it remains to this day.

The second portion of the Schneerson collection is in storage at the Russian State Military Archive. It had been assumed that this portion of the collection had been de-

stroyed or captured by Nazi Germany during the holocaust and Nazi occupation of Warsaw, Poland in World War II. Chabad recently learned that the Soviet Army captured this portion of the Schneerson collection from the Nazis and transferred it to the Russian State Military Archive.

Chabad has worked tirelessly to secure the release of these texts, archives, and manuscripts that comprise the sacred heritage of an entire community. On May 31, 1992, the entire United States Senate collectively appealed to then-President Boris Yeltsin to honor his own commitment to return the Schneerson collection. A copy of this appeal is enclosed. Since 1992, however, a mere eight volumes have been released.

We urge you to return these sacred religious texts, archives, and manuscripts to Chabad, which would be a significant example of your government's commitment to justice, human rights, and religious freedom.

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, February 27, 2017.

President, VLADIMIR PUTIN,
Russian Federation,
Moscow, Russia.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: We are writing respectfully to reaffirm our support and request for the return of the Schneerson collection of sacred texts from the Russian State Library and the Russian State Military Archive to its rightful owners, Agudas Chasidei Chabad of United States ("Chabad").

On May 31, 1992, all one hundred members of the United States Senate appealed to then-President Boris Yeltsin to honor Russia's commitment to return the collection to Chabad. On February 24, 2005, all one hundred members of the United States Senate again signed an appeal for your assistance in returning the collection. Copies of these letters are attached hereto. Since 1992, eight volumes of the collection have been returned to Chabad. We hereby respectfully request your assistance in seeing the return of the entire collection.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

REMEMBERING BERTA CACERES

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want to call the Senate's attention to the fact that it has now been 1 year since the assassination of Berta Caceres, a renowned indigenous Honduran environmental activist who devoted her life—and ultimately lost her life—defending the land, water, and other natural resources of the Lenca people.

After an initial attempt by the Honduran police and even some high-ranking officials to falsely portray the murder as a crime of passion, which is a not uncommon ploy to cover up official complicity in such cases, eight men have been arrested, including one active-duty and two retired military officers.

Although Honduran officials have denied any government involvement in Ms. Caceres's murder and downplayed the arrest of Major Mariano Diaz who was promptly discharged from the army, there are reasons to be skeptical.

Diaz, a decorated special forces veteran, was appointed chief of army intelligence in 2015, and at the time of the murder he was reportedly on track

for promotion to lieutenant colonel. Another suspect, Lieutenant Douglas Giovanni Bustillo, reportedly joined the military on the same day as Diaz. They served together and apparently remained in contact after Bustillo retired in 2008.

It is particularly noteworthy and troubling that, according to press reports, both Diaz and Bustillo may have received military training from the United States.

A third suspect, Sergeant Henry Javier Hernandez, was a former special forces sniper who had worked under the command of Diaz. He may also have worked as an informant for military intelligence after leaving the army in 2013.

According to press reports, First Sergeant Rodrigo Cruz, a former army officer who deserted after Caceres's death and remains in hiding, said the Honduran military high command gave a hit list with the names and photographs of activists to eliminate to the commander of the Xatruch multi-agency taskforce, to which Cruz's unit belonged, and that Caceres's name was on the list. It sounds a lot like the death squads in El Salvador in the 1980s.

Five civilians with no known military record have also been arrested. They include Sergio Rodriguez, a manager for the Agua Zarca hydroelectric dam that Berta Caceres had long opposed.

That project is being led by Desarrollos Energeticos SA, Desa, with international financing and the strong backing of the Honduran Government. According to press reports, the company's president, Roberto David Castillo Mejia, is a former military intelligence officer, and its secretary, Roberto Pacheco Reyes, is a former justice minister. Desa employed former Lieutenant Bustillo as head of security between 2013 and 2015.

Ms. Caceres had reported multiple death threats linked to her campaign against the dam, including several from Desa employees. The Honduran Government largely ignored her requests for protection, and Desa continues to deny any involvement in the murder.

It is inconceivable to anyone who knows Honduras that this outrageous crime was carried out by these individuals without orders from above. The question is whether the investigation will identify the intellectual authors, which almost never happens in Honduras. In fact, as Global Witness, the U.S. Department of State, and others have documented, there have been scores of killings of environmental activists in Honduras that have never been credibly investigated and for which no one has been punished.

I have no doubt that one of the reasons this case has progressed at all is because U.S. law enforcement experts, supported by the U.S. Embassy, have assisted in the investigation, and because of the efforts of Honduran Attorney General Oscar Fernando Chincilla.

However, as I have said before, in Honduras where impunity is the norm, a case of such domestic and international importance should also be the subject of a parallel independent investigation. The obvious entities to convene such an inquiry are the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Mission to Support the Fight against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras, MACCIH; yet the Honduran Government continues to reject such an inquiry.

The United States and Honduras have a troubled history; yet we and the Honduran people share many interests. We want to continue to help Honduras address the deeply rooted poverty, inequality, violence, and impunity that have caused so much suffering and hardship and contributed to the migration of tens of thousands of Hondurans, including children, to the United States.

But for this Senator, that requires solving the Berta Caceres case and undertaking credible investigations and prosecutions of the shocking number of assassinations of other social activists, journalists, and human rights defenders in recent years. It means Honduran officials publicly affirming and defending the legitimate role of such activists, who in the past have been ignored, threatened, and treated as legitimate targets. Only then will it be clear that the Honduran Government is committed to justice and that our assistance will achieve lasting results.

The Department of State needs to thoroughly and transparently investigate whether Major Diaz and Lieutenant Bustillo were in fact trained by the United States. If so, the Congress and the Honduran people deserve to know how they were selected, what training they received, and any steps taken to improve the process of screening potential trainees and to monitor the conduct of those who have received U.S. training.

Finally, as I have said before, as long as the Agua Zarca project and others like it continue over the objections of indigenous people whose livelihoods and cultures are intrinsically linked to the rivers that are impacted, the confrontations and violence will continue. The Honduran Government, like other governments in that region, needs to change its way of doing business in areas where the rights and interests of indigenous people have long been violated and ignored.

Given the shameful history of the Agua Zarca project it should be cancelled. Other hydroelectric and extractive projects in indigenous territories should be reconsidered by the Honduran Government and allowed to proceed only after a transparent process based on the free, prior, informed consent of affected communities.

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

RULES OF PROCEDURE

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship's rules for the 115th Congress be printed in the RECORD.

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

SENATE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP COMMITTEE RULES—115TH CONGRESS

JURISDICTION

Per Rule XXV(1) of the Standing Rules of the Senate:

(1) Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship to which committee shall be referred all proposed legislation, messages, petitions, memorials, and other matters relating to the Small Business Administration;

(2) Any proposed legislation reported by such committee which relates to matters other than the functions of the Small Business Administration shall, at the request of the chairman of any standing committee having jurisdiction over the subject matter extraneous to the functions of the Small Business Administration, be considered and reported by such standing committee prior to its consideration by the Senate; and likewise measures reported by other committees directly relating to the Small Business Administration shall, at the request of the Chair of the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, be referred to the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship for its consideration of any portion of the measure dealing with the Small Business Administration and be reported by this committee prior to its consideration by the Senate.

(3) Such committee shall also study and survey by means of research and investigation all problems of American small business enterprises, and report thereon from time to time.

RULES OF PROCEDURE

GENERAL

All applicable provisions of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the Senate Resolutions, and the Legislative Reorganization Acts of 1946 and of 1970 (as amended), shall govern the Committee.

MEETINGS

(a) The regular meeting day of the Committee shall be the first Thursday of each month unless otherwise directed by the Chair. All other meetings may be called by the Chair as he or she deems necessary, on 5 business days notice where practicable. If at least three Members of the Committee desire the Chair to call a special meeting, they may file in the office of the Committee a written request therefor, addressed to the Chair. Immediately thereafter, the Clerk of the Committee shall notify the Chair of such request. If, within 3 calendar days after the filing of such request, the Chair fails to call the requested special meeting, which is to be held within 7 calendar days after the filing of such request, a majority of the Committee Members may file in the Office of the Committee their written notice that a special Committee meeting will be held, specifying the date, hour and place thereof, and the Committee shall meet at that time and place. Immediately upon the filing of such notice, the Clerk of the Committee shall notify all Committee Members that such special meeting will be held and inform them of

its date, hour and place. If the Chair is not present at any regular, additional or special meeting, such member of the Committee as the Chair shall designate shall preside. For any meeting or hearing of the Committee, the Ranking Member may delegate to any Minority Member the authority to serve as Ranking Member, and that Minority Member shall be afforded all the rights and responsibilities of the Ranking Member for the duration of that meeting or hearing. Notice of any designation shall be provided to the Chief Clerk as early as practicable.

(b) It shall not be in order for the Committee to consider any amendment in the first degree proposed to any measure under consideration by the Committee unless an electronic copy of such amendment has been delivered to the Clerk of the Committee at least 2 business days prior to the meeting. Following receipt of all amendments, the Clerk shall disseminate the amendments to all Members of the Committee. This subsection may be waived by agreement of the Chair and Ranking Member or by a majority vote of the members of the Committee.

QUORUMS

(a)(1) A majority of the Members of the Committee shall constitute a quorum for reporting any legislative measure or nomination.

(2) One-third of the Members of the Committee shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of routine business, provided that one Minority Member is present. The term "routine business" includes, but is not limited to, the consideration of legislation pending before the Committee and any amendments thereto, and voting on such amendments, and steps in an investigation including, but not limited to, authorizing the issuance of a subpoena.

(3) In hearings, whether in public or closed session, a quorum for the asking of testimony, including sworn testimony, shall consist of one Member of the Committee.

(b) Proxies will be permitted in voting upon the business of the Committee. A Member who is unable to attend a business meeting may submit a proxy vote on any matter, in writing, or through oral or written personal instructions to a Member of the Committee or staff. Proxies shall in no case be counted for establishing a quorum.

NOMINATIONS

In considering a nomination, the Committee shall conduct an investigation or review of the nominee's experience, qualifications, suitability, and integrity to serve in the position to which he or she has been nominated. In any hearings on the nomination, the nominee shall be called to testify under oath on all matters relating to his or her nomination for office. To aid in such investigation or review, each nominee may be required to submit a sworn detailed statement including biographical, financial, policy, and other information which the Committee may request. The Committee may specify which items in such statement are to be received on a confidential basis.

HEARINGS, SUBPOENAS, & LEGAL COUNSEL

(a)(1) The Chair of the Committee may initiate a hearing of the Committee on his or her authority or upon his or her approval of a request by any Member of the Committee. If such request is by the Ranking Member, a decision shall be communicated to the Ranking Member within 7 business days. Written notice of all hearings, including the title, a description of the hearing, and a tentative witness list shall be given at least 5 business days in advance, where practicable, to all Members of the Committee.

(2) Hearings of the Committee shall not be scheduled outside the District of Columbia

unless specifically authorized by the Chair and the Ranking Minority Member or by consent of a majority of the Committee. Such consent may be given informally, without a meeting, but must be in writing.

(b)(1) Any Member of the Committee shall be empowered to administer the oath to any witness testifying as to fact.

(2) The Chair and Ranking Member shall be empowered to call an equal number of witnesses to a Committee hearing. Subject to Senate Standing Rule 26(4)(d), such number shall exclude any Administration witness unless such witness would be the sole hearing witness, in which case the Ranking Member shall be entitled to invite one witness. The preceding two sentences shall not apply when a witness appears as the nominee. Interrogation of witnesses at hearings shall be conducted on behalf of the Committee by Members of the Committee or such Committee staff as is authorized by the Chair or Ranking Minority Member.

(3) Witnesses appearing before the Committee shall file with the Clerk of the Committee a written statement of the prepared testimony at least two business days in advance of the hearing at which the witness is to appear unless this requirement is waived by the Chair and the Ranking Minority Member.

(c) Any witness summoned to a public or closed hearing may be accompanied by counsel of his or her own choosing, who shall be permitted while the witness is testifying to advise the witness of his or her legal rights. Failure to obtain counsel will not excuse the witness from appearing and testifying.

(d) Subpoenas for the attendance of witnesses or the production of memoranda, documents, records, and other materials may be authorized by the Chair with the consent of the Ranking Minority Member or by the consent of a majority of the Members of the Committee. Such consent may be given informally, without a meeting, but must be in writing. The Chair may subpoena attendance or production without the consent of the Ranking Minority Member when the Chair has not received notification from the Ranking Minority Member of disapproval of the subpoena within 72 hours of being notified of the intended subpoena, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. Subpoenas shall be issued by the Chair or by the Member of the Committee designated by him or her. A subpoena for the attendance of a witness shall state briefly the purpose of the hearing and the matter or matters to which the witness is expected to testify. A subpoena for the production of memoranda, documents, records, and other materials shall identify the papers or materials required to be produced with as much particularity as is practicable.

(e) The Chair shall rule on any objections or assertions of privilege as to testimony or evidence in response to subpoenas or questions of Committee Members and staff in hearings.

(f) Testimony may be submitted to the formal record for a period not less than two weeks following a hearing or roundtable, unless otherwise agreed to by the Chair and Ranking Member.

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

(a) No confidential testimony taken by, or confidential material presented to, the Committee in executive session, or any report of the proceedings of a closed hearing, or confidential testimony or material submitted pursuant to a subpoena, shall be made public, either in whole or in part or by way of summary, unless authorized by a majority of the Members. Other confidential material or testimony submitted to the Committee may be disclosed if authorized by the Chair with the consent of the Ranking Member.

(b) Persons asserting confidentiality of documents or materials submitted to the Committee offices shall clearly designate them as such on their face. Designation of submissions as confidential does not prevent their use in furtherance of Committee business.

MEDIA & BROADCASTING

(a) At the discretion of the Chair, public meetings of the Committee may be televised, broadcasted, or recorded in whole or in part by a member of the Senate Press Gallery or an employee of the Senate. Any such person wishing to televise, broadcast, or record a Committee meeting must request approval of the Chair by submitting a written request to the Committee Office by 5 p.m. the day before the meeting. Notice of televised or broadcasted hearings shall be provided to the Ranking Minority Member as soon as practicable.

(b) During public meetings of the Committee, any person using a camera, microphone, or other electronic equipment may not position or use the equipment in a way that interferes with the seating, vision, or hearing of Committee members or staff on the dais, or with the orderly process of the meeting.

SUBCOMMITTEES

The Committee shall not have standing subcommittees.

AMENDMENT OF RULES

The foregoing rules may be added to, modified or amended; provided, however, that not less than a majority of the entire Membership so determined at a regular meeting with due notice, or at a meeting specifically called for that purpose.

75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SINKING OF THE USS "HOUSTON"

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, yesterday marked the 75th anniversary of the sinking of the USS *Houston* (CA-30), the "flagship" of the U.S. Asiatic Fleet, which fought bravely against the Imperial Japanese Navy Battle Fleet. During an engagement on March 1, 1942, the USS *Houston* and the Australian cruiser HMAS *Perth* were sunk at the Battle of Sunda Strait, suffering a combined loss of nearly 1,000 servicemen; the surviving sailors and marines became prisoners of war. After the war, it was revealed that they had been sent to Japan and then transferred to the mainland and used as slave labor for construction of the Thai-Burma Railway. Only 266 men from the *Houston's* complement of 1,008 and 214 of the *Perth's* complement of 681 returned home after the war.

The news of this horrific loss hit the Lone Star state hard, but with typical Texan gusto and determination, it prompted a mass recruiting drive for volunteers to replace the lost crew. On Memorial Day 1942, a crowd of nearly 200,000 witnessed 1,000 "Houston Volunteers" inducted into the Navy. An accompanying bond drive raised over \$85 million, enough to pay for a new cruiser and an aircraft carrier, the USS *San Jacinto*. This historic event speaks to the American spirit and grit as well as our enduring alliance with Australia.

In honor of this occasion, we remember the brave men of Texas, and all of those from the Greatest Generation, who gave so much to preserve freedom

in the Pacific and fight for America. They fought for country and liberty in the face of impossible odds. These sailors, soldiers, and marines represent America's unbeatable determination.

REMEMBERING EDWARD "ED" GARVEY

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, today I wish to honor the life of my friend Edward "Ed" Garvey. Ed spent his lifetime fighting for equality, justice, and fairness for all Wisconsinites and Americans and did so with passion, joy, and a great Irish wit.

Ed was born in 1940 in Burlington, WI, to Edward and June Garvey. His legacy of leadership and service began at a young age. He emerged as a young leader in Wisconsin through Badger Boys State and as student body president at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Ed's lifelong commitment to social justice and racial equality began in college. As a member of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Council, Ed traveled to the South to join the African American civil rights movement. Following 2 years serving our Nation in the Army, Ed attended the University of Wisconsin Law School, graduating in 1969.

Thereafter, Ed joined the Minneapolis law firm Lindquist and Vennum and worked for the newly formed National Football League Players Association—NFLPA. For 12 years, Ed fought for labor rights for NFL players and workers, first as the NFLPA's attorney and eventually as its first executive director. He won greater freedom and economic fairness for the players, securing a fair share of profits for players who at the time needed second jobs to supplement their \$35,000 salaries.

Ed was never shy or deferential. He spoke truth to power and challenged the system anywhere he found an injustice. He loved a good fight, and he took great pleasure in the battles, but he was always respectful and driven by the progressive values that guided him. In moments of the greatest conflict, Ed would often use humor to disarm others while making a point. Even his greatest adversaries appreciated his principled positions and enjoyed his wit and intellect.

After more than a decade with the NFL, Ed returned home and was named Wisconsin Deputy Attorney General, where he took on big polluters and fought for environmental protections. He ran for the Senate twice, and in his bid for Governor in 1998, Ed not only fought for campaign finance reform, he led by example because he has always been deeply committed to changing a system where powerful interests have too much influence over public policy. While Ed came up short in his campaigns, he never gave up his fight for the "little guy" as a respected lawyer and as a leading progressive voice in our State.

Ed understood how important it is to pass on to the next generation our proud, progressive tradition in Wisconsin. He founded "Fighting Bob Fest" to honor the legacy of former progressive Wisconsin Governor and U.S. Senator Robert "Fighting Bob" LaFollette. Each year, Ed brought progressives together from across the country to share this tradition and give people a voice.

Ed's list of accomplishments and successes is long and has one thing common: He was committed to something bigger than he was. If you asked him, he would say his greatest accomplishment was his family. He spent more than five wonderful decades filled with adventures with his wife, Betty, and their three daughters, Pam, Kathleen, and Lizzy. In recent years, his four grandchildren were his greatest joy. I know that their wonderful memories of him will stay with them always.

I feel so privileged to have known and worked with Ed since my early years in public service. Ed lived his life and pursued his work with persistence and purpose. He loved Wisconsin and stood up for people from different walks of life because he wanted to make a difference in people's lives.

Perhaps most important, Ed inspired generations of young people to enter politics and law, to engage in our democracy, to let their voices be heard, and to never be intimidated by those of wealth, power, and privilege. I am a better person for having fought with him in support of a more progressive Wisconsin, and I am honored to work to continue his important legacy. "Forward!"

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO CHARLES EDWARD GRAY

• Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize 17-year-old Charles Edward Gray for his service to his community. Charles is a member of the Montana Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 214, out of Helena, MT.

On November 16, 2016, Charles was awarded the rank of Eagle Scout at his Eagle board review. Charles' Eagle Scout Service Project involved the planning, building, and installation of three wheelchair ramps at the YMCA Camp Child where children and families grow, learn new skills, and have fun in Montana's outdoors. He made the ramps out of treated lumber and composite planks and installed them at the camp's main lodge and in the girls' and boys' respective shower houses. The installation of these ramps will provide access to those with disabilities for many years to come, making Camp Child a more inclusive place.

Charles is a shining example of what it means to be a local servant leader and is using his skills to better his own community. Charles, thank you for ris-

ing to the challenge of serving Montana. I look forward to seeing what great things await your future.●

TRIBUTE TO TY LANTIS

• Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, this week, I have the distinct honor of recognizing Ty Lantis, a distinguished Montana craftsman with deep roots along the Yellowstone Valley. Ty grew up not too far from where the Powder River joins the Yellowstone River. During his adolescent years, Ty's family operated a saw mill south of Terry. He grew up building barns, garages, sheds, and many other structures. It is no surprise that Ty learned to make good use of his own talents and Montana's abundance of trees in order to become a successful homebuilder.

Shortly after graduating from Terry High School in Prairie County, Ty moved west along the Yellowstone Valley and started building homes in the Billings area. He helped build his first home when he was 19 years old. After a few more years of honing his craft, Ty teamed up with Greg Schmidt, and they launched their own company in 2003. Ty's Montana work ethic helped him to discover, develop, and deploy his talents in a way that literally helped to build a better community. In recent years, his company's craftsmanship has been honored in the Billings Parade of Homes, selected as the "Builder of the Year" in Billings, and recognized by the Yellowstone Valley People's Choice Award for homebuilding. In 2013, Ty's company built the house for the St. Jude Dream Home Giveaway, with the proceeds of this effort going to benefit children's medical research. The following year Ty served as the president of the Home Builders Association in Billings.

Despite the positive recognition from the community and from others in his industry, Ty remains a humble man who doesn't seek the attention that comes with a job well done. Ty prefers to go about his business and do quality work, but ultimately the quality of Ty's work speaks for itself. Today is my chance to say a simple thank you to Ty for the work he has done and will continue to do to build a Montana that is a treasure to all of us.●

TRIBUTE TO KIMBERLY LAWSON

• Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I wish to pay tribute to a dear friend and tireless champion of justice for working people, Kimberly Lawson. Kim's dedication to workers and their families spanned more than 30 years.

A proud daughter of northwest Indiana—Gary—and the industrial working class, Kim grew up witnessing firsthand the destruction of the industrial Midwest as corporate greed destroyed the steel industry and manufacturing jobs and decimated good-paying union jobs that built the middle class. Daughter of a union factory worker, Kim attended Purdue University, where she met the love of her life, Will Kohr.

Upon graduation, Kim began her long career in the labor movement, moving to California in 1986 to work as a journalist and an organizer with Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers Union, UFW.

Kim and Will moved to Upper Jay, NY, where their daughter Emma was born and raised. Six, often seven days a week, Kim, an International Representative for the fiercely independent and democratic United Radio, Electrical and Machine Workers of America, UE, would drive hours in every direction from her family's cabin in Upper Jay, NY, to help workers, often against great odds, form their own unions and bargain contracts.

For two decades, Kim has done the hardest and some of the most important work anyone can do. Because of her, thousands of people have gained the courage to stand up and speak for themselves and for what is right. Because of her, many, many thousands of people, in Vermont and across the country, live measurably better lives.

Kim Lawson led the effort to successfully organize workers at workplaces in Vermont, including U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Counseling Services of Addison County, Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity, NHVAC, Berlin Health and Rehabilitation Center, Hunger Mountain Co-op, City Market Co-op, Northeast Kingdom Community Action, and the University of Vermont; and in New Hampshire, Grafton County New Hampshire Nursing Home and Public Employees, and the National Visa Center; and in New York, Adirondack Community Action Program. At a time when the wages and living standards of most people were under attack, Kim helped people organize collectively for a better life.

Kim was also a founder of the Vermont Workers Center and for years staffed the Workers Rights Hotline which, free of charge, has helped many thousands of workers learn and protect their rights under the law. She has trained, mentored, and led countless young organizers and workers who, inspired by her quiet, steadfast and relentless example, carry on her pursuit of justice.

In whatever task she set for herself, Kim worked with her whole heart and a deep sense of solidarity for her fellow humanity. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Kimberly Lawson for her tireless work on behalf of our communities and citizens.●

TRIBUTE TO ROBERT "BOB" G. SMITH

● Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, I would like to congratulate and honor Robert "Bob" G. Smith, CEO of Goodwill Industries of Lower South Carolina—GWILSC—for 35 years of serving our great State.

Bob's dedication and passion has been a true testament to GWILSC's mission to "helping people reach their full potential through the dignity and

power of work." He has inspired and instilled confidence by promoting essential job training programs that have encouraged individuals to meet their goals.

His service has touched many people all over the South Carolina community, and his initiative to orchestrate a collaborative environment has helped to expand services that has transformed lives.

For more than three decades, Bob has worked tirelessly to serve others, and his contributions will continue to live on in the generations of South Carolinians he has been able to positively impact, and we are grateful for everything Bob has done to assist our communities. Therefore, I would like to recognize Robert "Bob" G. Smith for epitomizing the very best of the Palmetto State.●

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 10:22 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill and joint resolution, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 998. An act to provide for the establishment of a process for the review of rules and sets of rules, and for other purposes.

H.J. Res. 83. Joint resolution disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of Labor relating to "Clarification of Employer's Continuing Obligation to Make and Maintain an Accurate Record of Each Recordable Injury and Illness".

The message also announced that pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 6913, and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Members of the House of Representatives to the Congressional-Executive Commission on the People's Republic of China: Mr. WALZ of Minnesota and Ms. KAPTUR of Ohio.

The message further announced that pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 276d and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Members of the House of Representatives to the Canada-United States Interparliamentary Group: Mr. HIGGINS of New York, Ms. SLAUGHTER of New York, Mr. MEEKS of New York, Mr. LARSEN of Washington, and Mr. DEFazio of Oregon.

The message also announced that pursuant to 44 U.S.C. 2702, the Minority Leader reappoints the following individual on the part of the House of Representatives to the Advisory Committee on the Records of Congress: Mr. John A. Lawrence of Washington, DC.

At 4:00 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 1004. An act to amend chapter 3 of title 5, United States Code, to require the publication of information relating to pending agency regulatory actions, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1009. An act to amend title 44, United States Code, to require the Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs to review regulations, and for other purposes.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bills were read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 998. An act to provide for the establishment of a process for the review of rules and sets of rules, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

H.R. 1004. An act to amend chapter 3 of title 5, United States Code, to require the publication of information relating to pending agency regulatory actions, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

H.R. 1009. An act to amend title 44, United States Code, to require the Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs to review regulations, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communication was laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and was referred as indicated:

EC-925. A communication from the Acting Commissioner of Social Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the awarding of a sole-source contract to obtain wage information from payroll data providers for the Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance programs; to the Committee on Finance.

EXECUTIVE REPORT OF COMMITTEE

The following executive report of a nomination was submitted:

By Mr. HATCH for the Committee on Finance.

*Seema Verma, of Indiana, to be Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

*Nomination was reported with recommendation that it be confirmed subject to the nominee's commitment to respond to requests to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Senate.

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. PORTMAN (for himself, Mrs. FISCHER, and Mr. BURR):

S. 489. A bill to amend the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 and the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 with respect to participant votes on the suspension of benefits under multiemployer plans in critical and declining status; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. DAINES (for himself, Mr. TESTER, and Mr. RISCH):

S. 490. A bill to reinstate and extend the deadline for commencement of construction

of a hydroelectric project involving the Gibson Dam; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. DAINES (for himself, Mr. TESTER, Mr. RISCH, and Mr. CRAPO):

S. 491. A bill to reinstate and extend the deadline for commencement of construction of a hydroelectric project involving Clark Canyon Dam; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. CORNYN (for himself and Mr. CASEY):

S. 492. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow members of the Ready Reserve of a reserve component of the Armed Forces to make elective deferrals on the basis of their service to the Ready Reserve and on the basis of their other employment; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. RUBIO:

S. 493. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for the removal or demotion of employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs based on performance or misconduct, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. GRASSLEY:

S. 494. A bill to improve transparency regarding the activities of the American Red Cross; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. SANDERS:

S. 495. A bill to provide incentives for investment in research and development for new medicines, to enhance access to new medicines, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Ms. DUCKWORTH (for herself, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. YOUNG, and Mrs. CAPITO):

S. 496. A bill to repeal the rule issued by the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration entitled "Metropolitan Planning Organization Coordination and Planning Area Reform"; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Ms. CANTWELL (for herself, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. BROWN, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. COONS, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. MERKLEY, Mrs. ERNST, Mr. BLUNT, and Ms. KLOBUCHAR):

S. 497. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for Medicare coverage of certain lymphedema compression treatment items as items of durable medical equipment; to the Committee on Finance.

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

S. 498. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Defense to use only human-based methods for training members of the Armed Forces in the treatment of severe combat injuries, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mr. THUNE:

S. 499. A bill to amend the Food Security Act of 1985 to address needs in the agriculture sector by establishing a voluntary, short-term conserving use program for participating farmers, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

By Mr. ROBERTS (for himself and Mrs. MCCASKILL):

S. 500. A bill to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to make the Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security for Health Affairs responsible for coordinating the efforts of the Department of Homeland Security related to food, agriculture, and veterinary defense against terrorism, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. TESTER (for himself and Mr. DAINES):

S. 501. A bill to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate certain segments of East Rosebud Creek in Carbon County, Montana, as components of the Wild and Scenic Rivers System; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. FRANKEN (for himself and Ms. KLOBUCHAR):

S. 502. A bill to modify the boundary of Voyageurs National Park in the State of Minnesota, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. WYDEN (for himself, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. BOOKER, Ms. CANTWELL, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, and Mr. PETERS):

S. 503. A bill to require the Secretary of Agriculture to make publicly available certain regulatory records relating to the administration of the Animal Welfare Act and the Horse Protection Act, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for the use of an alternative depreciation system for taxpayers violating rules under the Animal Welfare Act and the Horse Protection Act, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Ms. HIRONO (for herself and Mr. DAINES):

S. 504. A bill to permanently authorize the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Business Travel Card Program; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. CASSIDY (for himself, Mr. BENNET, and Mr. YOUNG):

S. 505. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for an energy equivalent of a gallon of diesel in the case of liquefied natural gas for purposes of the Inland Waterways Trust Fund financing rate; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. THUNE:

S. 506. A bill to require that the Federal Government procure from the private sector the goods and services necessary for the operations and management of certain Government agencies, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. TESTER:

S. 507. A bill to sustain economic development and recreational use of National Forest System land in the State of Montana, to add certain land to the National Wilderness Preservation System, to designate new areas for recreation, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

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

S. 508. A bill to provide for the conveyance of certain Federal land in the State of Oregon, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. BARRASSO (for himself, Mr. ENZI, Ms. MURKOWSKI, and Mr. RISCH):

S. 509. A bill to improve the control and management of invasive species that threaten and harm Federal land under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. BLUMENTHAL (for himself, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. BROWN, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. COONS, Ms. WARREN, Mr. SCHATZ, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. KAINE, Mr. BENNET, Mr. TESTER, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. HASSAN, Mrs. MCCASKILL, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. FRANKEN, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. MERKLEY,

Mr. MURPHY, Mr. PETERS, Mr. UDALL, Ms. HARRIS, Mr. HEINRICH, Ms. CANTWELL, Mr. SCHUMER, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, Mr. KING, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. LEAHY, and Mr. WARNER):

S. 510. A bill to protect a woman's right and ability to determine whether and when to bear a child or end a pregnancy by limiting restrictions on the provision of abortion services; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. MANCHIN:

S. 511. A bill to provide for the sealing of records relating to Federal nonviolent criminal offenses related to substance use disorders, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. BARRASSO (for himself, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. CRAPO, Mrs. FISCHER, Mrs. CAPITO, and Mr. MANCHIN):

S. 512. A bill to modernize the regulation of nuclear energy; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

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

S. 513. A bill to designate the Frank and Jeanne Moore Wild Steelhead Special Management Area in the State of Oregon; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. PERDUE (for himself and Mr. PETERS):

S. 514. A bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to provide access to magnetic EEG/EKG-guided resonance therapy to veterans; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. CASEY (for himself, Mr. BROWN, and Mrs. MCCASKILL):

S. 515. A bill to require the Secretary of Labor to maintain a publicly available list of all employers that relocate a call center overseas, to make such companies ineligible for Federal grants or guaranteed loans, and to require disclosure of the physical location of business agents engaging in customer service communications, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

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

S. 516. A bill to provide grants to assist States in developing and implementing plans to address cybersecurity threats or vulnerabilities, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mrs. FISCHER (for herself, Mr. DONNELLY, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. BLUNT, Mrs. MCCASKILL, Mrs. ERNST, Ms. HEITKAMP, Mr. HOEVEN, Mr. SASSE, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. THUNE, Mr. ROBERTS, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, and Mr. DURBIN):

S. 517. A bill to amend the Clean Air Act with respect to the ethanol waiver for Reid vapor pressure limitations under such Act; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. WICKER (for himself, Ms. HEITKAMP, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. BARRASSO, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. FRANKEN, Ms. HIRONO, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. MANCHIN, Mr. RISCH, Mr. SCHATZ, and Mr. TESTER):

S. 518. A bill to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to provide for technical assistance for small treatment works; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mrs. GILLIBRAND (for herself and Mr. SCHUMER):

S. 519. A bill to amend the Safe Water Drinking Act to require the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency to establish maximum contaminant levels for

certain contaminants, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. CASSIDY:

S. 520. A bill to amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to reform payment to States under the Medicaid program; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. TESTER (for himself, Mr. RISCH, Mrs. MURRAY, and Mrs. MCCASKILL):

S. 521. A bill to make the National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass available at a discount to veterans; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. TESTER:

S. 522. A bill to establish a 5-year ban on individuals appointed to Executive Schedule positions and Members of Congress engaging in lobbying activities at the Federal level; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. MANCHIN (for himself, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Ms. HEITKAMP, Mr. NELSON, Mr. KING, Mr. MURPHY, Ms. BALDWIN, Ms. WARREN, Ms. HASSAN, and Mrs. SHAHEEN):

S. 523. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to establish a stewardship fee on the production and importation of opioid pain relievers, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. BOOZMAN (for himself, Mr. BROWN, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. COTTON, Mr. ISAKSON, and Mr. WICKER):

S. 524. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to make permanent certain provisions of the Heartland, Habitat, Harvest, and Horticulture Act of 2008 relating to timber; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mrs. GILLIBRAND (for herself and Mr. SCHUMER):

S. 525. A bill to require the United States Postal Service to designate a single, unique ZIP code for particular communities; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mrs. FISCHER (for herself, Mr. COONS, Mr. SCOTT, and Mrs. GILLIBRAND):

S. 526. A bill to amend the Small Business Act to provide for expanded participation in the microloan program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

By Mr. BLUNT:

S. 527. A bill to improve access to emergency medical services, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. SASSE (for himself, Mr. ALEXANDER, Mr. CASSIDY, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. HELLER, Mr. LEE, Mr. MCCONNELL, Mr. PERDUE, Mr. ROBERTS, and Mr. INHOFE):

S.J. Res. 26. A joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Department of Education relating to teacher preparation issues; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. CASSIDY (for himself, Mr. HATCH, Mr. ISAKSON, and Mr. DAINES):

S.J. Res. 27. A joint resolution disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of Labor relating to "Clarification of Employer's Continuing Obligation to Make and Maintain an Accurate Record of Each Recordable Injury and Illness"; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. INHOFE (for himself, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. BARRASSO, Mr. JOHNSON, Mr. MORAN, and Mrs. FISCHER):

S.J. Res. 28. A joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Administrator of the Envi-

ronmental Protection Agency relating to accidental release prevention requirements of risk management programs under the Clean Air Act; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. DAINES (for himself, Mr. HATCH, Mr. KENNEDY, and Mr. BARRASSO):

S.J. Res. 29. A joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the final rule of the Office of Natural Resources Revenue of the Department of the Interior relating to consolidated Federal oil and gas and Federal and Indian coal valuation reform; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. PERDUE (for himself, Mr. BOOZMAN, and Mr. LEAHY):

S.J. Res. 30. A joint resolution providing for the reappointment of Steve Case as a citizen regent of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

By Mr. YOUNG:

S.J. Res. 31. A joint resolution to authorize the use of United States Armed Forces against al-Qaeda, the Taliban, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, successor organizations, and associated forces; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

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

By Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself and Mr. GRAHAM):

S. Res. 78. A resolution expressing the sense of the Senate recognizing 3 years of Russian military aggression in Ukraine; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. REED, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. CARPER, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. TILLIS, and Mrs. CAPITO):

S. Res. 79. A resolution designating March 2, 2017, as "Read Across America Day"; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. COONS (for himself and Mr. INHOFE):

S. Res. 80. A resolution designating March 3, 2017, as "World Wildlife Day"; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. ROBERTS (for himself, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. CARDIN, and Ms. KLOBUCHAR):

S. Con. Res. 7. A concurrent resolution expressing the sense of Congress that tax-exempt fraternal benefit societies have historically provided and continue to provide critical benefits to the people and communities of the United States; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. CARDIN (for himself, Mr. LEAHY, Mrs. MCCASKILL, Ms. WARREN, Mr. CARPER, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. REED, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. BROWN, Mr. CASEY, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. UDALL, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. BENNET, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. COONS, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. MURPHY, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. HEINRICH, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. PETERS, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Ms. HARRIS, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, and Ms. DUCKWORTH):

S. Con. Res. 8. A concurrent resolution clarifying any potential misunderstanding as to whether actions taken by President Donald J. Trump constitute a violation of the Emoluments Clause, and calling on President Trump to divest his interest in, and

sever his relationship to, the Trump Organization; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 27

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 27, a bill to establish an independent commission to examine and report on the facts regarding the extent of Russian official and unofficial cyber operations and other attempts to interfere in the 2016 United States national election, and for other purposes.

S. 141

At the request of Mr. PETERS, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 141, a bill to improve understanding and forecasting of space weather events, and for other purposes.

S. 200

At the request of Mr. MARKEY, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 200, a bill to prohibit the conduct of a first-use nuclear strike absent a declaration of war by Congress.

S. 232

At the request of Mrs. FEINSTEIN, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 232, a bill to terminate the EB-5 Visa Program and to reallocate the employment creation visas to the other employment-based visa classifications.

S. 236

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 236, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to reform taxation of alcoholic beverages.

S. 317

At the request of Mr. LANKFORD, the name of the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 317, a bill to provide taxpayers with an annual report disclosing the cost and performance of Government programs and areas of duplication among them, and for other purposes.

S. 341

At the request of Mr. GRAHAM, the names of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. PORTMAN) and the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) were added as cosponsors of S. 341, a bill to provide for congressional oversight of actions to waive, suspend, reduce, provide relief from, or otherwise limit the application of sanctions with respect to the Russian Federation, and for other purposes.

S. 356

At the request of Ms. STABENOW, the name of the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) was added as a cosponsor of S. 356, a bill to amend title XXI of the Social Security Act to improve access to, and the delivery of, children's health services through school-based health centers, and for other purposes.

S. 372

At the request of Mr. PORTMAN, the name of the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING) was added as a cosponsor of S. 372, a bill to amend the Tariff Act of 1930 to ensure that merchandise arriving through the mail shall be subject to review by U.S. Customs and Border Protection and to require the provision of advance electronic information on shipments of mail to U.S. Customs and Border Protection and for other purposes.

S. 405

At the request of Mr. COONS, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. REED) was added as a cosponsor of S. 405, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and the Higher Education Act of 1965 to provide an exclusion from income for student loan forgiveness for students who have died or become disabled.

S. 407

At the request of Mr. CRAPO, the name of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 407, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to permanently extend the railroad track maintenance credit.

S. 413

At the request of Mrs. CAPITO, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 413, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to prohibit prescription drug plan sponsors and MA-PD organizations under the Medicare program from retroactively reducing payment on clean claims submitted by pharmacies.

S. 445

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 445, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to ensure more timely access to home health services for Medicare beneficiaries under the Medicare program.

S. 446

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the names of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), the Senator from Alabama (Mr. STRANGE), the Senator from Alabama (Mr. SHELBY) and the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SULLIVAN) were added as cosponsors of S. 446, a bill to allow reciprocity for the carrying of certain concealed firearms.

S. 455

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the name of the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING) was added as a cosponsor of S. 455, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to count resident time spent in a critical access hospital as resident time spent in a nonprovider setting for purposes of making Medicare direct and indirect graduate medical education payments.

S. 461

At the request of Mr. HEINRICH, the name of the Senator from Wisconsin (Ms. BALDWIN) was added as a cospon-

sor of S. 461, a bill to allow Homeland Security Grant Program funds to be used to safeguard faith-based community centers across the United States, and for other purposes.

S. 469

At the request of Mr. SANDERS, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 469, a bill to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to allow for the importation of affordable and safe drugs by wholesale distributors, pharmacies, and individuals.

S. 473

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the names of the Senator from Virginia (Mr. KAINE) and the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL) were added as cosponsors of S. 473, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to make qualification requirements for entitlement to Post-9/11 Education Assistance more equitable, to improve support of veterans receiving such educational assistance, and for other purposes.

S. 487

At the request of Mr. CRAPO, the names of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. DONNELLY), the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS) and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE) were added as cosponsors of S. 487, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for an exclusion for assistance provided to participants in certain veterinary student loan repayment or forgiveness programs.

S.J. RES. 12

At the request of Mr. JOHNSON, the names of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS), the Senator from Alabama (Mr. STRANGE), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. PAUL), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. SCOTT), the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER), the Senator from Utah (Mr. LEE) and the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH) were added as cosponsors of S.J. Res. 12, a joint resolution disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of Defense, the General Services Administration, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration relating to the Federal Acquisition Regulation.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. DAINES (for himself, Mr. TESTER, and Mr. RISCH):

S. 490. A bill to reinstate and extend the deadline for commencement of construction of a hydroelectric project involving the Gibson Dam; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, Montana is the fifth largest producer of hydropower in the Nation, with 23 hydroelectric dams contributing one-third of all electricity production in Montana. The Gibson Dam project near Augusta,

Montana will provide fifty to one hundred years of stable tax revenue for the state and local counties, reduce carbon emissions, create good-paying jobs, and will provide clean, reliable electricity to Montana. This bill would reinstate and provide a six-year extension of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission license, allowing Montana to continue to be a leader in clean, hydropower electricity.

I thank Senators TESTER and RISCH for joining me on introducing this bill and I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting this bipartisan legislation.

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. 490

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

SECTION 1. REINSTATEMENT AND EXTENSION OF TIME FOR FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION PROJECT INVOLVING GIBSON DAM.

Notwithstanding the time period specified in section 13 of the Federal Power Act (16 U.S.C. 806) that would otherwise apply to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission project numbered 12478-003, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (referred to in this section as the "Commission") shall, at the request of the licensee for the project, after reasonable notice, and in accordance with the good faith, due diligence, and public interest requirements of, and the procedures of the Commission under, that section, reinstate the license and extend the time period during which the licensee is required to commence construction of the project for the 6-year period that begins on the date of enactment of this Act.

By Mr. DAINES (for himself, Mr. TESTER, Mr. RISCH, and Mr. CRAPO):

S. 491. A bill to reinstate and extend the deadline for commencement of construction of a hydroelectric project involving Clark Canyon Dam; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, hydropower is a critical component of an all of the above energy portfolio that provides a reliable and affordable source of electricity for hard-working Montana families. Clark Canyon Dam hydropower project near Dillon, MT will power over 1,000 homes annually in the region, create good-paying jobs, reduce carbon dioxide emissions, and produce hundreds of thousands of dollars in tax revenue for Montana. This bill would reinstate and provide a 3-year contract extension of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission license, allowing Montana to continue to be a leader in clean, hydropower electricity.

I thank Senators TESTER, RISCH and CRAPO for joining me on introducing this bill, and I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting this bipartisan legislation.

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. 491

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

SECTION 1. EXTENSION OF TIME FOR A FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION PROJECT INVOLVING CLARK CANYON DAM.

Notwithstanding the time period described in section 13 of the Federal Power Act (16 U.S.C. 806) that would otherwise apply to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission project numbered 12429, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (referred to in this section as the “Commission”) shall, at the request of the licensee for the project, and after reasonable notice and in accordance with the procedures of the Commission under that section, reinstate the license and extend the time period during which the licensee is required to commence construction of project works for the 3-year period beginning on the date of enactment of this Act.

By Mr. CORNYN (for himself and Mr. CASEY):

S. 492. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow members of the Ready Reserve of a reserve component of the Armed Forces to make elective deferrals on the basis of their service to the Ready Reserve and on the basis of their other employment; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

S. 492

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 “Service-member Retirement Improvement Act”.

SEC. 2. ELECTIVE DEFERRALS BY MEMBERS OF THE READY RESERVE OF A RESERVE COMPONENT OF THE ARMED FORCES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 402(g) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(9) ELECTIVE DEFERRALS BY MEMBERS OF READY RESERVE.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—In the case of a qualified ready reservist (other than a specified Federal employee ready reservist) for any taxable year, the limitations of subparagraphs (A) and (C) of paragraph (1) shall be applied separately with respect to—

“(i) elective deferrals of such qualified ready reservist with respect to the Thrift Savings Fund (as defined in section 7701(j)), and

“(ii) any other elective deferrals of such qualified ready reservist.

“(B) SPECIAL RULE FOR FEDERAL EMPLOYEES IN THE READY RESERVE NOT ELIGIBLE TO MAKE ELECTIVE DEFERRALS TO A PLAN OTHER THAN THE THRIFT SAVINGS PLAN.—In the case of a specified Federal employee ready reservist for any taxable year—

“(i) the applicable dollar amount in effect under paragraph (1)(B) for such taxable year shall be twice such amount (as determined without regard to this subclause), and

“(ii) for purposes of paragraph (1)(C), the applicable dollar amount under section

414(v)(2)(B)(i) (as otherwise determined for purposes of paragraph (1)(C)) shall be twice such amount (as determined without regard to this subclause).

“(C) DEFINITIONS.—For purposes of this paragraph—

“(i) QUALIFIED READY RESERVIST.—The term ‘qualified ready reservist’ means any individual for any taxable year if such individual received compensation for service as a member of the Ready Reserve of a reserve component (as defined in section 101 of title 37, United States Code) during such taxable year.

“(ii) SPECIFIED FEDERAL EMPLOYEE READY RESERVIST.—The term ‘specified Federal employee ready reservist’ means any individual for any taxable year if such individual—

“(I) is a qualified ready reservist for such taxable year,

“(II) would be eligible to make elective deferrals with respect to the Thrift Savings Fund (as defined in section 7701(j)) during such taxable year determined without regard to the service of such individual described in clause (i), and

“(III) is not eligible to make elective deferrals with respect to any plan other than such Thrift Savings Fund during such taxable year.”.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by this section shall apply to taxable years beginning after the date of the enactment of this Act.

By Mr. WYDEN (for himself, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. BOOKER, Ms. CANTWELL, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, and Mr. PETERS):

S. 503. A bill to require the Secretary of Agriculture to make publicly available certain regulatory records relating to the administration of the Animal Welfare Act and the Horse Protection Act, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for the use of an alternative depreciation system for taxpayers violating rules under the Animal Welfare Act and the Horse Protection Act, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, today I am introducing the Animal Welfare Accountability and Transparency Act. This bill is a necessary step to restoring public information on animal cruelty that was removed from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s, USDA, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, APHIS, website under the Trump administration.

On February 3, 2017, APHIS removed information from its website related to oversight and enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act, AWA, and Horse Protection Act, HPA, including animal inspection and licensing reports for more than 9,000 licensed facilities that use animals—facilities like commercial dog breeding operators, animal research labs, roadside zoos, and horse show participants. Since 2009, APHIS has made this information public to increase transparency and hold violators of these animal cruelty laws accountable. This information is now hidden from the public and is only available through a Freedom of Information Act Request, which can take months and sometimes even years for an agency to respond.

The Animal Welfare Accountability and Transparency Act restores trans-

parency by requiring APHIS to once again make AWA and HPA inspection reports accessible to the public. In my view, transparency is key when it comes to giving animal lovers and consumers information about whether their pets or the products they buy are the result of heartbreaking beginnings. These inspection reports also help law enforcement officials track and understand trends in animal welfare violations.

Preventing animal cruelty starts with getting facts out to consumers. By shedding light on AWA and HPA violations, the Animal Welfare Accountability and Transparency Act holds accountable puppy mill operators and other businesses that use animals for breeding, research, and testing.

To ensure that taxpayers are not paying for entities that violate animal welfare laws, the Animal Welfare Accountability and Transparency Act also prohibits businesses that are found to be in violation of the AWA or HPA from collecting certain tax benefits.

Under current tax and accounting rules, companies can write off the value of breeding and working animals on their taxes using accelerated depreciation, as if those animals are machinery. They keep that preferential and valuable tax benefit, even if they violate animal cruelty laws. The Animal Welfare Accountability and Transparency Act puts an end to this practice and holds companies accountable for breaking the law by prohibiting businesses found to have violated AWA or HPA from claiming accelerated depreciation for tax purposes for five years.

The Animal Welfare Accountability and Transparency Act is a much needed step to restore transparency in animal cruelty and to hold companies accountable for violating the law.

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. 503

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 “Animal Welfare Accountability and Transparency Act”.

SEC. 2. PUBLIC AVAILABILITY OF REGULATORY RECORDS.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Agriculture (referred to in this section as the “Secretary”) shall maintain and promptly make available to the public in an online searchable database in a machine-readable format on the website of the Department of Agriculture information relating to the administration of the Animal Welfare Act (7 U.S.C. 2131 et seq.) and the Horse Protection Act (15 U.S.C. 1821 et seq.), including—

(1) the entirety of each report of any inspection conducted, and record of any enforcement action taken, under—

(A) either of those Acts; or

(B) any regulation issued under those Acts;

(2) with respect to the Animal Welfare Act—

(A) the entirety of each annual report submitted by a research facility under section 13 of that Act (7 U.S.C. 2143); and

(B) the name, address, and license or registration number of each research facility, exhibitor, dealer, and other person or establishment—

(i) licensed by the Secretary under section 3 or 12 of that Act (7 U.S.C. 2133, 2142); or

(ii) registered with the Secretary under section 6 of that Act (7 U.S.C. 2136); and

(3) with respect to the Horse Protection Act, the name and address of—

(A) any person that is licensed to conduct any inspection under section 4(c) of that Act (15 U.S.C. 1823(c)); or

(B) any organization or association that is licensed by the Department of Agriculture to promote horses through—

(i) the showing, exhibiting, sale, auction, or registry of horses; or

(ii) the conduct of any activity that contributes to the advancement of horses.

SEC. 3. USE OF ALTERNATIVE DEPRECIATION SYSTEM FOR TAXPAYERS VIOLATING CERTAIN ANIMAL PROTECTION RULES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 168(g)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by striking “and” at the end of subparagraph (D), by inserting “and” at the end of subparagraph (E), and by inserting after subparagraph (E) the following new subparagraph:

“(F) any property placed in service by a disqualified taxpayer during an applicable period.”

(b) DEFINITIONS.—Section 168(g) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(8) DISQUALIFIED TAXPAYER; APPLICABLE PERIOD.—For purposes of paragraph (1)(F)—

“(A) DISQUALIFIED TAXPAYER.—

“(i) IN GENERAL.—The term ‘disqualified taxpayer’ means any taxpayer if such taxpayer—

“(I) has been assessed a civil penalty under section 19(b) of the Animal Welfare Act (7 U.S.C. 2149(b)) or section 6(b) of the Horse Protection Act (15 U.S.C. 1825(b)) and either the period for seeking judicial review of the final agency action has lapsed or there has been a final judgment with respect to an appeal of such assessment, or

“(II) has been convicted under section 19(d) of the Animal Welfare Act (7 U.S.C. 2149(d)) or section 6(a) of the Horse Protection Act (15 U.S.C. 1825(a)) and there is a final judgment with respect to such conviction.

“(ii) AGGREGATION RULES.—All persons treated as a single employer under subsection (a) or (b) of section 52, or subsection (m) or (o) of section 414, shall be treated as one taxpayer for purposes of this subparagraph.

“(B) APPLICABLE PERIOD.—The term ‘applicable period’ means, with respect to any violation described in subparagraph (A), the 5-taxable year period beginning with the taxable year in which the period for seeking judicial review of a civil penalty described in subparagraph (A)(i) has lapsed or in which there has been a final judgment entered with respect to the violation, whichever is earlier.”

(c) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—The last sentence of section 179(d)(1) is amended by inserting “or any property placed in service by a disqualified taxpayer (as defined in section 168(g)(8)(A)) during an applicable period (as defined in section 168(g)(8)(B))” after “section 50(b)”.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply to property placed in service in taxable years beginning

after the date of the enactment of this section.

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

S. 513. A bill to designate the Frank and Jeanne Moore Wild Steelhead Special Management Area in the State of Oregon; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, today I am reintroducing a bill honoring two Oregon legends—Frank and Jeanne Moore—who have spent their lives together on the North Umpqua River as fishers, stewards of the land, and hosts to visitors from across the world at the famous Steamboat Inn.

The North Umpqua River runs through the Umpqua National Forest in Southwest Oregon. The river is a destination for rafters and kayakers, and is home to some of the best steelhead runs in the world, making it a fly-fishing haven. Frank and Jeanne Moore founded the Steamboat Inn in 1957, and spent years introducing visitors to the beauty of the Umpqua National Forest and the North Umpqua River. Frank, a decorated WWII veteran and a recent inductee into the Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame, was the fishing guide for the Inn's visitors, and has now been fishing this river for 70 years. The Steamboat Inn's website paints a wonderful picture of how Frank and Jeanne welcomed visitors to the North Umpqua River:

“Each night, Jeanne Moore cooked evening meals for as many as sixty road construction crew members, who ate in shifts, before turning her attention to feeding her lodge guests. Frank pitched in, helped with the cooking, and also made a policy decision that would henceforth guide the Fisherman's Dinner: From then on, anglers could fish until the last light disappeared on the river. Dinner would be served one half hour after sunset!”

In the 1960's, the river and its tributaries experienced significant degradation, and Frank Moore has worked tirelessly ever since to rehabilitate the river and the steelhead populations. Frank served on the State of Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission and has received the National Wildlife Federation Conservationist of the Year award and the Wild Steelhead Coalition Conservation Award. He works with his neighbors and local organizations to monitor the river, and just about everyone he comes across on his drives along the river knows his name and knows his work. Frank and Jeanne have opened their door to visitors and have taken great care of this Oregon treasure.

The Frank and Jeanne Moore Wild Steelhead Special Management Area will stand as a tribute to the Moore's and their dedication to protecting this special place in Oregon and preserving the hard work they've put in to ensure that Oregonians and visitors alike will have a healthy river, full of steelhead, to visit for decades to come.

It is my honor to reintroduce this bill today with my colleague from Oregon, Senator JEFF MERKLEY, on behalf of these extraordinary Oregonians.

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. 513

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 “Frank and Jeanne Moore Wild Steelhead Special Management Area Designation Act”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds that—

(1) Frank Moore has committed his life to family, friends, his country, and fly fishing;

(2) Frank Moore is a World War II veteran who stormed the beaches of Normandy along with 150,000 troops during the D-Day Allied invasion and was awarded the Chevalier of the French Legion of Honor for his bravery;

(3) Frank Moore returned home after the war, started a family, and pursued his passion of fishing on the winding rivers in Oregon;

(4) as the proprietor of the Steamboat Inn along the North Umpqua River in Oregon for nearly 20 years, Frank Moore, along with his wife Jeanne, shared his love of fishing, the flowing river, and the great outdoors, with visitors from all over the United States and the world;

(5) Frank Moore has spent most of his life fishing the vast rivers of Oregon, during which time he has contributed significantly to efforts to conserve fish habitats and protect river health, including serving on the State of Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission;

(6) Frank Moore has been recognized for his conservation work with the National Wildlife Federation Conservationist of the Year award, the Wild Steelhead Coalition Conservation Award, and his 2010 induction into the Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame; and

(7) in honor of the many accomplishments of Frank Moore, both on and off the river, approximately 99,653 acres of Forest Service land in the State of Oregon should be designated as the “Frank and Jeanne Moore Wild Steelhead Special Management Area”.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) MAP.—The term “Map” means the map entitled “Frank Moore Wild Steelhead Special Management Area Designation Act” and dated June 23, 2016.

(2) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service.

(3) SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREA.—The term “Special Management Area” means the Frank and Jeanne Moore Wild Steelhead Special Management Area designated by section 4(a).

(4) STATE.—The term “State” means the State of Oregon.

SEC. 4. FRANK AND JEANNE MOORE WILD STEELHEAD SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREA, OREGON.

(a) DESIGNATION.—The approximately 99,653 acres of Forest Service land in the State, as generally depicted on the Map, is designated as the “Frank and Jeanne Moore Wild Steelhead Special Management Area”.

(b) MAP; LEGAL DESCRIPTION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—As soon as practicable after the date of enactment of this Act, the

Secretary shall prepare a map and legal description of the Special Management Area.

(2) **FORCE OF LAW.**—The map and legal description prepared under paragraph (1) shall have the same force and effect as if included in this Act, except that the Secretary may correct clerical and typographical errors in the map and legal description.

(3) **AVAILABILITY.**—The map and legal description prepared under paragraph (1) shall be on file and available for public inspection in the appropriate offices of the Forest Service.

(c) **ADMINISTRATION.**—Subject to valid existing rights, the Special Management Area shall be administered by the Secretary—

(1) in accordance with all laws (including regulations) applicable to the National Forest System; and

(2) in a manner that—

(A) conserves and enhances the natural character, scientific use, and the botanical, recreational, ecological, fish and wildlife, scenic, drinking water, and cultural values of the Special Management Area;

(B) maintains and seeks to enhance the wild salmonid habitat of the Special Management Area;

(C) maintains or enhances the watershed as a thermal refuge for wild salmonids; and

(D) preserves opportunities for recreation, including primitive recreation.

(d) **FISH AND WILDLIFE.**—Nothing in this section affects the jurisdiction or responsibilities of the State with respect to fish and wildlife in the State.

(e) **ADJACENT MANAGEMENT.**—Nothing in this section—

(1) creates any protective perimeter or buffer zone around the Special Management Area; or

(2) modifies the applicable travel management plan for the Special Management Area.

(f) **WILDFIRE MANAGEMENT.**—Nothing in this section prohibits the Secretary, in cooperation with other Federal, State, and local agencies, as appropriate, from conducting wildland fire operations in the Special Management Area, consistent with the purposes of this Act, including the use of aircraft, machinery, mechanized equipment, fire breaks, backfires, and retardant.

(g) **VEGETATION MANAGEMENT.**—Nothing in this section prohibits the Secretary from conducting vegetation management projects within the Special Management Area in a manner consistent with—

(1) the purposes described in subsection (c); and

(2) the applicable forest plan.

(h) **PROTECTION OF TRIBAL RIGHTS.**—Nothing in this section diminishes any treaty rights of an Indian tribe.

(i) **WITHDRAWAL.**—Subject to valid existing rights, the Federal land within the boundaries of the Special Management Area river segments designated by subsection (a) is withdrawn from all forms of—

(1) entry, appropriation, or disposal under the public land laws;

(2) location, entry, and patent under the mining laws; and

(3) disposition under all laws relating to mineral and geothermal leasing or mineral materials.

By Mr. DAINES (for himself, Mr. HATCH, Mr. KENNEDY, and Mr. BARRASSO):

S.J. Res. 29. A joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the final rule of the Office of Natural Resources Revenue of the Department of the Interior relating to consolidated Federal oil and gas and Federal and Indian coal valuation re-

form; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, as a fifth-generation Montanan and having spent 18 years in the private sector, I know how important it is to receive your fair share in any deal. However, the Office of Natural Resources Revenue Consolidated Federal oil and gas and Federal and Indian coal valuation reform rule does not protect the taxpayers' fair share of mineral royalties as finalized. The rule as finalized creates high uncertainty and, at worst, could cause many energy operators across the country to shut-in what is already very capital-intensive production, placing our Nation's energy and infrastructure security and good-paying energy jobs at risk. The rule could leave the taxpayer at a net loss in royalties. This resolution would halt implementation of the final ONRR valuation rule, a rule whose implementation is already postponed due to litigation, allowing the States and producers to work with the Department of the Interior to reform valuation in a common-sense way.

I thank Senators HATCH and KENNEDY for joining me on introducing this resolution, and I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the joint resolution be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the text of the joint resolution was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S.J. RES. 29

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That Congress disapproves the rule submitted by the Office of Natural Resources Revenue of the Department of the Interior relating to "Consolidated Federal Oil & Gas and Federal & Indian Coal Valuation Reform" (published at 81 Fed. Reg. 43337 (July 1, 2016)), and such rule shall have no force or effect.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 78—EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE RECOGNIZING 3 YEARS OF RUSSIAN MILITARY AGGRESSION IN UKRAINE

Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself and Mr. GRAHAM) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:—

S. RES. 78

Whereas, according to conservative estimates from the United Nations, approximately 10,000 people have been killed, over 20,000 wounded, and nearly 2,000,000 internally displaced since the current conflict in Ukraine began in 2014;

Whereas, March 1, 2014, marks 3 years since the Government of the Russian Federation authorized military forces to illegally annex the Crimean region of Ukraine;

Whereas the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances signed by the Russian Federation in December 1994 provided security assurances against the threats or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine;

Whereas the United States and other countries stated in a letter to the United Nations that the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 was a violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity and thus was a breach of the Budapest Memorandum;

Whereas, in September 2014, the Russian Federation signed the Minsk I Protocol, which called for an immediate ceasefire and effective monitoring by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE);

Whereas, in February 2015, the Russian Federation signed the Minsk II Protocol, which again called for an immediate ceasefire, the withdrawal of heavy weapons, and effective monitoring by the OSCE;

Whereas Russian, Ukrainian, and European representatives reaffirmed their commitment to the Minsk agreements at the 2017 Munich Security Conference;

Whereas Secretary of State Rex Tillerson recently stated that the United States expects "Russia to honor its commitments to the Minsk agreements and work to de-escalate violence in Ukraine";

Whereas the Government of the Russian Federation, despite its commitments to these peace accords, continues to destabilize Ukraine through a variety of military and political maneuvers;

Whereas OSCE observers still do not have full, unimpeded access to the Ukrainian-Russian border;

Whereas the Government of the Russian Federation continues to supply weapons, equipment, and personnel to separatists intent on undermining the sovereignty of Ukraine and who recently relaunched a campaign of aggression in January 2017;

Whereas the Government of the Russian Federation has yet to withdraw its heavy weapons from Ukraine and continues its sabotage and subversion efforts;

Whereas Russian President Vladimir Putin signed an order recognizing passports issued by separatist rebels in Eastern Ukraine;

Whereas the Ukraine Freedom Support Act of 2014 (Public Law 113-272) authorized increased military and economic assistance for Ukraine;

Whereas the Government of the Russian Federation continues to engage in a campaign of disinformation about the conflict in both Ukraine and the West;

Whereas the defense minister of the Russian Federation recently announced the formation of "information warfare troops";

Whereas the Government of the Russian Federation has mobilized up to 100,000 troops to Belarus' border with Lithuania and Poland, reminiscent of actions taken at the Ukrainian border in 2014; and

Whereas it is long-standing policy of the United States Government not to recognize territorial changes effected by force alone: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) condemns continued Russian military intervention in the sovereign state of Ukraine;

(2) calls on the Government of the Russian Federation to immediately cease all activity that seeks to normalize or recognize the Russian-backed rebel separatists in Eastern Ukraine;

(3) affirms that sanctions imposed on the Russian Federation for destabilizing the international order in Eastern Europe should not be lifted until the Russian Federation complies with all terms of the Minsk agreements and ceases its illegal attempts to annex Ukraine's Crimea; and

(4) calls on the United States Government, United States allies in Europe, the United Nations, and international partners to continue to pressure the Government of the Russian Federation to uphold its international obligations.

SENATE RESOLUTION 79—DESIGNATING MARCH 2, 2017, AS “READ ACROSS AMERICA DAY”

Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. REED, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. CARPER, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. TILLIS, and Mrs. CAPITO) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 79

Whereas reading is a basic requirement for quality education and professional success and a source of pleasure throughout life;

Whereas the people of the United States must be able to read if the United States is to remain competitive in the global economy;

Whereas Congress has placed great emphasis on reading intervention and providing additional resources for reading assistance, including through the programs authorized under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6301 et seq.) and through annual appropriations for library and literacy programs; and

Whereas more than 50 national organizations concerned about reading and education have joined with the National Education Association to designate March 2, the anniversary of the birth of Theodor Geisel (commonly known as “Dr. Seuss”), as a day to celebrate reading: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates March 2, 2017, as “Read Across America Day”;

(2) honors—

(A) Theodor Geisel (commonly known as “Dr. Seuss”) for his success in encouraging children to discover the joy of reading; and

(B) the 20th anniversary of Read Across America Day; and

(3) encourages—

(A) parents to read with their children for at least 30 minutes on Read Across America Day in honor of the commitment of the Senate to building a country of readers; and

(B) the people of the United States to observe Read Across America Day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

SENATE RESOLUTION 80—DESIGNATING MARCH 3, 2017, AS “WORLD WILDLIFE DAY”

Mr. COONS (for himself and Mr. INHOFE) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 80

Whereas wildlife has provided numerous economic, environmental, social, and cultural benefits during the course of human history and wildlife conservation will secure these gifts for future generations;

Whereas plant and animal species play an important role in the stability of diverse ecosystems around the world and the conservation of this biodiversity is critical to maintain the delicate balance of nature and keep complex ecosystems thriving;

Whereas observation of wild plants and animals in their natural habitat provides individuals with a more enriching world view and a greater appreciation of the wonders of the natural environment;

Whereas tens of millions of individuals in the United States strongly support the conservation of wildlife, both domestically and abroad, and wish to ensure the survival of species in the wild, such as rhinoceroses, tigers, elephants, pangolins, turtles, seahorses, sharks, ginseng, mahogany, and cacti;

Whereas the trafficking of wildlife, including timber and fish, comprises the fourth

largest global illegal trade after narcotics, the counterfeiting of products and currency, and human trafficking and has become a major transnational organized crime with an estimated worth of as much as \$19,000,000,000 annually;

Whereas increased demand in Asia for high-value illegal wildlife products, particularly elephant ivory and rhinoceros horns, has recently triggered substantial and rapid increases in poaching of these species, particularly in Africa;

Whereas trafficking of wildlife is a primary threat to many wildlife species, including elephants, rhinoceroses, tigers, pangolins, and sharks;

Whereas many different kinds of criminals, including some terrorist entities and rogue security personnel, often in collusion with corrupt government officials, are involved in wildlife poaching and the movement of ivory and rhinoceros horns across Africa;

Whereas wildlife poaching presents significant security and stability challenges for military and police forces in African nations that are often threatened by heavily armed poachers and the criminal and extremist allies of those poachers;

Whereas wildlife poaching negatively impacts local communities that rely on natural resources for economic development, including tourism;

Whereas penal and financial deterrents can improve the ability of African governments to reduce poaching and trafficking and enhance their capabilities of managing their resources;

Whereas assisting institutions in developing nations, including material, training, legal, and diplomatic support, can reduce illegal wildlife trade;

Whereas wildlife provides a multitude of benefits to all nations and wildlife crime has wide-ranging economic, environmental, and social impacts;

Whereas the African elephant population has declined by 27 percent in the last decade, primarily as a result of poaching, and only approximately 415,000 such elephants remain in Africa;

Whereas, from 2007 to 2012, the number of elephants killed in Kenya increased by more than 800 percent, from 47 to 387 elephants killed;

Whereas, as a result of poaching, forest elephant populations in Minkébé National Park in Gabon have declined by 78 to 81 percent;

Whereas the number of forest elephants in the Congo Basin in Central Africa declined by approximately ⅓ between 2002 and 2012, placing forest elephants on track for extinction in the next decade;

Whereas the number of rhinoceroses killed by poachers in South Africa—

(1) increased by more than 9,000 percent between 2007 and 2014, from 13 to more than 1,200 rhinoceroses killed; and

(2) was 1,175 in 2015;

Whereas fewer than 4,000 tigers remain in the wild throughout all of Asia;

Whereas pangolins are often referred to as the most trafficked mammal in the world;

Whereas all 8 pangolin species spanning Africa and Asia are faced with extinction because pangolin scales are sought after in the practice of traditional Chinese medicine and pangolin meat is considered a delicacy;

Whereas approximately 100,000,000 sharks are killed annually, often targeted solely for their fins, and unsustainable trade is the primary cause of serious population decline in several shark species, including scalloped hammerhead sharks, great hammerhead sharks, and oceanic whitetip sharks;

Whereas the United States is developing and implementing measures to address the criminal, financial, security, and environmental aspects of wildlife trafficking;

Whereas Congress has allocated specific resources to combat wildlife trafficking and address the threats posed by poaching and the illegal wildlife trade;

Whereas, in December 2013, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed March 3 as World Wildlife Day to celebrate and raise awareness of the wild fauna and flora around the world;

Whereas March 3, 2017, represents the fourth annual celebration of World Wildlife Day;

Whereas, in 2017, the theme of World Wildlife Day is “Listen to the Young Voices”; and

Whereas, in 2017, World Wildlife Day commemorations will encourage young people, as the future leaders and decision makers of the world, to act at both local and global levels to protect wildlife and to rally together to address the ongoing overexploitation and illicit trafficking of wildlife: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates March 3, 2017, as “World Wildlife Day”;

(2) supports raising awareness of the benefits that wildlife provides to people and the threats facing wildlife around the world;

(3) supports escalating the fight against wildlife crime, including wildlife trafficking;

(4) applauds the domestic and international efforts to escalate the fight against wildlife crime;

(5) commends the efforts of the United States to mobilize the entire Government in a coordinated, efficient, and effective manner for dramatic progress in the fight against wildlife crime; and

(6) encourages continued cooperation between the United States, international partners, local communities, nonprofit organizations, private industry, and other partner organizations in an effort to conserve and celebrate wildlife, preserving this precious resource for future generations.

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 7—EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF CONGRESS THAT TAX-EXEMPT FRATERNAL BENEFIT SOCIETIES HAVE HISTORICALLY PROVIDED AND CONTINUE TO PROVIDE CRITICAL BENEFITS TO THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. ROBERTS (for himself, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. CARDIN, and Ms. KLOBUCHAR) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Finance:

S. CON. RES. 7

Whereas the fraternal benefit societies of the United States are long-standing mutual aid organizations created more than a century ago to serve the needs of communities and provide for the payment of life, health, accident, and other benefits to their members;

Whereas fraternal benefit societies represent a successful, modern-day model under which individuals come together with a common purpose to collectively provide charitable and other beneficial activities for society;

Whereas fraternal benefit societies operate under a chapter system, creating a nationwide infrastructure, combined with local energy and knowledge, which positions fraternal benefit societies to most efficiently address unmet needs in communities, many of which the government cannot address;

Whereas the fraternal benefit society model represents one of the largest member-

volunteer networks in the United States, with close to 8,000,000 people of the United States belonging to nearly 25,000 local chapters across the country;

Whereas research has shown that the value of the work of fraternal benefit societies to society is more than \$3,800,000,000 per year, accounting for charitable giving, educational programs, and volunteer activities, as well as important social capital that strengthens the fabric, safety, and quality of life in thousands of local communities in the United States;

Whereas, in 1909, Congress recognized the value of fraternal benefit societies and exempted those organizations from taxation, as later codified in section 501(c)(8) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986;

Whereas fraternal benefit societies have adapted since 1909 to better serve the evolving needs of their members and the public;

Whereas the efforts of fraternal benefit societies to help people of the United States save money and be financially secure relieves pressure on government safety net programs; and

Whereas Congress recognizes that fraternal benefit societies have served their original purpose for over a century, helping countless individuals, families, and communities through their fraternal member activities: Now, therefore, be it

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

(1) the fraternal benefit society model is a successful private sector economic and social support system that helps meet needs that would otherwise go unmet;

(2) the provision of payment for life, health, accident, or other benefits to the members of fraternal benefit societies in accordance with section 501(c)(8) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is necessary to support the charitable and fraternal activities of the volunteer chapters within the communities of fraternal benefit societies;

(3) fraternal benefit societies have adapted since 1909 to better serve their members and the public; and

(4) the exemption from taxation under section 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 of fraternal benefit societies continues to generate significant returns to the United States, and the work of fraternal benefit societies should continue to be promoted.

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 8—CLARIFYING ANY POTENTIAL MISUNDERSTANDING AS TO WHETHER ACTIONS TAKEN BY PRESIDENT DONALD J. TRUMP CONSTITUTE A VIOLATION OF THE EMOLUMENTS CLAUSE, AND CALLING ON PRESIDENT TRUMP TO DIVEST HIS INTEREST IN, AND SEVER HIS RELATIONSHIP TO, THE TRUMP ORGANIZATION

Mr. CARDIN (for himself, Mr. LEAHY, Mrs. MCCASKILL, Ms. WARREN, Mr. CARPER, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. REED, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. BROWN, Mr. CASEY, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. UDALL, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. BENNETT, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. COONS, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. MURPHY, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. HEINRICH, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. PETERS, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Ms. HARRIS, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, and Ms. DUCKWORTH) submitted the following concurrent resolution;

which was referred to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs:

S. CON. RES. 8

Whereas article I, section 9, clause 8 of the United States Constitution (commonly known as the “Emoluments Clause”) declares, “No title of Nobility shall be granted by the United States: And no Person holding any Office of Profit or Trust under them, shall, without the Consent of the Congress, accept of any present, Emolument, Office, or Title, of any kind whatever, from any King, Prince, or foreign State.”;

Whereas, according to the remarks of Governor Edmund Randolph at the 1787 Constitutional Convention, the Emoluments Clause “was thought proper, in order to exclude corruption and foreign influence, to prohibit any one in office from receiving or holding any emoluments from foreign states”;

Whereas the issue of foreign corruption greatly concerned the Founding Fathers of the United States, such that Alexander Hamilton in *Federalist No. 22* wrote, “In republics, persons elevated from the mass of the community, by the suffrages of their fellow-citizens, to stations of great pre-eminence and power, may find compensations for betraying their trust, which, to any but minds animated and guided by superior virtue, may appear to exceed the proportion of interest they have in the common stock, and to overbalance the obligations of duty. Hence it is that history furnishes us with so many mortifying examples of the prevalence of foreign corruption in republican governments.”;

Whereas the President of the United States is the head of the executive branch of the Federal Government and is expected to have undivided loyalty to the United States, and clearly occupies an “office of profit or trust” within the meaning of article I, section 9, clause 8 of the Constitution, according to the Office of Legal Counsel of the Department of Justice;

Whereas the Office of Legal Counsel of the Department of Justice opined in 2009 that corporations owned or controlled by a foreign government are presumptively foreign states under the Emoluments Clause;

Whereas President Donald J. Trump has a business network, the Trump Organization, that has financial interests around the world and negotiates and concludes transactions with foreign states and entities that are extensions of foreign states;

Whereas the very nature of a “blind trust,” as defined by former White House Ethics Counsels Richard Painter and Norm Eisen in an opinion piece in the *Washington Post* entitled, “Trump’s ‘blind trust’ is neither blind nor trustworthy”, dated November 15, 2016, and the Congressional Research Service report “The Use of Blind Trusts By Federal Officials”, is such that the official will have no control over, will receive no communications about, and will have no knowledge of the identity of the specific assets held in the trust, and that the manager of the trust is independent of the owner;

Whereas on January 11, 2017, President-elect Donald J. Trump and his lawyers held a press conference to announce that he would be placing his assets in a trust and turning over management of the Trump Organization to his two adult sons, Donald Trump Jr. and Eric Trump, and executive Allen Weisselberg; that there will be no communication with President Trump and no new overseas business deals; that an ethics advisor will be appointed to the management team to fully vet any new proposed domestic deals; and that the Trump Organization will donate any profits from any foreign governments that use Trump hotels to the Department of the Treasury;

Whereas this arrangement is not sufficient because of its utter lack of independent accountability and transparency, such that the director of the Office of Government Ethics has stated that “[t]he plan the [President] has announced doesn’t meet the standards that the best of his nominees are meeting and that every president in the last four decades have met”;

Whereas the director of the Office of Government Ethics has characterized the promise to limit President Trump’s direct communication about the Trump Organization as “wholly inadequate” because President Trump would still be well-aware of the specific assets held and could receive communications about and take actions to affect the value of those assets, especially when those running the business are his own children, whom Trump will see often;

Whereas the promise that no new overseas business deals will be agreed to by the Trump Organization fails to explain what constitutes a deal, and whether expansions to existing properties, licensing or permitting fee agreements, or loans from foreign banks like Deutsche Bank AG would qualify as “deals”;

Whereas the promise that the Trump Organization will donate profits from any foreign governments that use Trump hotels does not include Trump golf courses and other properties; does not explain whether the promise covers foreign government officials who register under their own names or third-party vendors hired by foreign governments to do business with the Trump Organization; does not explain whether foreign organizations signing tenant agreements with domestic Trump businesses, such as the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, which is Trump Tower’s biggest tenant, qualifies; does not define what constitutes “profits”; does not address the fact that revenue received by a failing business still provides value to that business even if there is no net profit; and has no mechanism for the public to verify that the promise is being fulfilled;

Whereas President Trump’s lawyer claimed that “it would be impossible to find an institutional trustee that would be competent to run the Trump Organization” when there are dozens if not hundreds of highly qualified trustees who handle complicated business situations like the disposition of the Trump Organization;

Whereas, at the January 11, 2017, press conference, President-elect Trump’s lawyer implied that the only reason people have raised the Emoluments Clause is over “routine business transactions like paying for hotel rooms” and claimed that “[p]aying for a hotel room is not a gift or a present, and it has nothing to do with an office. It’s not an emolument.”;

Whereas a comprehensive study of the Emoluments Clause written by Richard Painter, Norman Eisen, and Lawrence Tribe, two of whom are former ethics counsels to past Presidents, has concluded that “since emoluments are properly defined as including ‘profit’ from any employment, as well as ‘salary,’ it is clear that even remuneration fairly earned in commerce can qualify”;

Whereas numerous legal and constitutional experts, including several former White House ethics counsels, have also made clear that the arrangement announced on January 11, 2017, in which the President fails to exit the ownership of his businesses through use of a blind trust or equivalent, will leave the President with a personal financial interest in businesses that collect foreign government payments and benefits, which raises both constitutional and public interest concerns;

Whereas Presidents Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, William J. Clinton, and George

W. Bush have set the precedent of using true blind trusts, in which their holdings were liquidated and placed in new investments unknown to them by an independent trustee who managed them free of familial bias;

Whereas the continued intermingling of the business of the Trump Organization and the work of government has the potential to constitute the foreign corruption so feared by the Founding Fathers and to betray the trust of America's citizens;

Whereas, on January 20, 2017, President Trump swore an oath to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States, the rights, privileges and limitations of which are defined and guarded by the Federal judiciary of the United States; and

Whereas Congress has an institutional, constitutional obligation to ensure that the President of the United States does not violate the Emoluments Clause of the Constitution, Federal law, or fundamental principles of ethics, and is discharging the obligations of office based on the national interest, not based on personal interest: Now, therefore, be it

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

(1) finds the promised actions outlined by President Donald J. Trump at his January 11, 2017, press conference wholly inadequate and insufficient to ensure compliance with the Emoluments Clause of the United States Constitution;

(2) calls upon President Trump to follow the precedent established by prior Presidents and convert his assets to simple, conflict-free holdings, adopt blind trusts managed by an independent trustee with no relationship to Donald J. Trump or his businesses, or take other equivalent measures;

(3) calls upon President Trump not to use the powers or opportunities of his position as President of the United States for any purpose related to the Trump Organization; and

(4) regards, in the absence of express affirmative authorization by Congress, dealings that Donald J. Trump, as President of the United States, may have through his companies with foreign governments or entities owned or controlled by foreign governments as potential violations of the Emoluments Clause.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

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

Pursuant to Rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committees are authorized to meet during today's session of the Senate:

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The Committee on Armed Services is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate Thursday, March 2, 2017, at 9:30 a.m.

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

The Committee on Finance is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, March 2, 2017, during the first scheduled vote on the Senate floor, tentatively scheduled for 10 a.m., in S-216, the President's Room of the United States Capitol.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Committee on Foreign Relations is authorized to meet during the ses-

sion of the Senate on Thursday, March 2, 2017 at 10:30 a.m., to hold a hearing entitled "Venezuela: Options for U.S. Policy."

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence is authorized to meet during the session of the 115th Congress of the U.S. Senate on Thursday, March 2, 2017 at 2 p.m., in room SH-219 of the Senate Hart Office Building to hold a closed hearing.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS, TECHNOLOGY, INNOVATION AND THE INTERNET

The Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation's Communications, Technology, Innovation and the Internet Subcommittee is authorized to hold a meeting during the session of the Senate on Thursday, March 2, 2017, at 9:30 a.m., in room G50 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to hold a hearing titled "Exploring the Value of Spectrum to the U.S. Economy."

APPOINTMENTS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair, on behalf of the majority leader, pursuant to the provisions of S. Res. 64, adopted March 5, 2013, appoints the following Senators as members of the Senate National Security Working Group for the 115th Congress: JAMES RISCH of Idaho (Republican Administrative Co-Chairman), THAD COCHRAN of Mississippi (Republican Co-Chairman), LINDSEY GRAHAM of South Carolina (Republican Co-Chairman), MARCO RUBIO of Florida (Republican Co-Chairman), BOB CORKER of Tennessee, JOHN MCCAIN of Arizona, ROY BLUNT of Missouri, JAMES INHOFE of Oklahoma, and BEN SASSE of Nebraska.

The Chair, on behalf of the President pro tempore, and upon the recommendation of the majority leader, pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 2761, appoints the following Senator as chairman of the Senate Delegation to the British-American Interparliamentary Group Conference during the 115th Congress: the Honorable THAD COCHRAN of Mississippi.

The Chair, on behalf of the Democratic leader, pursuant to the provisions of Public Law 99-93, as amended by Public Law 99-151, appoints the following Senators as members of the United States Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control: the Honorable DIANNE FEINSTEIN of California, the Honorable SHELDON WHITEHOUSE of Rhode Island, and the Honorable HEIDI HEITKAMP of North Dakota.

READ ACROSS AMERICA DAY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 79, submitted earlier today.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 79) designating March 2, 2017, as "Read Across America Day."

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. 79) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

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

WORLD WILDLIFE DAY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. Res. 80, submitted earlier today.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 80) designating March 3, 2017, as "World Wildlife Day."

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

Mr. McCONNELL. 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. 80) 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, MARCH 6, 2017

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 2 p.m., Monday, March 6; 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 H.J. Res. 37; further, that the time until 6 p.m. be equally divided in the usual form; finally, that all debate time on H.J. Res. 37 expire at 6 p.m. Monday.

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

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. McCONNELL. If there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous

order, following the remarks of Senator KLOBUCHAR.

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

The Senator from Minnesota.

CALLING FOR AN INDEPENDENT, NONPARTISAN COMMISSION

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise today to express my deep concern about this administration's ties to the country of Russia. We are just 3 months into the 115th Congress, and I have come to the Senate floor multiple times to discuss inappropriate contact between Trump administration officials and the Russian Government. This is truly unprecedented.

Our Constitution was set up to guarantee that our democracy would be free of influence from foreign powers. For months, U.S. intelligence agencies have said that Russia used covert cyber attacks, espionage, and propaganda to try to undermine our democracy. Reports show it, and the facts prove it. As I learned from my trip at the end of the year with Senator MCCAIN and Senator GRAHAM to the Baltics, Georgia, and Ukraine, this is not unique to our country and our elections and our democracy. This is something that has gone on for years—where Russia shut down the internet in the little country of Estonia simply because they had the audacity to move a bronze statue to a public square in Lithuania where they invited members of the Ukrainian Parliament who were in exile from Crimea in Kiev and invited them to Lithuania to celebrate their 25th anniversary of independence from Russia, and then they attempted to hack into the computers of the members of the Parliament in Lithuania.

As Senator MARCO RUBIO noted, this is not just about one party or one candidate or even about one country; this is an assault on democracies across the world. Last month, we learned that the very day President Obama imposed sanctions on Russia, with unprecedented attacks on our democracy, General Flynn, a member of the Trump transition team, spoke to a senior Russian official regarding those sanctions. The National Security Adviser, the person charged with the most sensitive matters of U.S. national security, then misled the Vice President of the United States and then, in turn, the American people. He resigned, as did the former chairman of the Trump campaign; he resigned.

Now we have learned that Attorney General Sessions met with the Russian Ambassador. Fine, Members meet with Ambassadors; we know that happens. But in fact, he met with the Russian Ambassador only 3 days after then-President Obama was at the G20 Summit. He was at the G20 Summit, and he met with Vladimir Putin himself. He told him to stop the cyber attacks, but he also told him that America was not going to back down from the sanctions. In fact, President Obama told the

whole world that day in a press conference that we were not going to roll over and back down on the sanctions imposed against Russia because of their illegal invasion of Ukraine.

What happened 3 days later? Then-Senator Sessions, now our Attorney General, in fact, met with the Russian Ambassador.

Senator Sessions was then asked about contacts with the Russians from Trump officials during his hearing. I was there. I serve on the Judiciary Committee. Senator FRANKEN posed some of those questions, in addition to Senator LEAHY, who has noted that, at best, the answer was misleading.

That is why I feel so strongly that a press conference today is not enough and that Senator Sessions must come before the Judiciary Committee and answer under oath the questions that we now have.

What are those questions?

What was actually said at the meeting? Were sanctions discussed? Remember, 3 days—this meeting occurred 3 days after President Obama had said he would not roll back the sanctions. Were the sanctions discussed? Why did the Russian Ambassador, by the way, not meet with many other Members that day? We may not have a full accounting, but it appears that many of the Armed Services Committee members did not meet with the Russian Ambassador that day.

No. 2, what were the discussions with the Trump administration, then-campaign officials back in September, before that meeting occurred between Senator Sessions and the Russian Ambassador? What were the discussions leading into it? What were the discussions after the meeting? Those are things we truly need to know.

For weeks, Senator Sessions could have corrected the record—for weeks, during the time in which this Russian issue and the contact with the Trump administration were discussed thoroughly. For weeks, I have been calling on Senator Sessions, now Attorney General Sessions, to recuse himself from any investigation into Russia.

There are clear Department of Justice guidelines about conflicts of interest, and, as I have said for weeks, when you read those rules, there is a clear conflict of interest. Today, Attorney General Sessions agreed to a partial recusal. He recused himself on the part of the investigation that relates to the Presidential campaign. Well, the American people deserve a full recusal.

Think about it. The meeting between General Flynn and the Russian Ambassador took place after the campaign ended. The meeting that we just learned about today between the President's son-in-law and Russian officials happened after the campaign ended. We need a full recusal and an independent counsel to manage the investigation of contacts between the Russian Government, the Trump campaign, and the Trump administration.

I believe, as I have noted earlier, that Attorney General Sessions must come

before the Senate Judiciary Committee under oath and answer these questions:

Were sanctions discussed? What were his discussions leading into that meeting with the Russian Ambassador? What were the discussions afterwards? And I am sure my other colleagues on the Judiciary Committee have many, many other questions.

I know when I asked about Russia at Senator Sessions' nomination hearing, I asked him very specifically if he had any reason to doubt the evidence put forward by our 17 intelligence agencies that there had, in fact, been an attempt by a foreign government, the country of Russia, to influence our election. He said he had no reason to doubt those findings. He had no reason to doubt those findings, so he clearly understood when you read that report how important this is—the \$200 million spent in propaganda by Russian TV, as well as the hacking, as well as the attempts to influence the election.

So we have these facts. We know that meeting took place just 3 days after the President, our then-President Obama, met with Vladimir Putin at the G20 Summit. We know that is a time when Putin was told by the President of the United States to stop undermining the U.S. election system with cyber attacks. This was back in September before the election even occurred. We saw Paul Manafort resign from the campaign over Russia. We saw General Flynn step down over his contacts with the Russian Ambassador, and then we have that meeting. To me this seems like a pattern, and I want to not only see the facts through the investigations that are ongoing but also hear from the Attorney General himself.

That is why I am calling for the Department of Justice inspector general to investigate the actions of the Attorney General and whether the ongoing investigation into the Trump campaign and administration contacts with the Russian Government has been compromised in any way.

We know that Russia attempted to interfere with our election. Russia tries to undermine our democracy. This is not fake news. This is as real as it gets.

Aides and surrogates of this administration during the campaign and the transition were in contact with officials from a foreign government that was actively working to bring our democracy down. They were actively working to influence our elections. As Senator RUBIO has noted, one time it is one candidate and one political party, and the next time it will be the other candidate and the other political party, unless we all come together in a bipartisan fashion to get to the bottom of the facts.

So how do we do that beyond the recusal and the independent counsel and having Senator Sessions come back before the Judiciary Committee to thoroughly answer my questions and the questions of my colleagues? Well,

the other way we do it is by having an independent commission. That is why I introduced, along with Senators CARDIN, LEAHY, FEINSTEIN, and CARPER, the bill that was announced by Senator CARDIN and me, with ADAM SCHIFF and ELIJAH CUMMINGS, that would create an independent, nonpartisan commission to uncover all the facts and make sure that future elections and political campaigns are safeguarded from foreign interference. Remember that this commission can go alongside the Intelligence Committee investigation—not to replace it but to be in addition to it—because this committee and experts appointed by this Congress from both sides of the aisle, just like the 9/11 Commission so successfully did, could actually not just uncover some facts that aren't known publicly, but, most importantly, they can make recommendations to make sure this doesn't happen again.

By the way, there are upcoming elections in Germany and in France, and getting that information out there doesn't just help our democracy, it also helps democracies in other parts of the world. We also need—and I touched on this earlier—an independent counsel, special prosecutor to look into all the contacts between the Trump administration and the campaign and have a full recusal.

What else can Congress do besides the independent commission? We have to make sure that the Intelligence Committee proceeds with its investigation. I am pleased that Senator BURR and Senator WARNER have come together and announced that they are going to do a full and thorough investigation. They will also be looking into the contacts with the campaign—incredibly important.

Now we have the issue of the sanctions. As I mentioned, the day that the Obama administration was imposing additional sanctions on Russia—and the Trump campaign, through General Flynn, was actually meeting during this transition day with the Russian Ambassador to perhaps undermine those sanctions—I was with Senators MCCAIN and GRAHAM in Eastern Europe. As I noted, when we were in the Baltics, we heard and met with leaders—Prime Ministers and Presidents of these countries in Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia, who have seen this movie before. We went to Ukraine. We went to Georgia. We heard from Ukraine—6,500 attempts to hack into their coun-

try's computer system alone, shutting down access in Estonia. Trolls, in a building in Moscow—nearly 1,000 people—who are now working and have been working to undermine democracies all around the world.

So this isn't just about defending our own democracy; it is about defending the world's democracies. It is about saying to a country that thinks they can just get us to roll over and say: Hey, you can influence our election. No, that is not right. That is why we worked for expanded sanctions; that is why we introduced on a bipartisan basis with Senator MCCAIN and Senator GRAHAM—and I was one of the original sponsors with Senator CARDIN and others—the Countering Russian Hostilities Act that would impose more sanctions on Russia. It would address cyber attacks, human rights violations, and its illegal annexation of land in Ukraine and Georgia.

Just this weekend, on Sunday afternoon, I met with my Ukrainian community. Hundreds of people showed up on a Sunday afternoon in Minnesota because they are so concerned about their friends and relatives and they so believe in our democracy. Right down the road from the Ukrainian Center, where we held our meeting and where I listened and answered questions from my constituents, is a deli called Kramarczuk's. It is owned by a Ukrainian immigrant family whose parents came over to our country having fled oppression, and they came over to our country and bought this deli. They put this beautiful mural across an entire wall, and it is a beautiful photo of our Statue of Liberty, that beacon of democracy. Because of the Kramarczucs—they believe in our country. They believe in America. They believe in a country that is going to stand up for freedom of the press, that is going to stand up for freedom of religion, and that is going to stand up for them and their rights as immigrants to be citizens in this country. They believe in it because they have seen the worst of it. They have seen dictatorships, they have seen oppression, and they came to our country. They expect our country, as they serve their Ukrainian food to the people all over Minnesota in front of the big mural of the Statue of Liberty—they believe that our country is going to stand up for democracy.

That was the message that Senator MCCAIN, Senator GRAHAM, and I

brought to the people of Ukraine. We not only, of course, met with the President and their official leaders, but we also went right to the frontline. On New Year's Eve, we were in Eastern Ukraine on the sea—cold, snow coming down—with hundreds and hundreds of Ukrainian troops, hearing the stories of a mother who was so young, who had just lost her son a week before to a Russian separatist sniper. We heard the stories of the 10,000 people killed just as this conflict began, standing up for democracy, just as we have stood up for our democracy.

So when all of these discussions go on about recusals and about who should resign and what should happen, let's remember what this is all about. This is about saving our democracy and making our democracy strong so we can continue to be the beacon that those Ukrainians put on their wall in their deli because they believe in this country so much. This isn't about partisan divides. This is simply about being a democracy and getting to the bottom of it. When something goes on and a foreign country is trying to influence things, you have to put your party aside. You have to say: You know what, I want to know what happened here. If I am a Democrat or Republican, I want to know what happened so it doesn't happen again. I want to be able to protect our citizens and our election system and our democracy. That is what this is about.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL MONDAY,
MARCH 6, 2017, AT 2 P.M.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. YOUNG). Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 2 p.m. on Monday.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 6 p.m., adjourned until Monday, March 6, 2017, at 2 p.m.

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate March 2, 2017:

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN
DEVELOPMENT

BENJAMIN S. CARSON, SR., OF FLORIDA, TO BE SECRETARY OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT.

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

JAMES RICHARD PERRY, OF TEXAS, TO BE SECRETARY OF ENERGY.