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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable BEN SASSE, a Senator from the State of Nebraska.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, we seek Your blessings this day for our lawmakers. You know their hearts, their motives, and their needs. Lord, provide for their needs out of the abundance of Your riches in glory. Remind them that unless You provide Your guidance, they labor in vain. So guide them in what they propose to accomplish so that they will reap a bountiful harvest. Hold them with Your mighty hand until doubts and fears subside.

We pray in Your wonderful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer 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.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 13, 2018.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable BEN SASSE, a Senator from the State of Nebraska, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

Mr. SASSE thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

TAX REFORM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, it has been less than 3 months since historic tax reform became law. It has been less than 3 months since we have cut taxes significantly for middle-class families by lowering rates and increasing the standard deduction, since we created new deductions to help small businesses keep more of what they earn and purchase new equipment more easily, and since we leveled the playing field for American producers by making our corporate tax rates more competitive—a measure that mainstream economists agree will boost future wages for workers.

There is a common theme here. Each part of this bill was built on the simple idea that American workers, job creators, and middle-class families know best what to do with their own hard-earned money, and they ought to be able to keep more of it. It is a defining philosophy on our side of the aisle.

Our Democratic friends don't seem to share that notion. The Democratic leader in the House called these historic tax cuts "probably one of the worst bills in the history of the United States of America."

In the Senate, my Democratic colleagues' predictions were equally dire. My friend the Democratic leader offered this assessment: "There is nothing about this bill that suits the needs of the American worker."

Tax reform used to be a shared, bipartisan priority—apparently, not anymore. Now our Democratic friends seem fully committed to the notion

that there is no problem Washington, DC, can't solve by raising taxes and imposing more regulations.

Just last week, my friend the Democratic leader made this clear. He announced that he wants to claw back tax reform and have Americans send more money to the IRS.

Here is his rationale: There are much better ways to use this money—much better ways to use this money than for people to keep more of their own money, apparently. The unspoken assumption is unmistakable: Democratic leaders know how to spend that money better than the citizens and employers. The government knows best.

Of course, just a few months in, we are getting a clear picture of which philosophy really works. The good news about tax reform keeps pouring in, and with every favorable story, my Democratic friends tie themselves in knots trying to convince everyone that new investments, new jobs, new raises and bonuses, and companies repatriating money back home are somehow not good news after all.

Even as billions of dollars are put toward raises, bonuses, and new worker benefits, it is nothing more than "crumbs." Even as billions more are invested in U.S. manufacturing and new jobs, they stick by their predictions of "Armageddon"—all of this, even as tax reform is achieving specific goals they spent years claiming to support.

Consider the issue of the minimum wage. Because of tax reform, Hormel Foods has raised starting pay to \$13, Wells Fargo has established a \$15 minimum wage, and Walmart has raised the starting wage for its associates. That is great, but, apparently, Senate Democrats have better uses for the money going forward than your raise.

Take the subject of family leave. Because of tax reform, including the family leave incentive championed by Senator FISCHER, huge national employers

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



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such as Starbucks and CVS are expanding paid family leave programs or creating new ones.

These new family leave programs are great, but I think Senate Democrats have other designs on the private dollars financing these programs. They have better uses in mind for the tax savings that are flowing to charities and nonprofits around the country, like the women's shelter in Washington State that is getting \$1 million toward a brand-new building.

Well, Republicans just don't see it that way. Rather than trying to regulate our way into prosperity through higher taxes and heavyhanded mandates, we believe in simply taking Washington's foot off the brake. Because we did, American free enterprise is creating the very pay raises and benefits that our Democratic colleagues insisted only government could provide.

My friends across the aisle may want to repeal the tax cuts that have generated these raises, bonuses, new jobs, new investments, minimum wage increases, and paid family leave expansions. They may want to raise taxes so badly that they are willing to shrink workers' paychecks and send jobs and investments back overseas. Fortunately, Republicans in Congress will not let that happen. We are standing with the American people.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

ECONOMIC GROWTH, REGULATORY RELIEF, AND CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 2155, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2155) to promote economic growth, provide tailored regulatory relief, and enhance consumer protections, and for other purposes.

Pending:

McConnell (for Crapo) modified amendment No. 2151, in the nature of a substitute.

Crapo amendment No. 2152 (to amendment No. 2151), of a perfecting nature.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DACA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, on September 5 of last year, President Trump announced the repeal of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program, known as DACA. As a result of that decision by President Trump, hundreds of thousands of immigrants who came to the United States as children, known as Dreamers, face losing their work permits and their right to stay in America without deportation. They are threatened with being returned to countries that many of them barely remember, if at all.

These Dreamers were brought here as children—infants, toddlers, young kids—by their parents to America, and they grew up here. They went to school in America, to our public schools and other schools that were available to them. They stood up in their classrooms every morning and pledged allegiance to the flag. They grew up believing that this was their home.

At some point in their lives their parents pulled them aside and told them the bitter truth—that they were not legally in America, they were undocumented, and they were vulnerable. At any minute, a knock on the door or a stop on the highway could result in not only their deportation but the deportation of every member of their family. Growing up is tough enough for an adolescent. I can't imagine growing up with this shadow over me, wondering whether at any moment a misstep or being in the wrong place might mean that I would be sent from this country and that my parents would be sent with me, but they grew up with that reality and with that danger.

They did some extraordinary things. They not only prospered in America and finished their education, they went on with great ambition, believing the day would come when they would get a chance to be part of this country.

Seventeen years ago, I introduced the Dream Act. The purpose of that bill was to give those young people a chance—a chance to earn their way to legal status, earn their way to citizenship. If they have a serious criminal record, they are gone and we want nothing to do with them. They had squandered any opportunity they had to be part of America's future. But if they were doing the right thing, leading a good life, working hard, finishing school, many of us believed they deserved a chance. In fact, at this point, 85 percent of Americans believe they deserve a chance, and that includes 60 percent of the people who voted for President Trump.

We have never passed the Dream Act and made it the law, but when I asked my former Senate colleague, President Obama, to see if there was something he could do by Executive order, he created DACA. DACA gave these young people a 2-year renewable protection.

They had to pay a \$500 fee, submit themselves to a criminal background check, and if they passed it, they would end up with a temporary, renewable right to stay in America. About 800,000 came forward and did it.

There were many more who were eligible but scared—scared that turning over their family's information and their personal information to this government or any government could turn out badly. Can you blame them? They have lived their whole lives in fear that a highway stop or somebody being arrested next to them could mean they would have to leave the only country they had ever known. But 800,000 stepped up and said: We will do it. I encouraged them. I went to so many meetings in Chicago, around the State of Illinois, and around the country telling them that this DACA Program was for real and that the government was giving them a pledge that they would stand by them on a renewable basis because of President Obama's order.

The program was a huge success. As I mentioned, 800,000 signed up, and some even renewed. Then came the decision by President Trump to end the program. What he said was that by March 5 of this year, there would be no more DACA. Those who were protected could play out their temporary protection but no renewals.

That is where the issue stood for the longest time. Many of us decided that we needed to do something about it and to accept the President's challenge and create a law—a law that would provide protection for these young people. Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM, a Republican from South Carolina; Senator JEFF FLAKE, a Republican from Arizona; Senator CORY GARDNER, a Republican from Colorado; Senator MICHAEL BENNET, a Democrat from Colorado; and Senator BOB MENENDEZ, a Democrat from New Jersey—we came together and decided on a bipartisan basis to draw up a bill to try to solve this problem, be fair to these young people, and give them a chance to stay in America and earn their way to citizenship. When we proposed the bill to President Trump, he rejected it. In fact, he rejected six different bipartisan proposals to solve this problem.

So the deadline was looming and passed last week on March 5, and the program, by the President's proclamation, would have been finished were it not for two Federal courts that intervened and said: No, Mr. President. You may have overstepped. You may have done more than you can legally do. So we are going to protect these Dreamers, these DACA young people, until we resolve the question on your constitutional authority to make that decision.

At the current moment, more than 700,000 of these young DACA recipients are protected by a court order that required that they reopen DACA eligibility for those whose DACA protection had expired, the 2-year temporary protection. Now tens of thousands of them are coming forward and applying for DACA renewal.

Last week I called Secretary Nielsen at the Department of Homeland Security and said: I have some questions that I am hearing as I travel around. For example, if I was protected by DACA and my protection came to an end and I am now reapplying for DACA and going to your agency, how long will it take your agency to process my application?

Secretary Nielsen could not give me an exact date, but there has been speculation that it could take 4 to 6 months. You see, there is a big backlog of cases, and it could take months before they process all those cases. That was my first question.

My second question: In that 4- to 6-month period, can these young DACA recipients be deported?

She said no. I put out an order, she said, that no one is to be deported if they made an application for DACA renewal.

I asked Secretary Nielsen: Can we have that in writing?

I will get back to you, she said.

I don't think that is too much to ask—whether these young people can be protected from deportation while they are applying for DACA renewal.

The third question: There is also a legal ability to work under DACA. Can you protect these young people's ability to have a job while you are processing their applications?

She didn't know whether she could. I have since learned that she has the authority to do that, but it is an important question, isn't it? If you happen to be one of these DACA recipients—the vast majority of them are actually working, and most of them are in school or have graduated. They have to. They don't qualify for any Federal Pell grants or government loans, so they need to work to pay off their education. That is understandable.

So it is still uncertain as to what is going to happen. Then what happens when the court lifts this injunction, and what will be the future of these young people?

President Trump said some harsh things about immigration during the course of the Presidential campaign. We all remember his comments about people of the Muslim religion, his comments about Mexican rapists, and his pledge to build a big, beautiful wall from sea to shining sea and have Mexico pay for it. Do you remember? We all heard those things. But an interesting thing happened after he was elected: He started saying more moderate, positive things about Dreamers, to the point where I actually had some hope that this particular group would have a fighting chance. As of today, there is no indication that President Trump feels the same way. Six different bipartisan proposals have been rejected. So here we stand with this uncertainty.

When the issue came before the Senate, we did our best to put together a bipartisan rollcall. We came close but not close enough. There were 4 pro-

posals on the floor, and the one with the largest number of votes received 54 votes. There were three Democrats who disagreed with some parts of it. I think we could have probably found a way to get their support. But we only had 8 Republicans who joined us—8 out of 51—to vote for the measure to deal with this issue. So it is still an unresolved issue at this moment as to what is going to happen after the court cases.

I have come to the floor many times—in fact, over 100 times—to tell the stories of these Dreamers, and I would like to do that today before I yield to the Democratic leader.

This is Maria Torres Mendoza. Maria is the 111th Dreamer I have featured here on the floor of the Senate. She came here to the United States from Mexico when she was 5 years old, and she grew up in the State of Washington. Her family didn't have much money, so she worked pretty hard. She used to deliver newspapers. She delivered 100 newspapers before school each morning. She worked odd jobs—shoveled snow, cut grass. When she was in high school, she worked as a server at a restaurant every day while she was still going to school, kept up with her studies, and delivered the newspapers in the morning. You can tell Maria is not a lazy person.

Because of her family's financial struggles, despite her best efforts, her family was homeless for some time. Through it all, she was an excellent student, and despite her family difficulties, she graduated from high school with a 3.8 grade point average.

She didn't believe she would ever make it to college, but she did. She was accepted at Washington State University Tri-Cities. She is a senior now, and this spring, she will graduate with a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering and a minor in computer science. She is currently working as a student engineer at ATI Titanium and Specialty Alloys, a specialty parts manufacturer. Her main project is creating a system to facilitate the usage of AutoCAD drawings and manuals for engineering and maintenance. I hope none of my colleagues ask me to explain what I just said, but it sounds like pretty important work. What is her dream? She wants a master's degree in engineering. She is particularly interested in nuclear-powered mechatronics—the technology that combines electronics and mechanical engineering.

Maria wrote me a letter, and here is what it said:

DACA is a whole world of opportunities for me. If DACA were to be taken away from me, all my hard work would not count. I want to see the results of my hard work and I wouldn't be able to do so without DACA.

Would America be a better place if Maria was asked to leave? Would we be a stronger nation if we took this young girl's amazing energy, her academic accomplishment, and her dream and drive and sent them back to Mexico? After

all these years, after education and hard work—two jobs at a time when she was in high school—is there any doubt that this young woman is going to be a spectacular success in life?

That is what this comes down to—real human beings, DACA recipients, protected by that Executive order of President Obama's, who are now under the threat of deportation because of President Trump's decision. It is a test of who we are as a nation, whether we believe in fairness and opportunity or whether we are going to walk away from our legacy. This is a nation of immigrants.

I stand before you proudly, the son of an immigrant to this country. My mother was brought here from Lithuania when she was 2 years old, and here her son stands as a Senator from the State of Illinois. That is my story, that is my family's story, and that is America's story.

It is time for us to remember Maria and the hundreds of thousands just like her who are asking for a chance to be part of our future.

Mr. President, is it possible that with all the things on your mind, you have forgotten DACA and the Dreamers?

We need President Trump to step up and lead.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

DACA

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, let me thank my friend from Illinois, Senator DURBIN. There has been no more passionate, effective, strong, and consistent voice for the Dreamers, for those beautiful, young people who simply want to become Americans and contribute to America. He will never let this issue rest, nor will we. We are going to do everything we can to help the Dreamers. We hope President Trump finally sees it in his heart to actually get something done. We had a bipartisan agreement. It could have passed. It had some things we didn't like, and it had some things the other side didn't like, but President Trump, in one of the more inept acts in terms of legislating, blew the whole deal. We are going to keep working.

I thank my colleague from Illinois.

GUN SAFETY

Mr. President, as the Senate debates the banking bill, Americans are wondering if the Republican majority will ever move to take up the issue of gun safety. Tomorrow, thousands of students across the country—awakened students—will participate in a nationwide walkout to demand action. At 10 a.m. in high schools from one end of America to the other, students will walk out for 17 minutes in honor of the 17 who gave their lives at Stoneman Douglas High School, in solidarity. But they are not going to stop there; they are going to keep working and working and working until we get something done.

When the students walk out, what will this Senate, what will this Congress, what will our Republican friends be able to say? Nothing, because we will have done nothing in that time to address gun safety in a meaningful way.

The unfortunate reality is that it seems there is too little courage in the White House to take on the NRA. After sounding the right notes when the cameras were on, President Trump has backed away from everything but the policies to which the NRA gives its rubberstamp approval.

I am still amazed at this. I believe it was on the issue of age that the President criticized Senator TOOMEY at his televised meeting and told him not to be afraid of the NRA. He said he wasn't.

And what does the President do? He doesn't show one one-hundredth of the courage that Senator TOOMEY showed on guns.

Senator TOOMEY and I don't agree on much, and I would have gone further than he did in the checks bill that he and Senator MANCHIN put together, but he had the courage to buck the NRA.

President Trump, you have no courage to buck the NRA. You talk a good game, and then, when it comes to action, you are afraid to do anything—anything—that gets the NRA upset.

The NRA is so far away from where America is. Over 90 percent of America wants background checks. The NRA and Trump don't. A huge percentage—over 80 percent of gun owners—want background checks—comprehensive and universal background checks. President Trump and the NRA don't. The majority of Americans want protective orders so that if a family member or a friend or a teacher sees a young person acting like they are angry or upset and might do damage, their gun could be temporarily taken away. Most Americans want that. President Trump and the NRA don't, and neither do our Republican friends. The vast majority of Americans would like a debate on assault weapons—or certainly the majority. President Trump, the NRA, and our Republican majority don't.

Mr. President, why don't you retract what you said to Senator TOOMEY. Why don't you admit that he had more courage than you? Why don't you say that you are afraid of the NRA, because that is really what is going on here. No one is going to be taken in by nice words spoken in an hour in front of a TV camera when you then back off on anything. Of course, the plan was released Sunday night. They thought, hopefully, that it would get no news coverage, but it is still in the news.

Unfortunately, too many Republicans here on the Hill are in the same boat as President Trump, but not Senator TOOMEY. They want to appear as though they are doing something for gun safety but are only willing to support the smallest bore policies that the NRA gives a green light to. They say:

OK, let's do these small things first; maybe we will do more later.

We all know the game here. Everyone sees what is going on. My friends on the other side don't dare support anything that the NRA opposes, even though the vast majority of Americans want them to. Our friends hope that we will pass something tiny, something small so that they can clap their hands and say they did something on gun violence and move on. The day they want to do something meaningful and real on gun safety never seems to come.

My friend the Senator from Texas—he is a good friend of mine. We banter in the gym almost every morning. I have worked with him on a number of issues. But he comes to the floor every day and says: Let's do the small Fix NICS bill, and then we will see about other proposals. He knows as well as I do that Fix NICS is not even close to enough of a response to the epidemic of gun violence in the country. He knows as well as I do that the NRA is OK with Fix NICS but not universal background checks.

Fix NICS only improves reporting within the existing background check system. The big loopholes that allow so many bad people, felons, and those adjudicated mentally ill to get guns—the gun show loophole, the online loophole—are not touched by Fix NICS.

I say to my good friend the senior Senator from Texas, when you are a doctor and you are sewing up a wound, you don't just do the first stitch and then walk away and say: We did something. No, you have to do the real job to cure the injury. I appreciate that my friend from Texas wants to pass this bill. Democrats support it. I am a cosponsor. But as a response to the spree of shootings in our schools, on our streets, in our churches, movie theaters, nightclubs, concerts, and on street corners every evening, a bill to repair just one tiny little aspect of the background check system is not sufficient.

A policy or an attitude that says that we cannot offend the NRA on anything will never, never, never help ameliorate our problem of gun violence to a sufficient extent.

As my colleague Senator MURPHY, Senator CORNYN's coauthor of Fix NICS, has said: "If we were to only debate the Fix NICS Act, we would be slamming the door in the face of all of these kids who are demanding change."

He said it perfectly.

Democrats are fighting to make sure that Fix NICS isn't our only response. I hope and pray that my Republican colleagues will find the courage to go beyond what the gun lobbyists tell them is OK and work with Democrats on real and significant gun safety legislation.

TRADE

Mr. President, now on another matter, this is a happy moment because many Democrats—certainly I—agree with the Trump administration when they blocked the proposed bid by the

Singapore-based Broadcom to purchase the San Diego-based Qualcomm, on national security grounds.

Let me say this unequivocally: President Trump and his administration made the right decision on blocking Broadcom from taking over Qualcomm.

We all know that China has been rapacious about trade and very smart. They look for places where they can steal our best technology. They develop it there in China and keep us out of their markets and then try to flood the world with their products, sometimes dumping them. China has been rapacious about trade. Frankly, in my opinion, neither the Bush administration nor the Obama administration did enough. President Trump has a much better attitude.

One particular area of concern is how frequently foreign companies have sought controlling stakes in cutting-edge technology companies like Qualcomm. Qualcomm has done a great job, and they are leading the world in developing the 5G system. We need to preserve that as Americans because it has both economic and national security concerns.

As China seeks dominance in the semiconductor and wireless industries, the United States must be wary of attempts to acquire U.S. leaders in these industries. As to a foreign-controlled Broadcom, I don't know what the links are between Broadcom and China. I suspect there may be some, but China could move to take it over and, poof, the dominance that we would seek in 5G technology developed here would go away. It is a national security concern and an economic security concern.

We Democrats believe that the CFIUS model should extend not just to national security but to economic security. When China attempts to steal our best technology by buying American companies—whether it is robotics, AI, or chips on Qualcomm—we ought to block it.

China doesn't play fair. Lifetime President Xi hopes to dominate in the crown jewel of America's industries—the tech industries and others, where we dominate because we have been so good because we have taken immigrants, Mr. President, from around the world, and they helped develop these great things. We have to be wary of China—wary of China. To his credit, President Trump is more wary of China than the last five or six administrations, and I am glad he is. I am glad his administration is. It is just almost too late, but it is not yet.

It is no secret that President Trump and I share similar feelings on the issue of trade, particularly when it concerns China. I have often been critical of this administration—like I have been of previous administrations—when it fails to follow through on the President's rhetoric or misdirects its policies.

The recent steel and aluminum tariffs are an example of how the administration has the right instincts but bad

execution. If properly calibrated, tariffs could be an effective tool to rein in China. China certainly dumps and has sought dominance in the steel and aluminum industries. Instead of targeting heavily subsidized Chinese steel and aluminum, the President has put in place across-the-board tariffs that would hurt many of our domestic industries. There was an article today about a Missouri ball bearing company that doesn't know where it is going to get its steel from. It hurts allies like Canada.

Canada makes its own steel and aluminum. We have a trade surplus with Canada. Putting Canada in the same boat as China is a huge mistake. That is why these tariffs—and I support the thrust of them—should have been more carefully targeted.

In contrast, the action on Qualcomm is targeted and effective in terms of protecting U.S. industry, and I urge the Trump administration to do more of these things. They will fill a hole that previous administrations failed to fill.

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Mr. President, finally, on Russia, we all know that the Republican majority on the House Intelligence Committee has ended its investigation into foreign interference in the 2016 elections. The House Republican majority on the Intelligence Committee has so discredited itself.

The report makes several assertions that are contradicted by already well-known facts. It says that Russia had no preference for Donald Trump in the 2016 elections. Remember, it is not just the intelligence community's assessment that the Russians were trying to elect Trump, but an independent grand jury—nonpolitical—in the special counsel's investigation concluded the same thing on the basis of evidence independently acquired and presented by the special counsel. By saying they disagree with the intelligence community's assessment that Russia interfered in the 2016 election to help Trump, Speaker RYAN and Chairman NUNES are closer to Putin's view than the view of the CIA, the FBI, the NSA, and the DNI—people in the administration.

It seems that there are no lengths to which Chairman NUNES and Speaker RYAN will not go to protect this White House, even when it damages America's security.

After Chairman NUNES's midnight run to the White House, his partisan memo, fake memo, and fake scandals about unmasking FBI text messages, no one should take this report seriously. I would say, to the vast majority of Americans, Chairman NUNES has discredited himself. He is much more of a partisan operative than a representative helping America be secure.

The House Republican majority has never taken this investigation seriously. From the very beginning, they have sought to distract and kick up dust. They have shown time and again

that they are willing to put party before country—something our Founding Fathers warned against. They are willing to twist facts and ignore evidence about a foreign power attacking our democracy because it might cause political damage to the President. It is a shocking and shameful abdication of duty.

In my judgment, Chairman NUNES, you and your committee have made a shocking and shameful abdication of duty to America. A congressional party that is wholly subservient to the political interests of the President is failing fundamentally to fulfill its constitutional obligation. Congress is supposed to be a separate, equal branch of government. Read the Constitution. Read the Federalist Papers. One of the main purposes of Congress was to check the power of the executive branch. Our Founding Fathers feared an overreaching executive branch, as I know my friend from Nebraska knows, because he cites these things. That responsibility doesn't fall only on one party. It falls on all of us.

That is why there has been a history of bipartisanship and cooperation on the Intelligence Committees, where the vital interests of the Nation are at stake. That has been the case through the years. Until Chairman NUNES seemed to get ahold of this, that tradition was a grand one and a good one. Now that tradition has been discarded by House Republicans on the Intelligence Committee through this embarrassing episode that will historically go down as one of the lowest moments of any committee's actions in Congress.

Let me say pointedly to my colleagues that the Senate Intelligence Committee has been quite different than the House Intelligence Committee. I salute both Chairman BURR and Ranking Member WARNER for trying to run things in a different way. Let us hope that the Senate Intelligence Committee does not go the way of the House and continues its bipartisan cooperation to get to the bottom of this mess. That is because we have a responsibility to get to the bottom of what happened in 2016 and to report those findings in an unbiased way. If the House isn't going to do it, the Senate must.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I would like my colleagues to take a trip down memory lane. Go back a decade or two to 2006, 2007, 2008, and look at the decade before that. My State of Ohio, for 14 years in a row—from the late 1990s

through the year 2010—experienced almost a decade and a half of foreclosure increases leading up to the crisis. That meant that in Ohio, literally every year for 14 years, there were more foreclosures than the year before in my State.

Predatory and irresponsible lenders made dangerous, subprime loans. They often ignored whether borrowers had the ability to repay that loan. The incentives were these: We will keep writing these; we will keep underwriting; we will keep collecting fees. We don't care if the borrower can pay.

We can see that is a setup for disaster. Because of the lack of standards for underwriting, we learned a painful lesson that not all mortgage lending is created equal.

Look at some headlines from that period. On September 18, 2008, the front page of the Wall Street Journal featured three headlines. This was September 18, 2008, so just slightly less than 10 years ago: "Mounting Fears Shape World Markets As Banking Giants Rush to Raise Capital." "Bad Bets and Cash Crunch Push Ailing AIG to Brink." "Worst Crisis Since '30s, With No End."

On the same day the Washington Post reported: "Markets in Disarray as Lending Locks Up."

How did we get to that crisis? Banks forgot the essential rule of lending. A borrower needs to be able to pay back the loan. It is pretty simple, but a forgotten dictum. Instead, lenders offered loans that required no documentation. They offered loans with teaser interest rates that shot through the roof after 2 or 3 years. They offered loans where borrowers never paid down their principal or they stripped their home's value through cash-out refinances.

So borrowers had these mortgages where they simply paid the interest with the belief the home would go up in value more and more and more, never paying the principal. The homes didn't go up in value, and look what happened.

All of these practices had devastating results for families and communities and the economy. My wife Connie and I live in ZIP Code 44105 in Cleveland, OH, just south of Slavic Village in the great city of Cleveland. Eleven years ago, in the first half of 2007, 44105 had more foreclosures than any ZIP Code in the United States of America. I can still see the blight brought on by those foreclosures—what it did to individual families, what it did to the neighborhood, what it did to the city of Cleveland.

Think about—and we don't do that very much here. We don't really think all that much when we talk about things like this. We look at numbers. We look at statistics. We read analyses and data, but we don't really think about individual families.

Think about what happens when somebody suffers a foreclosure. First of all, these families understand that things are getting tighter. It is harder

and harder to pay their mortgage. Their spouse may have been scaled back to half time, depending on the economic circumstances.

The first thing they do is often get rid of the family pet. It costs too much to take the dog to the vet. The second thing they do is cut back on everything. They just start cutting back on everything. Eventually they have that sit-down with their 12-year-old daughter and their 14-year-old son and their 15-year old son, and tell them: We are going to have to move. We don't know where we are going or what school district we will be in. We don't know how much we are going to get; we have to sell the car. We don't know how much you are going to be able to see your friends. They think about the personal side, but we don't do that much here.

Pope Francis used to admonish his parish priests to go out and smell like the flock. We don't do that very much here. We look at data and ideas, and we don't think about our policies and our votes and the impact they have on individual human beings.

So thinking back to ZIP Code 44105, if those faulty mortgage products weren't bad enough on their own, they were targeted to communities of color. The neighborhood my wife and I live in, ZIP Code 44105, is mostly African American, but pretty diverse. A lot of people look more like me, but there are a lot of people with moderate to low incomes.

These mortgage products were targeted to communities of color. In those communities in particular, even those who qualified for no-frills, no-surprises prime mortgages were often instead steered into subprime loans. Why? Because the lender could make more money on a subprime loan than a straightforward loan that most Members of the Senate generally sign up for. So even African-American and Hispanic borrowers with higher incomes than other borrowers found themselves—because the banks put them there—with subprime mortgages.

These practices of discrimination, which went on for years, stripped a generation's worth of equity from communities that had fought hard for equal access to home ownership. Think about this: The household wealth of communities of color simply hasn't recovered from the last decade. Middle-class Black and Hispanic families lost half of their wealth from 2007 to 2013. In 2016, it was \$38,000. The numbers are similar for Hispanic households: \$85,000 in 2007, \$46,000 in 2016. They all sound like numbers, but what that does to a family who has lost half its wealth, particularly because their wealth is generally in the home that they own—think of what that does.

My colleagues talk about how hard the banks have it, how hard it is to be a banker now, and how hard it is for Wall Street. I would like to revisit what happens when banks stop following the rules. Borrowers with these higher cost loans were foreclosed on at

almost triple the rate of borrowers with standard 30-year, fixed-rate mortgages. Between 2006 and 2014, more than 9 million homeowners lost their homes to foreclosure in distressed sales or surrendered their home to the lender—9.3 million homeowners. What does that mean to us? Do we know any of them? Do we ever talk to any of them? Do we listen to their stories about what happens when you get thrown out of your house? Do we sit there and patiently listen and ask them questions and ask them to tell us about what has happened during the last 10 years of their lives? Because when you get thrown out of your home, whether you are evicted or whether you get put out because of foreclosure, you don't just give away the family pet. You don't just cut back on everything. You lose a lot of your possessions because you can't take things with you. You start again in your life, and you start again in debt. Does anybody here care about that?

They talk about how hard it is for the banks and how Wall Street is suffering, but they don't think about the individual homeowners who struggle. Some of them get foreclosed on. Some of them are just struggling. Some of them have lost half of their wealth.

It is not just families of color who lost half their wealth; a whole lot of working class White families have lost a lot of their wealth. Does this place seem to care? Not a whole lot.

It wasn't just subprime mortgages. The crisis revealed a host of other harmful practices, like steering borrowers to affiliated companies, kickbacks for business referrals, inflated appraisals, and loan officer compensation based on the loan product. If you have a certain loan product that might be more profitable, even though it is a little sleazy and a little underhanded, you make a little more money because you steer people into those loan products. It might lead to the ruining of their lives or it might lead to their foreclosure, but they are making more money.

So what does that mean? It means the worse the loan was for the borrower, the more money the lender made. In 2008, the worse the loan was for the borrower, the more money the lender made. That is what our laws were. We fixed that, and we are going to undo some of that in this bill.

After the dust settled, this country realized how twisted our mortgage lending market had become. Congress finally stepped in to do what the market and regulators refused to do for too long.

I believe in free enterprise. I believe in the dynamism of capitalism. But when the market and the regulators did nothing except encourage this kind of behavior—that is why government is involved. That is why government steps in. That is why we did Wall Street reform. It established a commonsense rule that lenders should evaluate whether a borrower has the

ability to repay a home loan. The ability to repay rule means that lenders can no longer make a loan based on the home's value or ignore the fact that an adjustable rate mortgage will become unaffordable in a year or two.

A mortgage is the largest financial transaction most families will make in their lifetime. It is a big deal, central to the economic life and the life overall of a great majority of people in this country. Requiring that the mortgage process, services, and fees be transparent and understandable to borrowers is essential. We don't all have great sophistication when we get a homeowner's loan. That is why it is so important that it be transparent and understandable to borrowers. But the bill before us today chips away at that principle. It includes several provisions that, when taken together, weaken transparency and inclusiveness and undermine fairness in mortgage lending.

The bill says lenders need not consider whether a borrower can afford an adjustable rate mortgage after the interest rate adjusts. Banks and mortgage companies make more money when they write more loans. I get that. They should. But when the incentive is only that and there is no requirement that the borrower be able to afford an adjustable rate mortgage after the interest rate adjusts—we know what will happen.

The bill also allows the largest banks to acquire small banks and retains these legal protections for the larger banks.

I spoke to a member of a bank board in Mansfield, OH, yesterday, a longtime friend of our family's. That is where I grew up. I know the locally owned banks in Mansfield, OH. I know that Mechanics Bank works hard for their enrichment. I know they work hard for their customers. They know their customers. Small banks work with their customers. If they lose a job or face a sudden illness, the bank can try to work with them to figure out how to avoid foreclosure. Would a megabank in Cleveland, Columbus, or Dayton do the same thing? Based on the record of Secretary Mnuchin's bank, OneWest, and others during the crisis, we can be pretty sure we know the answer to that, and the answer is no, they won't.

The bill before us also gives lenders a pass on the requirement to escrow for taxes and insurance when making subprime loans. It doesn't cost real money to the lender to put money aside for taxes and insurance; it is part of the calculation when you buy a house. Most of us want our taxes and insurance included so we have a more predictable stream of outflow, so we know how much we are paying next month, and it doesn't change. It may change once a year, but it doesn't change often. By definition, someone taking out a subprime loan is at a higher risk of default. Also, escrow helps a borrower plan for the expenses of taxes and insurance, and it protects

the lender from unexpected losses. That is in the bill, and we are stripping that out of the law.

Former FDIC Chair Sheila Bair, appointed by President Bush, is a terrific public servant. She was a high-ranking employee—I believe chief of staff—for Senator Dole when he was a Member of the Senate. She steered the FDIC through the worst of the financial crisis. She raised her opposition to this provision in a letter to me.

This bill exempts 85 percent of banks from reporting the HMDA data they are collecting and reporting today. I credit Senator CORTEZ MASTO, who, as the attorney general of Nevada before she joined us in the Senate 14 months ago, saw up close what happened with foreclosures. She is a strong, outspoken opponent of this bill. She has had those discussions with people who have lost their homes. She understands how it happened. She doesn't have the amnesia that apparently a majority of my colleagues have, forgetting what happened 10 years ago and learning almost nothing from what happened 10 years ago. Her amendment would fix HMDA data collection. Without this data, we can't monitor trends in mortgage lending, particularly in rural areas. Without this data, it will be even harder to see who has access to affordable mortgage credit and who does not.

We know that redlining is still happening. The latest report from the Center for Investigative Reporting analyzed tens of millions of mortgage records and found that across the country, people of color are far more likely to be turned down for a loan even when you take into account factors like their income and the size of the loan. Without this data, we won't know when redlining happens. It will make it more difficult to show that community lenders go the extra mile for their customers. That is why the NAACP, National Community Reinvestment Coalition, Unidos, National Urban League, Rural Community Assistance Corporation, and more than 170 State and national organizations have objected to this devastating new hole in lending data. Why in the world would Congress want to keep us from getting that information, keep us from getting that data, so we, in fact, understand better what goes on?

Part of our problem in 2007 and 2008 was that we had a whole bunch of regulators who were asleep at the switch, we had a Congress that was oblivious, and we had a national media that was not paying enough attention to this. Part of that was that the regulators didn't have the information they needed. That is why the head of supervision at the Federal Reserve, Randal Quarles, who was in the Bush administration then, could see nothing but roses and candy in the years ahead. He said that in 2006 and I believe in 2007. He had no idea what was going on, partly because he maybe didn't want to know but partly because we didn't have

the data collected that we are starting to collect now. So we are going to say we don't care about that.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the letter from former FDIC Chair Sheila Bair and the letters from civil rights groups in opposition to this provision be printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of my remarks.

Any one of these provisions is bad enough, but taken together, they add up to riskier loans for American families and more foreclosures on American families.

Think about this: If this bill passes, a bank could make a subprime loan without considering whether a borrower could afford the higher interest rate when the teaser rate expires. The first 2 or 3 years, you are paying rate X, and then in the third or fourth year, you are paying X plus two or X plus three, and then the next year, maybe X plus that number plus one, to the point you can't afford your mortgage anymore. What happens? You get foreclosed on, and your life turns upside down.

If this bill passes, a bank could make a subprime loan without considering whether the borrower could pay the higher interest rate. A bank wouldn't have to collect taxes and insurance on a monthly basis, making a loan look affordable when it may not be because you have insurance and taxes. Why not put that in the monthly payment so people can predict more and understand their finances better?

The homeowner loses her right to take the bank to court for removing her from her home even though the bank made a loan it knew she could never repay. So the bank makes a loan to a homeowner. The homeowner perhaps doesn't have the sophistication the banker sitting across the table has, doesn't quite understand what the teaser rate will mean to the cost of her house. Then the bank doesn't do the escrow adding insurance and taxes, and the bank convinces this perspective homeowner, the borrower, that she can make these payments, no problem. Then she loses her right to action if she is foreclosed on. She has no recourse even though the bank sold her something that a good banker wouldn't have. It is a recipe for disaster. It is a recipe for more families ending up in homes they were misled into thinking they could afford. Is it too much to ask a lender to consider whether a family can afford the loan they are getting? Are we back here already?

The cherry on top is this bill eliminates data we need to determine whether banks are targeting certain communities for these risky loans. We know this administration and the heads of Departments are not concerned about accountability for financial institutions' equity, lending, and inclusivity. We learned that HUD is considering changing its mission statement to delete references to inclusive communities. Imagine that, Secretary Carson, that you would do such a thing.

I am concerned this bill will put more families at risk of poor housing conditions, particularly in rural communities that are so often ignored in this town. The bill reduces the frequency of required inspections for units overseen by rural public housing agencies that administer 550 or fewer units of HUD public housing and section 8 rental vouchers. For many of these so-called PHAs, HUD will inspect their property once every 3 years rather than every 1 or 2 years. This bill would allow PHAs to inspect more voucher-assisted units just once every 3 years. A lot can happen to an apartment in 3 years that could put residents' health and safety at risk. In my neighborhood, it is in the 90 percent rate, those homes that have toxic levels of lead, and it gets worse as the house gets older and the paint chips. And we are not going to inspect these places.

I understand that PHAs face many challenges in maintaining high-quality housing for families. Due to years of underfunding, public housing alone faces an estimated \$26 billion backlog of repairs. My Senate Democratic colleagues and I have proposed an infrastructure package that includes funding for public housing repairs and revitalization to help address these challenges. We have an obligation to make sure these struggling families have safe and decent housing. I have been clear throughout this process that I want to help community lenders and housing providers better serve their customers. We don't do that by reducing accountability. We don't do that by returning to the freewheeling housing market that led to millions of families losing their homes.

When we talk about escrow and lending requirements, it sounds kind of boring, it sounds dry, and it may sound like legalese that don't matter, but it matters when it comes to the biggest, most important purchase most Americans will make.

It just seems that particularly when people buy that first home and they don't really know much about how to do that—maybe they don't have a lot of political sophistication; they are 25 or 30 years old or whatever age they are—we shouldn't make it more complicated, we should make it less complicated. Bankers should not be incentivized only by how much money they make by writing more and more mortgages but instead should walk through what this is going to cost: Here is the escrow. Here is what your insurance costs. Here is what you are going to pay if you have a teaser rate. We are going to make some decisions, and this house may be a little too expensive for you because of that teaser rate, because of what you will be paying 3 years from now in addition to the escrow, the taxes and insurance that you hadn't really planned for.

Weakening a standard here or granting an exemption there will end up causing real pain for real families.

Growth in the housing sector is only sustainable if families can afford their loans and homes are maintained. I know families in my ZIP Code can't afford a repeat of the housing crisis. I know what it has done to my neighborhood. Some of them are still digging out.

Let's stop listening to the big-bank lobbyists and start listening to the people we serve, the families across this country who remember all too well what foreclosures and job losses mean to them.

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

FEBRUARY 13, 2018.

Hon. SHERROD BROWN,
Ranking Member, Senate Banking Committee,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR BROWN: You had requested my views on S. 2155, the "Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief and Consumer Protection Act". At the outset, I would like to commend the Senate Banking Committee leadership for developing this legislation on a bipartisan basis, and proceeding in the traditional way with hearings and a markup. I appreciate that much work has gone into negotiating its provisions, and I am highly supportive of most of them, particularly those reforms which give relief to community and regional institutions, as well as changes that would give consumers more control over their credit information.

Regrettably, the bill also includes Section 402 which would significantly weaken a key constraint on the use of excessive leverage by the largest financial institutions in the US. In these times of market volatility, I would strongly urge the Senate to reject this provision as imprudent and short-sighted. Now is the time we should be bolstering bank capital levels, not chipping away at them.

Banks operated with far too little capital during the run up to the 2008 financial crisis. In setting capital requirements, regulators erroneously judged certain activities—for instance mortgage securities, derivatives, and European sovereign debt—as having little, if any risk. Banks piled into these activities because regulators let them lever returns with borrowed money. The consequences were catastrophic.

Because their judgments about risk were so wide of the mark, regulators have made greater use of non-risk weighted standards since the crisis. The most important of these is the "supplemental leverage ratio" or "SLR"—a relatively simple metric which sets minimums for big banks' common equity as a percentage of their total assets and certain off-balance sheet exposures. In the US, the SLR has been set at 5% for the largest banking organizations (6% for their insured bank subsidiaries).

Section 402 is a seemingly innocuous provision which would exempt from the SLR deposits held at central banks by "custodian" banks. This includes deposits at the Federal Reserve (Fed), as well as the central banks of other Organization for the Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) members such as Turkey and Greece.

As originally introduced, Section 402 was limited to three so-called "custodian" banks, specialized banks which safeguard customer assets but do not engage in traditional commercial banking. However, during the markup, the Senate Banking Committee loosened the definition of "custodian" bank, potentially creating a gaping loophole as any bank arguably serves as "a custodian" of de-

positor money. Most big banks will likely press the Fed to let them benefit from Section 402, given the huge competitive advantage it would bestow. Data from the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) indicate that capital reductions for some banks could approach 30%.

The laudable goal of the sponsors of S. 2155 is to support economic growth. But it seems Section 402 will simply give banks more incentives to take on additional leverage by parking money with central banks, not making business and consumer loans. They can arbitrage the near-zero interest rates they pay on deposits with the 150 basis points they can get at the Fed. That's a nice, tidy margin that will grow even wider as the Fed raises rates this year.

Central bank deposits do not support lending in the real economy. They do include the extra reserves created by central banks when they intervene in the markets through things like quantitative easing, the practice of buying government and private securities to increase the money supply. If the goal of S. 2155's supporters is to facilitate monetary interventions, then that should be made clear. However, even assuming that is the purpose, there is no need for Section 402. The Fed already has substantial flexibility to temporarily ease capital requirements during times of economic stress. The Basel Committee, an international regulatory forum which includes central bank supervisors, has said that in times of exceptional macroeconomic circumstances central banks should have the flexibility to temporarily remove reserve deposits from the leverage ratio calculation to facilitate such interventions. Only the Brexit-challenged Bank of England has removed central bank deposits from its leverage calculation. Notably, it also made an upward adjustment in its ratio to mitigate the reduction in capital levels, something which S. 2155 does not do.

More fundamentally, why does Congress want to start designating banking activities as low or no risk, when expert financial regulators were so spectacularly wrong prior to the crisis? The SLR's key strength is that it does not reflect government judgments about risk. Central bank deposits may seem low risk, but where does this slippery slope end? The Treasury Department wants US government securities also removed from the leverage ratio, notwithstanding their significant interest rate risk. What's next? Housing agency debt? How about AAA corporate bonds? To the extent these instruments compete with central bank deposits for banks' liquid investments, Section 402 will put them at a competitive disadvantage unless they get similar treatment. It will also alter the competitive landscape as it provides a special capital break for big banks that does not apply to smaller institutions, an ironic result for a bill designed to help community and regional banks.

Before concluding, I would like to address some of the confusion surrounding this change, not surprising given the complexity of bank capital regulation. Assets of pension funds, mutual funds, endowments and other bank clients that are held in custody and invested under the control of those clients are already excluded from the SLR. Losses on those assets fall to the clients, not the bank. The SLR applies to funding, be they deposits or other borrowings, over which banks have control. Even though custody banks may not operate as traditional commercial lenders, they are highly systemic and have significant operational risk with many trillions under custody. They can also suffer losses on their investment portfolios, as they did during the crisis. As Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) Vice-Chair Tom Hoenig has pointed out, custodian banks were bor-

rowing from the Federal Reserve \$60 to \$90 billion dollars a day to cover funding shortfalls during that tumultuous time.

In the years following the crisis, custodian and other large, systemic banks have grown and remained profitable notwithstanding toughened capital rules. Indeed, the higher capital standards we imposed in the US relative to Europe have been key to our faster economic recovery. It is true that during times of market stress, deposits significantly increase at custodian banks. But this is true of all banks—FDIC insured deposits went up dramatically during the crisis. This is why risk-based capital rules have built in counter-cyclical buffers, and there would certainly be no harm in Congress recognizing the authority of bank regulators to provide capital accommodation in times of severe stress when deposits are increasing dramatically as investors seek out safety. This is authority I believe they already have.

Government judgments favoring one asset class over another inevitably distort markets. I would strongly encourage Congress not to embark down this path. The responsibility—and accountability—for capital rules should rest with the Fed and other bank regulators. Weakening capital rules now will undermine the resiliency of the banking system and heighten the risk of bank failures during the next downturn. This current recovery is already long in the tooth by historical standards. For now, growth is strong and banks are profitable, but that will eventually change. If anything, Congress should be encouraging banks and their regulators to increase capital buffers.

You had also requested my views on other aspects of S. 2155. As previously indicated, outside of Section 402, I am highly supportive of this bill with two caveats. First, in limiting the application of Enhanced Prudential Standards (EPS) Congress should take care not to weaken pre-Dodd-Frank authorities to utilize forward-looking supervisory tools and protect the deposit insurance fund. You would not want to inadvertently weaken supervisory tools that existed prior to the crisis. Second, I am troubled by Section 109 which would exempt many more lenders from escrow requirements for high-cost mortgage loans. Mandatory escrow of insurance and taxes for borrowers with troubled credit histories provide both consumer and safety and soundness benefits. Borrowers who have difficulty managing their finances may well have trouble making these essential payments on their own, forcing them to turn to high cost lenders to cover those costs when they come due, or worse, defaulting on their mortgage obligations. Moreover, administrative costs of escrow requirements are not high and certainly less than costs associated with default. To both protect consumers from the loss of their homes as well as the FDIC-insured banks from mortgage defaults, I would encourage Congress to leave current escrow requirements alone.

Sincerely,

SHEILA C. BAIR.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE
ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE,
Washington, DC, March 5, 2018.

Re NAACP Strong opposition to S. 2155, the Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief, and Consumer Protection Act.

THE HONORABLE,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR: On behalf of the NAACP, our nation's oldest, largest and most widely-recognized grassroots-based civil rights organization, I strongly urge you to oppose, work against, and vote "Nay" on passage of S. 2155, the mis-named Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief, and Consumer Protection

Act. This dangerous bill does irreparable damage to fair lending protections against racial discrimination; it harms homebuyers; and it contains over two deregulatory provisions of the financial services industry that were put into place after the 2008 global crises which led to a recession from which many American families and communities are still trying to recover.

Section 104 of the bill would exempt 85% of depository institutions from full reporting of loan data under the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA). This would devastate our attempts to determine—and potentially rectify—racially discriminatory lending or loan approval patterns at play. The HMDA dataset contains the most comprehensive publicly available information on mortgage market activity. Each fall, new HMDA data are made available. In 2016, almost 7,000 institutions released over 16 million records, making HMDA an invaluable administrative dataset on housing and homeownership for policymakers, regulators, and researchers.

Furthermore, S. 2155 provides exemptions from crucial mortgage lending protections for buyers of manufactured homes, such as mobile homes. These provisions would allow sellers of manufactured homes to overcharge customers and make the millions of Americans who wish to purchase a manufactured home more vulnerable to predatory lending practices similar to those which caused so many—too many—families to lose their homes in the 2008 crisis.

If we as a nation learned anything from the 2008 financial crisis, it is that American consumers need more information and protection, not less. Thus, I urge you to reject S. 2155 and to focus on policies and proposals to help the average American consumer. Thank you in advance for your attention to the position of the NAACP. Should you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me at my office.

Sincerely,

HILARY O. SHELTON,
Director, NAACP
Washington Bureau
& Senior Vice President
for Policy and Advocacy.

MARCH 8, 2018.

Re Oppose section 104, “The Home Mortgage Disclosure Act Adjustment”.

DEAR SENATOR: The undersigned civil rights, fair housing, consumer, and community organizations write to highlight our strong concerns with Section 104 of S. 2155, “the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act Adjustment and Study”. This section would undermine efforts to ensure that the nation’s mortgage lenders are serving all segments of the market fairly by exempting the vast majority of lenders from the updated reporting required by the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act (Dodd-Frank). Public officials use this information in distributing public-sector investments so as to attract private investment to areas where it is needed, and to identify possible discriminatory lending patterns.

THE DODD-FRANK ACT’S UPDATED HMDA REPORTING REFLECTS LESSONS FROM THE FINANCIAL CRISIS

In response to widespread concerns about predatory lending and opacity in the mortgage market in the run-up to and following the financial crisis, Congress amended the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA) to require both banks and non-bank lenders to disclose more information about their mortgage lending activities—updates finalized by the CFPB in 2015. Although not previously reported and disclosed through HMDA, these data points are already collected on a rou-

tine basis by banks, credit unions and for-profit mortgage companies in the normal course of business, either as a part of basic loan underwriting, for securitization or for other purposes required by law.

The CFPB Reduces the Reporting Burden on Small Lenders Without Sacrificing Data About Lending in Underserved Communities

After considering a number of higher reporting thresholds and receiving extensive feedback from all size and type of lending institutions, the CFPB adopted a standard that applies the new reporting requirements to institutions that made 25 closed-end mortgage loans or 100 open-end/home equity lines of credit (HELOCs). Importantly, in response to concerns raised by lenders and by some in Congress, the CFPB has already temporarily raised the reporting threshold for HELOCs to 500 through 2019, in order to further review the impact of the rule and what the permanent HELOC threshold should be. In adopting the HMDA thresholds, the agency balanced several Congressional interests—adopting a uniform and simplified reporting regime for banks and non-banks; eliminating the need for low-volume banks to report while maintaining sufficient data for analysis at the national, local, and institutional levels; and increasing visibility into the home mortgage lending practices of non-banks.

Section 104 upsets the careful balance: its proposed reporting thresholds—500 closed end loans or 500 open-end lines—would exempt the vast majority of the nation’s mortgage lenders from the updated requirements. Based on 2013 data, under the threshold set by the CFPB, 22 percent (1,400) of the depository institutions that currently report on their closed-end mortgages would be exempt. In contrast, if Section 104 is enacted, the agency estimates that 85 percent (5,400) of depositories and 48 percent of nondepositories (497) would not have to update reporting on their mortgages. This higher threshold would sacrifice key data about lending in underserved communities that would help to ensure the flow of credit to qualified borrowers, stimulate the economy, and prevent future mortgage crises.

Tiered Reporting Sacrifices Critical Data Without Reducing Lender Burden

Section 104 proposes to adopt a tiered reporting approach, exempting some lenders from reporting the new data points pursuant to the Dodd-Frank Act only. This is purportedly a way to reduce burden. However, because the data points covered by the rule are already collected by lenders, the burden associated with the rule is minimal. Further, as with any data collection effort, the primary driver of HMDA costs is in establishing and maintaining systems to collect and report data, and not the costs associated with collecting and reporting a particular data field. Therefore, this approach sacrifices critical information without relieving much of the purported HMDA reporting burden on banks or non-banks.

SECTION 104 WOULD UNDERMINE FAIR ACCESS TO MORTGAGE CREDIT

HMDA was passed in 1975 to provide the necessary tools to dismantle uneven access to mortgage credit and expand equal lending opportunities for qualified borrowers, yet important segments of the market continue to lack fair access. For people of color, low-to moderate-income families, and borrowers in rural areas, access to mortgage credit remains tight. While the numbers of loan originations have gone down for all borrowers, African Americans and Latinos have experienced the steepest declines. A Federal Reserve analysis of lending in rural areas has found higher denial rates in those commu-

nities since the housing crisis than in urban areas. The new data would help explain and inform responses to these lending gaps. A new HMDA data point on the applicant’s age is also vital information for evaluating age bias in lending, especially in conjunction with reverse mortgages.

The stark disparities in access to mortgage credit and the continued struggle for economic recovery in the communities hit hardest by the financial crisis call for a strengthening of our nation’s fair lending laws, specifically HMDA, not a weakening of them. Quite simply, the updated HMDA data will provide critical information about whether similarly situated borrowers and underserved communities are receiving equitable access to mortgage credit, data that we lacked a decade ago when the crisis hit. This is not the time to limit the nation’s ability to adequately assess the reasons for restricted credit access for underserved borrowers. Instead, we must increase efforts to address the causes behind the increased difficulty in accessing safe, affordable credit.

For these reasons and more, we urge you to oppose Section 104 and any other efforts to roll back the data collection and reporting as called for in Dodd-Frank and implemented by the CFPB. Should you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact Gerron Levi at the National Community Reinvestment Coalition.

Sincerely,

National Groups: Americans For Financial Reform, Center for Responsible Lending, Consumer Action, Consumer Federation of America, Equal Rights Center, Grounded Solutions Network, Housing Choice Partners, The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, Morningstar Urban Development, Incorporated, NAACP, National Community Reinvestment Coalition, National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development, People’s Action, National Fair Housing Alliance, National Housing Law Project, National Organization of African Americans in Housing, National Urban League, Public Counsel, Rural Community Assistance Corporation, Take Charge America, UnidosUS (Formerly NCLR).

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

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I rise to discuss S. 2155. It is called the Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief, and Consumer Protection Act. One would think from the title that I would be all for it, but as one who went through the drop in the economy when we were on the brink of collapse, I believe this is a very bad bill.

Let me go back to that time. Banks were teetering and over 300 would fail in the next 3 years. For perspective, only three banks had failed in the year of 2007. Unemployment was skyrocketing. We lost \$19 trillion in household wealth. Americans lost nearly 9 million jobs.

In my State of California, more than 2 million people were unemployed, 3½ million mortgages were at risk, and nearly 200,000 people filed for bankruptcy.

Now that the economy has recovered and unemployment has decreased from its high point of 10 percent during the crisis, I worry that my colleagues have forgotten the magnitude of this crisis. I simply cannot.

I remember sitting in caucuses hearing from our top financial officials about the potential for a total collapse of our economy. Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner testified to the House Financial Services Committee that “our financial system failed to do its job and came precariously close to failing altogether.” That is not an exaggeration. For those of us who were here, who listened to the economists, who heard what was happening, we feared a total collapse. Personal conversations I had with these economists carried the most dire warnings. We should never get close to that point again.

Congress spent more than \$400 billion on something labeled TARP, Troubled Asset Relief Program, to help stabilize the economy. It was very controversial at the time, but we have since recouped more than we spent on that bank program.

Congress then passed the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act in 2010, putting in place policies to prevent another financial crisis, including strong protections on the largest banks. Now, just 8 years later—how quickly we forget—we are considering loosening these protections.

Have we forgotten the lessons from 10 years ago and the devastating consequences for American families?

As with any bill we pass, I am open to looking at how it has been implemented and making adjustments as needed. For Dodd-Frank, I agree that community banks and credit unions shouldn't be regulated the same way as the largest banks in the country. I am open to adjusting some of these regulations for them, but this bill simply goes too far. It goes beyond targeted relief for small institutions.

The nonpartisan CBO, Congressional Budget Office, says the probability of a large bank failing or another financial crisis will go up if this bill is enacted. One provision I am particularly worried about would roll back regulations and supervision for banks with assets between \$50 billion and \$250 billion. These aren't just small community banks we are talking about. Instead, this would apply to some of the largest banks in our country.

Paul Volcker, the former chairman of the Federal Reserve, wrote that Countrywide, National City, and GMAC were all below \$250 billion and “required billions of dollars in official capital assistance and debt guarantees either for themselves or their acquiring institutions.”

Here is what Phil Angelides, who served as chairman of the Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, said about this particular provision:

The bill's provisions to lift the asset threshold for enhanced prudential standards

and supervision from \$50 billion to \$250 billion would substantially reduce oversight over 25 of the nation's 38 largest banks, including institutions of over \$100 billion in assets that were deemed “Too Big to Fail” in 2009.

A number of financial institutions with less than \$250 billion triggered the need for bailout assistance during the crisis and history has shown, time and time again, that the failure of financial firms that are not among the largest mega-banks can pose systemic threats to financial stability.

In addition to weakening these requirements, the bill can also weaken capital requirements for even the largest banks.

Sheila Bair, former Chair of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, said this could lead up to a 30-percent capital reduction at some banks. Just think of that. She also raises a question that we should all take a moment to reflect on: Why does Congress want to start designating banking activities as low or no risk, when expert financial regulators were so wrong prior to the crisis?

Finally, this bill would amend the SAFE Act that I authored to ensure mortgage brokers and lenders meet minimum standards. This was necessary to curb the abusive lending practices we saw leading up to the financial crisis in which many consumers were taken advantage of through predatory lending.

This was a serious problem in California. Between March and June of 2008, 406 defendants were charged in 144 mortgage fraud-related cases, and approximately \$1 billion in losses were attributed to these fraudulent acts.

The SAFE Act created a new system of registration and licensing that included background checks, education requirements, and testing to ensure that mortgage brokers and lenders could meet basic standards.

The bill before us, interestingly enough, would allow mortgage loan originators to operate without a license—without a license—for up to 120 days if they move from a bank to a nonbank or across State lines. Allowing this transition period without ensuring that lenders have passed the licensing test we required in the SAFE Act weakens the protections we put in place for consumers.

Before I conclude, I want to say that I appreciate this is a bipartisan bill. It has gone through the Banking Committee. I also understand the interest in ensuring regulations are appropriately tailored to the size and activity of financial institutions, but I am really worried that Members here have become too comfortable in our economic recovery and have forgotten where the path of deregulation ends.

I oppose this bill because it simply goes too far in deregulating some of our largest institutions and weakening the protections we put in place to prevent another financial crisis.

If we don't learn from past failures, we are doomed to repeat them.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the letter of Phil Angelides.

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

Sacramento, CA, March 5, 2018.

Re S. 2155.

Hon. MIKE CRAPO,
*Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on Banking,
Housing, and Urban Affairs, Washington,
DC.*

Hon. SHERROD BROWN,
*Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on
Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs,
Washington, DC.*

I am writing this letter to express my strong opposition to S. 2155 by Senator Crapo which would weaken the financial system safeguards and taxpayer and consumer protections put in place in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis. The provisions of the bill, particularly when coupled with the clearly expressed deregulatory agenda of the Trump Administration and its key financial regulators, will once again put us on the path of exposing American taxpayers, our financial system, and our economy to significant risk.

As Chairman of the Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, which conducted the nation's official inquiry into the causes of the financial crisis, I am deeply troubled by the potential passage of this legislation, considering the magnitude of the economic and human damage caused by the crisis and the effectiveness of post-crisis reforms in stabilizing our financial system and economy. That the Senate is taking up this bill on the floor at this time is particularly astounding given that next week will mark the 10th anniversary of the collapse of Bear Stearns, one of the seminal events in the unraveling of our financial markets that plunged our nation into the Great Recession.

Before the financial crisis abated, the federal government and the nation's taxpayers provided trillions of dollars of financial assistance through two dozen separate programs, including the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP), to bail out Wall Street. Even with this historic and unprecedented government response, the consequences of the crisis were dire. Millions lost their jobs and their homes, cities and towns across the nation were devastated, and trillions of dollars in wealth were stripped away from hard working families and businesses. The aspirations of millions of Americans were crushed in the financial assault on our nation, with all too many families and regions still struggling today from the fall-out of the crisis.

Without any compelling public policy rationale—other than the deceptive guise of aiding regional and community banks—this bill now seeks to undo key bulwarks of public protection designed to avert future crises. Indeed, its provisions would put us on the road to re-creating conditions that the FCIC concluded led to the 2008 crisis. While the bill purports to be the “Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief, and Consumer Protection Act”, only the “regulatory relief” portion of its title bears any relationship to reality. Like the “Commodity Futures Modernization Act of 2000”, which ensured that over-the-counter derivatives would remain hidden in a dark market, or the House “Financial CHOICE Act”, which would eviscerate the Dodd-Frank financial reforms, S. 2155's benign name deliberately obscures its detrimental effects.

Below are just some of my specific concerns with the legislation.

First, the bill's provisions to lift the asset threshold for enhanced prudential standards and supervision from \$50 billion to \$250 billion would substantially reduce oversight over 25 of the nation's 38 largest banks, including institutions of over \$100 billion in assets that were deemed “Too Big To Fail” in

2009. A number of financial institutions with less than \$250 billion triggered the need for bailout assistance during the crisis and history has shown, time and again, that the failure of financial firms that are not among the largest mega-banks can pose systemic threats to financial stability. While the bill purports to allow the Federal Reserve to “reach back” to institutions with more than \$100 billion in assets, those provisions would be legally difficult to implement, given the likelihood of financial industry litigation; undermine the very purpose of having enhanced prudential standards in place prior to the emergence of risks; and undercut the Federal Reserve’s current broad authority to impose such standards.

Secondly, while existing law allows the Federal Reserve to tailor financial stability rules for banks over \$50 billion in assets, this bill would now require the Federal Reserve to do so for the banks still subject to enhanced prudential standards—those with assets over \$250 billion. There is legitimate concern that this change, from “may” to “shall”, will be implemented to reduce scrutiny of the 13 biggest banks in our nation.

Third, the bill will weaken stress testing of major financial institutions by, among other things, reducing the timeframe for testing from semi-annually for the nation’s biggest banks to “periodically”, which could be as infrequently as once every three years. What public purpose could possibly be served by diminishing the understanding by regulators of how major financial institutions would fare in the event of adverse financial and economic conditions?

Fourth, as Secretary Mnuchin himself has indicated, the legislation is likely to be implemented in a manner that deregulates 10 foreign megabanks—including but not limited to firms such as Credit Suisse and Deutsche Bank—heighening the risk that those banks could infect and debilitate our nation’s financial system.

Fifth, the bill would punch a new hole in leverage ratios, leading to a substantial reduction in required capital at certain large banks, a troubling reversal of the drive toward stronger capital requirements in the wake of the crisis. The need for enhanced capital at major financial institutions has been one of the areas of broadest consensus emanating from the 2008 meltdown. It should also be noted that this proposal is wholly outside the realm of the bill’s stated purpose of aiding regional and community banks.

Finally, this bill begins to chip away at the post-crisis reforms made to the woeful mortgage lending standards that the FCIC found to be a primary cause of the crisis. There is no sound policy rationale or good public purpose served by exempting most financial institutions from reporting mortgage lending data which they already collect; eliminating escrow requirements for subprime loans; or giving lenders a liability shield for adjustable rate mortgages underwritten at low teaser rates.

Based on the above concerns, I urge the Senate to reject S. 2155. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

PHIL ANGELIDES,
Chairman, Financial Crisis Inquiry
Commission (2009–2011).

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. 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. 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.

SIGNING AUTHORITY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be authorized to sign duly enrolled bills or joint resolutions on Tuesday, March 13, 2018.

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

FIX NICS BILL

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, just 2 days ago, the White House announced its plans to reduce gun violence in our Nation’s schools. This is an important issue, and the White House’s recommendations should be taken seriously. I certainly do.

The President’s blueprint attempts to address this pervasive problem from multiple angles during what has been a period of heightened tension and discord across the country. Parents and children continue to grapple every day with the aftermath of the shooting at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL. But, of course, the problem didn’t start with that single event and what I think can only be fairly called a catastrophic failure across the board, which resulted in this terrible tragedy.

One important piece of the White House plan is to train school staffers. The President strongly supports a bill introduced by the senior Senator from Utah that would authorize funding for school safety improvements. You wouldn’t think that would be controversial. Those school safety improvements include training efforts, school threat assessment, and crisis intervention teams. This bill is called the STOP School Violence Act. We ought to pass it, and we ought to pass it today.

As Senator HATCH said last week, there has been little disagreement but a lot of discussion and debate and not much legislative progress. He said: “To break the impasse, we must unite on the issues where we agree.”

I couldn’t agree with Senator HATCH more. We must unite on the issues where we can agree. One of those issues relates to a bill that I have introduced with the junior Senator from Connecticut, Mr. MURPHY, to improve background checks on gun purchases.

NICS is the National Instant Criminal Background Check System. As of earlier today, the bill called Fix NICS now has 69 cosponsors. That is nine votes more than we need in order to pass legislation, so clearly we could and should get it done.

The numbers speak for themselves: 32 Republicans and 36 Democrats want to strengthen the National Instant Criminal Background Check System. Why? Because we want to save lives.

There have been some who have come to the floor and have said in public comments: Well, we want to do more.

Well, God bless you. I hope that we will have other ideas presented that could do even more, but we know this has the political support and the critical mass we need to get this done in the Senate and to get it done now.

The reason this particular legislation is supported by so many Senators is, essentially, that it enforces current law. In other words, current law states that a felon—a person convicted of a felony in any court in the Nation—cannot buy or possess a firearm. It also says that a person who has committed and been convicted of an act of domestic violence cannot purchase or possess a firearm. If you entered the country illegally, you cannot possess or purchase a firearm, and so on and so forth. There are also provisions that if you have been adjudicated as a person with mental illness, you cannot legally purchase or possess a firearm. The problem is that many States and the Federal Government have done a very poor job of uploading the appropriate information into the FBI’s National Instant Criminal Background Check System, so there are gaps in the system.

The most notable one recently occurred in Sutherland Springs, TX, outside of San Antonio, where 26 people were killed and 20 more were injured by a gunman who purchased the guns illegally. He lied on his background check and, sadly, the Federal Government had failed to discharge its duty to upload the appropriate information, which would have revealed that at the point of sale. I am convinced that those 26 people who are dead would be alive today and the 20 more who were wounded would not have been shot if an appropriate background check system had been in place. We have reached critical mass, and I believe we are at a tipping point.

I believe the public is demanding that we do something. That is what we usually hear when these mass shootings occur. People say: Well, do something.

My question is, OK, what is it that you want us to do?

This is something concrete and specific. It enjoys broad political support and will save lives, so I believe it is worth doing, and it is worth doing today, if possible.

TAX REFORM

Mr. President, the other topic I want to address is the legislation that was signed into law in December called the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. That is the formal name of the comprehensive overhaul of our Nation’s Tax Code. The tax change we made was a change in the law that doubled the standard deduction, meaning that for the first \$24,000 a married couple earns, they will pay zero income tax. It doubled the child tax credit. It lowered tax rates across the board, and for the first time in a long time, it made the United States more competitive when it comes to attracting investment and businesses around the globe.

(Mr. CRUZ assumed the Chair.)

We know that our Tax Code had been a self-inflicted wound. With the highest tax rate in the world, businesses were moving offshore to lower tax jurisdictions—such as Ireland, for example—in order to avoid the highest taxes here in

the United States. We changed that by lowering the business tax rate to attract people to bring that money back to the United States rather than leaving it overseas.

Today, I want to briefly mention one of several portions of the law that is frequently overlooked. They don't steal the headlines, but they actually deserve more recognition.

The one I am thinking of is the one sponsored by the junior Senator from South Carolina, Mr. SCOTT, called the Investing in Opportunity Act. Importantly, this measure helps incentivize long-term private investment in communities that need it most. That is why it is called the Investing in Opportunity Act. It provides a new way for investors across the Nation to pool their resources through newly created opportunity funds established specifically for making investment in economically distressed communities, so designated by State Governors.

As any businessperson will tell you, private capital formation is a necessary ingredient for planting the seeds of job creation and opportunity. Our economically distressed communities need this sort of investment, and this provision of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act makes that possible and more likely.

That is just one of the provisions we need to keep reminding folks back home about because they get so much disinformation, and, of course, there is so much information coming at us that it easily gets lost in the day-to-day shuffle. These are important provisions, and I think they bear some emphasis.

The Presiding Officer and I have the great privilege of representing 28 million Texans. He and I hear from them from time to time on the legislation we pass. On the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, I heard from Pam from Amarillo, TX. She prefers that her last name not be mentioned, and I will certainly respect that. She thought she had made a mistake when she was figuring out her payroll at her company at the end of February. Because the pay increases to employees were just that big, she thought she had made a mistake. She said the differences in withholding were "significant" and a real "boost in salary."

Similarly, we heard from Glenda from Midland, TX, who wrote to me recently. Glenda has been retired since 2013, which, she reminded me, means that she is living on a fixed income with no possibility of pay increases or year-end bonuses. That doesn't mean she is not grateful for the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. She said that the reduction in her income taxes feels like a raise, even though she is retired and living on a fixed income.

She took the critics to task for calling her additional income crumbs. She said that maybe to them it is crumbs, but "every single dollar makes a difference" to her. She called the effects of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act an "absolute blessing."

I want to express my gratitude to Glenda and Pam for sharing their stories because I think it is really important to make sure that the facts get out.

According to what the Bureau of Labor Statistics said last week, Midland—where Glenda lives—had the largest employment increase in the country over the last year. This past January in Midland, the increase was 10.4 percent. In Texas, they also had the lowest unemployment rate of 2.4 percent, a significant decrease from 4 percent at the same time last year.

Of course, as the Presiding Officer and I know, Midland is the epicenter of energy production, and they are basically trying to get as many people as are willing to work on the jobs that produce energy to fuel our economy. Glenda is actually a part of a larger story that involves not only the place she calls home but also the entire country.

After years of economic stagnation, Americans are finally getting some good economic news. In February, the U.S. economy added 313,000 jobs—313,000 jobs. That is about one-third of a million. The unemployment rate is at a 17-year low, and it would have been even lower but for the fact that the number of people actually in the workforce increased by 806,000 in February alone. Let me say that again. The reason the unemployment rate actually didn't dip statistically lower from 4.1 percent is that 800,000-plus Americans reentered the workforce. To me, that is a remarkable statistic and a reason for hope that our economy will continue to grow and people will continue to find work, provide for their families, and pursue their dreams.

Since January of last year, our economy has added nearly 3 million jobs. Consumer confidence is at the highest level since 2000. The good news is that it is happening not because the Federal Government is spending the money but because the people who are actually earning it are getting the money and spending it as they see fit.

Glenda and Pam are just two of the examples I have mentioned, but they are proof that spirits are high, people are hopeful, and the economy is gaining force.

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.

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

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

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:34 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled

when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PORTMAN).

ECONOMIC GROWTH, REGULATORY RELIEF, AND CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. HELLER. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to express my strong support for the legislation we are debating, which will restore economic opportunity, create jobs, help businesses grow, and help every Nevadan as they work to achieve the American dream.

As a member of the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, I can tell you that this legislation is years in the making, and I wish to thank the chairman of the committee, Senator CRAPO, and my fellow colleagues who are on the committee for their efforts to get us where we are today.

For years the economy had been growing slowly after the great recession. It was like a truck with a bad transmission. It was moving, but it wasn't going anywhere fast. Today everything has changed. The American economy has been primed, the engine has been started, and through the work of the Senate and President Trump, the gas pedal has been hit, and our economy is finally going full speed ahead.

Just a few months ago, we passed historic tax cuts for Nevada families and for Nevada businesses. A typical Nevada family of four will roughly get a \$2,200 tax cut. We lowered the individual rates across the board and doubled the standard deduction used by most Nevadans, allowing them to keep more of their paycheck. This bill also included my efforts to double the child tax credit, from \$1,000 to \$2,000, further easing the tax burden on working families.

Overall, these tax cuts accomplish my three major goals of creating more jobs, increasing wages, and making America more competitive around the world. I am proud to have worked on these tax cuts, but Congress can do more. That is why we are here today.

The Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief, and Consumer Protection Act we are debating is the next major step that we must take to shift our economy into another gear. This bipartisan bill tailors financial regulations to protect consumers and help Nevadans have more access to financial resources and more access to economic opportunities. It will give Nevadans more choices when it comes to finding a loan to buy a house, to buy a car to get to work, to start a business, and, for that matter, to grow their business. Finally, this bill helps to ensure that local lenders can grow their services for every community in Nevada.

This is the oil in the economic engine. It keeps not only cities like Las Vegas, Henderson, and Reno running but all communities in Nevada, such as Mesquite, Pahrump, Carson City,

Fallon, Elko, and Ely. This bill includes many bipartisan proposals that I fought for. I am pleased that the legislation I offered with Senator MENENDEZ to ease workforce mobility for mortgage loan officers who wish to move to Nevada or to change jobs is included in the base text.

In committee I offered an amendment that was based off of legislation I worked on with Senator WARNER that would require the regulators for credit unions to publish their annual budgets and to hold a public hearing on that budget. It would increase public transparency and ensure that Nevada credit union members have a voice in Washington, DC.

Working with my friend Senator TESTER, we were able to include language to increase congressional oversight of the Federal Reserve and the Treasury Department in order to ensure that our best interests are represented at international insurance discussions on capital standards.

I was also pleased that language authored by Senators PERDUE, TESTER, DONNELLY, and myself was incorporated to require consumer credit bureaus to provide free and timely security credit freezes to all consumers. It also requires credit bureaus to provide consumers a notice at any time of their consumer rights and for the credit bureaus to tell consumers on their websites that they have a right to request a security freeze, fraud alert, and an Active-Duty military fraud alert.

Additionally, this bill includes the Community Lender Exam Act that I co-led with Senator DONNELLY, which would allow more highly rated community lenders to be examined every 18 months instead of 12 months. This will help safe and sound local lenders to direct more of their time and capital to Nevada communities and ensure the same level of regulatory supervision.

With this bill we are seeing something rare in Washington, DC—Democrats and Republicans working together to help Americans have more economic opportunities. Let me say that again. This bill will help Americans have more economic opportunities. That is why I am here in the Senate—to give every Nevadan the opportunity to live the fullest life and to achieve their goals. I look forward to voting to support this legislation, and I would encourage all of my colleagues to do the same.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. HEITKAMP. 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. HEITKAMP. Mr. President, I am here to discuss the merits of S. 2155, a bill that I have been working on since coming to the Senate in 2013. It is a bill

that addresses the concerns of rural financial institutions, particularly those in our rural communities. It is a bill that was drafted to address access to capital concerns and the consolidation of small banks in areas where I live, which is in the State of North Dakota. It is a bill that I am incredibly proud of. I know that there have been a lot of statements made about this bill in the last week, and I am here to set a lot of those straight.

Before I start, I wish to talk about what it is like in rural communities where I grew up. I find it interesting when I hear that this bill is about Wall Street banks and big bank bailouts. The last time I checked, Lincoln State Bank, which is my small community bank in the community where I went to high school, in Hankinson, ND, is not on the Fortune 500. It is not on the Fortune 100. It is a small community bank that has been operating and has been available to consumers in my community to help them achieve their family goals, achieve their farming goals, and achieve their needs for capital going forward.

I don't recognize the bill that is being debated here in the U.S. Senate because it is not the bill that has been written, and it is not the bill that is hopefully going to pass the Senate. I don't think that it is any mistake, when you look at the five primary sponsors of this bill—the five of us who wrote this bill—that most of us are from predominantly rural States. I think we understand the needs of those living in our States and the needs of those living in our rural communities.

When you look at an opportunity to fix regulation and to respond to concerns that people have, one of the constant arguments that I get when I go home is this: There is no longer any common sense in Washington, DC. They don't understand where we live. They don't understand who we are. They don't understand that we live in communities and that we support and protect each other. Instead, they write one regulation that is supposed to be one-size-fits-all.

That is certainly not what this is. This is an attempt to write a bill that would give direction to the Federal regulators so that small banks could be treated as small banks and so that large banks could continue to be regulated and treated as the large, systemically significant institutions that they are.

I will give just a few statistics that I think everybody should understand.

Thirty years ago, there were approximately 14,000 banks in the United States. Today, there are approximately 5,000. Since the passage of Dodd-Frank, the United States has lost about 14 percent of its smallest banks. Meanwhile, the small banks' share of U.S. domestic deposits and banking assets has decreased, and the five largest U.S. banks, which don't benefit from our bill, appear to have absorbed much of this market share.

What I have said consistently is that Dodd-Frank was supposed to have stopped too big to fail, but the net result has been too small to succeed. The big banks have gotten bigger since the passage of Dodd-Frank, and the small banks have disappeared. They have retreated from their traditional role of relationship lending, first out of fear for regulation in that they might be doing something wrong and then out of fear of the cost of regulation if they are going to work towards compliance.

I will make one simple point. This bill was not written by Wall Street bankers, and it was not written by Wall Street lobbyists. If it had been, it would have been a completely different bill in that it would actually provide relief to Wall Street banks and Wall Street bankers, but it does exactly the opposite. It will give relief to those institutions, whether they be regional banks or small community banks, that can be effective competition for the largest institutions in this country.

It is absolutely essential that we set the record straight that this bill is to get our relationship institutions—whether they be credit unions or banks or our regional institutions that are not doing anything more sophisticated than the work that is being done in our small community banks—the regulatory relief that they need to effectively compete against the biggest banks in this country and to tailor our regulations, to set our regulations, in a way that reflects the common sense of American citizens.

I will take a minute because I think a lot of things that have been said about this bill have been incredibly reckless. These inaccurate claims, if left unchallenged and undiscussed, will create the legislative history of this bill, which could, in fact, then be used by many of the same institutions that we believe are not affected by this bill to argue that they are entitled to some sort of protection. We can't let that happen.

First, let me start by saying this is not a giveaway to Wall Street. It is not a giveaway to the largest institutions. Our bipartisan bill makes targeted, commonsense fixes so as to provide tangible relief to community banks and credit unions so that they can lend to borrowers in rural America and support rural communities. It leaves in place rules and regulations that hold Wall Street accountable. In fact, the big banks aren't necessarily happy with this bill because it doesn't benefit them much.

When we asked the current regulators, such as Fed Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell—he basically said that he believes the bill gives the regulators the tools they need to continue to protect and prevent against financial collapse.

Let me say how the bill doesn't help the largest institutions.

It will not make any significant changes to the regulations that face the largest Wall Street banks. They

will continue to be reined in from causing havoc to the financial system like they did during the financial crisis. It will not make any structural changes to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. It will be allowed to continue to protect consumers. It will do nothing to weaken or repeal the Volcker rule. The only institutions that will be given any relief from the Volcker rule will be those banks that have under \$10 billion in assets. That is not JPMorgan; that is not Citibank; that is not Goldman Sachs; that is not the largest of institutions. Those institutions of \$10 billion or less are the only institutions that will get relief from the Volcker rule. It also does not change the way the Federal Reserve regulates foreign banks.

Second, this bill will not lead to another mortgage lending crisis.

Let's just go back and examine what happened in 2008. We had a significant number of liar loans—subprime lending—which drove the mortgage market. That was troublesome and problematic in and of itself, but the real problem came when those mortgages were securitized and sold into the secondary market. That is where the trouble began. It was trouble enough that they were putting institutions in jeopardy, but they were passing along that risk to the public through these securitized products—derivatives. Guess what. When the whole thing collapsed, we looked behind, and we saw these risky mortgage loans. We saw what actually created some of the problems on the front end before it was securitized.

Nothing in this bill changes qualified mortgage standards. Nothing in this bill removes the protections that Dodd-Frank has provided to the secondary market. The only thing this bill does as it relates to mortgages is to say to those small institutions, which are the small community banks that I am familiar with, that they can make mortgages without worrying about the qualified mortgage standards. They can go ahead and do that. The one thing they can't do is sell those mortgages into the secondary market. They have to keep those mortgages on the books.

When you have a requirement that they keep them on the books, do you really, honestly believe that these institutions are going to take unnecessary risks? The answer is no. Guess what. They didn't take unnecessary risks before 2008. They did not cause this problem, but they are incurring the bulk of the expenses to fix this problem.

To suggest that we are, in fact, risking the financial security of this country—of our institutions—because we gave a small, discrete break on mortgages to the smallest of institutions, which have to keep these mortgages in portfolio, is absurd. If you don't believe me, let's look at what Congressman Barney Frank, one of the architects of Dodd-Frank, said yesterday. He said, "Nothing in this bill in any way weak-

ens the prohibition about making shaky loans to people with weak credit and then packaging them into a security."

Our bill restores the balance for small community banks in the mortgage business without opening the door to excesses and predatory lending standards that led to the financial crisis. To suggest otherwise is disingenuous and simply not true. We have to push back against this idea that somehow we are rolling back the clock. In fact, in this same interview, Congressman Barney Frank said that about 95 percent of Dodd-Frank, as it is written, will remain intact after this bill passes—95 percent. You would not believe that to listen to the dialogue and the diatribe we have heard on the floor.

The third misstatement is that we will somehow scrap the rules for the largest Wall Street banks and allow regional banks with up to \$250 billion in assets to follow the same rules and regulations as the tiny community banks.

Again, this is not true. Far from scrapping the rules, our bill simply provides that the Federal Reserve has the ability to tailor one piece of Dodd-Frank, and that is the section 165 regulations. For certain regional lenders, that means that if they do not pose systemic risk, they will not be subject to the requirements of section 165. Yet, if the Fed determines that they could, as in the case, as you have heard, of Countrywide—if there is another Countrywide out there and the Fed discovers another Countrywide—it can, in fact, include that institution in section 165.

So let's not exaggerate the impact of this bill. Let's talk about how we have moved the assumption from \$50 billion or \$100 billion to \$250 billion in terms of what is systemically risky, knowing that the Fed can always go back and include smaller institutions if they, in fact, see the challenges.

The other thing that we need to point out about the Dodd-Frank regulations and consistent regulations in moving forward is that our bill still requires very rigorous stress testing for these regional institutions. Regional institutions would have to have the ability to meet those stress tests.

At his confirmation hearing, Chairman Powell called the framework of this bill a sensible one, and he affirmed that he would like to continue meaningful and frequent stress tests on banks between \$100 billion and \$250 billion, as provided for in this bill, while he confirmed that it is not necessary to stress test the smaller banks. I think that this position is supported, again, by Janet Yellen, who said, "I do think it's appropriate to tailor regulations to the system footprint of the financial organization" and called our bipartisan Senate bill "a move in a direction that we think would be good."

Moreover, our bill does not change the risk-based capital and leverage regime for these regional institutions under the Basel III reforms. Relatedly,

our bill does not change the fact that the comprehensive capital analysis and review—what we call CCAR—applies to these regional banks. Of course, the Fed has said it will continue to implement enhanced prudential standards.

In addition to stress tests that are required under this bill for some banks over \$100 billion, we have all of these other requirements and the requirement that they continue to meet qualified mortgage standards. They can sell these mortgages into the secondary market if they meet those standards.

It is critically important that we be very clear about what this bill does and does not do for our midsized or regional institutions.

The fourth and probably the most hurtful of the claims that have been made is that those of us who care deeply about preventing and eliminating discrimination in lending have somehow opened the door to allow for discrimination in lending by changing the HMDA standards. That is an outrageous claim and particularly hurtful for the Members of this body who have spent their lives fighting discrimination. I want to talk about the facts.

Our bill continues to require that all lenders, no matter the size, collect the traditional HMDA data, which includes information on race, gender, and ethnicity. Contrary to what some have said, our bill only relaxes the new, additional data requirements for some of the smallest lenders in the country—those that make less than 500 loans a year. This data only makes up 3.5 percent of all of the data collected under HMDA. Think about that. We are claiming that people are discriminating and allowing for discrimination because we are relaxing the standards for the smallest institutions, and it only amounts to 3.5 percent of the total data collected—3.5 percent. This is an outrageous statement, and it is needs to be corrected on the record.

You might ask, why even change the 3.5? For those small institutions, the 44 pages of data that they are required to collect—it may, in fact, be that they no longer are interested in doing those kinds of mortgages.

So it is very important that we correct the record. In fact, I asked Chairman Powell during a recent Banking Committee hearing to clarify whether he believed the change in S. 2155 would result in or lead to additional discrimination in lending. He said that he did not believe that it in any way would affect their ability to enforce the fair lending laws in this country.

Fifth, some have inaccurately alleged that the change from "may" to "shall" in the tailoring is a dangerous provision that empowers big banks to secure more favorable treatment from the government. I think that claim does not stand up to scrutiny.

First, it is common sense that we should tailor Federal regulations so they are implemented in a practical and effective way. Second, in our bill, we retain the broad rule of construction under section 165, which provides

the Federal Reserve with wide latitude to tailor prudential standards to any company or category of companies based on any risk the Fed deems appropriate—pretty broad authority on the part of the Federal Government. Third, in the event of a lawsuit, the Fed would be given strong deference by the courts to interpret what might apply to section 165.

Sixth, our bill would not open up targeted reforms to the supplementary leverage ratio beyond the three custody banks. Under the plain reading of this bill, the three custody banks are the only three institutions that are predominantly engaged in the custody business. Of course, the regulators retain the discretion to make appropriate adjustments to SLR.

To be clear, there is broad agreement among regulators that the unique business model of custody banks warrants tailored treatment of the SLR provision. That is why a substantially similar bill passed the House Financial Services Committee—no lighthearted people there on the minority side—by a vote of 60 to 0.

Finally, our bill will not gut oversight of foreign megabanks operating in the United States such as Barclays and Deutsche Bank. These three institutions, all of which have over \$250 billion in assets, will be subject to section 165 of Dodd-Frank. That means foreign banks will still be subject to foreign bank stress test requirements, liquidity stress testing, and strict Basel III capital requirements.

Our bill does not change the Fed's requirement that large foreign banks establish an intermediate holding company in the United States, which subjects foreign banks' U.S. operations to requirements similar to those imposed on U.S. banks.

Chairman Powell at the March Senate Banking Committee hearing was asked about this, and he said he did not believe this bill would exempt foreign banks from tough oversight under Dodd-Frank. Additionally, the substitute amendment for this bill has affirmed that large foreign banks do not escape Dodd-Frank supervision.

I think it is really important that we debate the actual merits of this bill and not the "boogeyman" merits—the statements that this bill will somehow lead to a catastrophic downfall of our financial system. As I said, even Barney Frank disagrees with that evaluation of this bill.

It is important we set the record straight on what this bill does and does not do and that we make sure that when a court is reviewing this provision—if, in fact, there is ever litigation—that the court has a record to go to on the floor of the Senate and in the committee which corrects misstatements and refocuses the bill on what the actual intended outcome is and how the bill was actually written.

So with that, I will yield the floor, but I will say I intend to submit a document for the RECORD in the next dis-

cussion, which, hopefully, will provide a written document outlining the myth versus the facts of this bill so we can have an actual record that the courts can look to that documents the intent and the purpose of this legislation beyond the hyperbole and overstatement that we have heard.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. WARREN. 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. WARREN. Thank you, Mr. President.

I have come to the floor of the Senate five times over the past week to talk about how the bank lobbyist act puts American families in danger of getting punched in the gut in another financial crisis. I have talked about how it rolls back consumer protections and how, if it passes, 25 of the 40 largest banks in this country—banks that sucked down, collectively, almost \$50 billion in bailout money during the crisis, and nobody went to jail—can be regulated like tiny, little community banks.

I talked about how the bill will roll back the rules on the very biggest banks in this country—JPMorgan Chase, Citigroup, and the rest of them—banks that broke our economy in 2008, banks where no one went to jail, banks where taxpayers coughed up \$180 billion to bail them out. I talked about how Washington is poised to make the same mistake it has made many times before deregulating giant banks while the economy is cruising, only to set the stage for another financial crisis.

Now, I am not the only one who has talked about problems with this bill. The Wall Street Journal, Bloomberg, the FDIC, the Congressional Budget Office, the NAACP, the Urban League have all talked about parts of this bill that cause problems and would cause problems in our economy.

Today, I want to talk about another part of the bill that keeps me awake at night—the part that guts our ability to find and go after mortgage discrimination by exempting 85 percent of banks from reporting data about the loans they make under a law called the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act or HMDA.

There is a long and shameful history in this country of discriminating against communities of color when they try to buy homes. From 1934 to 1968, the Federal Housing Administration led the charge, actively discriminating by refusing to insure loans to qualified buyers while helping White families finance their plans to achieve the American dream. This policy was not a secret. Nope. It was not the product of a handful of racist government

officials. Nope. It was the official policy of the U.S. Government until 1968—in my lifetime and the lifetime of 90 Senators who serve today. The official policy of this government was to help White people buy homes and to deny that help to Black people. Because the Federal Government had set this standard, private lenders enthusiastically followed Washington's lead.

Homes are the way that millions of working families built some economic security. They pay down a mortgage and own an asset that over time often appreciates. A home serves as security to fund other ventures—to start a small business or to send a youngster to college. If Grandma and Grandpa could hang on to the home and get it paid off, they can often pass along an asset that boosts the finances of the next generation and the one after that.

That is exactly what White people have done for generations—but not Black people. Systematically, over many decades, government policies that encouraged mortgage companies to lend only to White borrowers cut the legs out from under minority families trying to build some family wealth, and the result has been exactly what you would predict. It has contributed to a staggering gap of wealth between White communities and communities of color today. One statistic from Massachusetts, according to the Boston Globe, states that the median net worth of White families living in Boston is \$247,500, and the median net worth for a Black family is \$8. That is something all Americans, regardless of race, should be ashamed of.

When I was traveling around the country in the aftermath of the financial crisis, it became clear to me that the crash had made the problem worse. Subprime lenders that had peddled mortgages full of tricks and traps had specifically targeted minority borrowers. That meant that during the great recession, a huge number of minority borrowers lost their homes. When rising home prices helped White Americans regain some financial security, communities of color, with their lower homeownership rates and their higher foreclosure rates, were often left behind.

Again, this is just one example. According to Pew, between 2010 and 2013, the median wealth of White households grew by 2.4 percent, but the wealth of Hispanic households in that same time fell by 14.3 percent, and the wealth of African-American households fell by 33.7 percent.

Mortgage discrimination didn't end in the 1960s when formal redlining policies were abolished. It didn't end with the tightening of mortgage rules following the financial crisis. Lending discrimination is still alive and well in America in 2018.

According to a new report that just came out from the Center for Investigative Reporting and Reveal, in 2015 and 2016, nearly two-thirds of mortgage lenders denied loans for people of color

at higher rates than for White people. This problem affects both big and small lenders, and it is nationwide. Minority borrowers were more likely to be denied a mortgage than White borrowers with the same income in 61 different cities across America.

How do we know that? Because of HMDA data. That is how we can see how much Black families were charged for a mortgage or how often Latino families were denied a chance to take out a mortgage—and we can compare those numbers with White borrowers who have the same income and same credit scores, but we can't do that if the data is missing. It is impossible to detect and fight mortgage discrimination without HMDA data.

The banking bill on the floor of the Senate says that 85 percent of the banks will no longer be required to report HMDA data, including the borrower's credit score and age; the loan's points, fees, and interest rates, and the property value. Eighty-five percent. This data is essential to figuring out whether the borrower got a fair deal.

If this bill passes, there will be entire communities where there will not be enough data to figure out whether borrowers are getting ripped off, entire communities where it will be impossible to monitor whether people are getting cheated because of their race or gender, entire communities where Federal and State regulators will not be able to bring cases, and independent groups like Reveal will not be able to hold these groups accountable.

Sure, banks will save a little money by not having to fill out the HMDA data, but when communities of color are once again left behind, there will be no way to prove it. That is why civil rights groups around the country have spoken up against this bill. The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights said "[e]xempting the overwhelming majority of our Nation's banks and credit unions from an expanded HMDA requirement that would better enable Federal regulators, State attorneys general, fair housing advocates, and others to identify and address discriminatory and predatory mortgage practices is unwise."

The Urban League and the National Community Reinvestment Coalition wrote in a newspaper column that the bill "would be a giant step backwards for the public and national groups who use this data to ensure banks treat all borrowers equally." According to the NAACP, the bill "would devastate our attempts to determine—and potentially rectify—racially discriminatory lending or loan approval patterns at play."

This is about basic fairness. HMDA data is an investment we should be making to make sure that all qualified Americans have the same chance to buy a home. Throughout our history, Washington has always fallen short of that goal. Gutting HMDA allows our country and our government to ignore discrimination, letting history repeat itself.

Communities of color will pay the price if this Congress makes this same mistake again. It isn't too late. We can stop this bill from becoming law.

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

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

STOP ENABLING SEX TRAFFICKERS ACT

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, today I want to talk about the tragedy of human trafficking. I want to talk about it today because this is an issue that I hope the entire U.S. Senate will take up within the next week.

We have legislation on which we have worked on a bipartisan basis over the last couple of years, and we have an opportunity late this week or early next week to address this growing problem. I have spent a lot of time focused on this issue over the last couple of years because of the growth of trafficking and my sense that we can do something constructive about it. Others have been involved as well.

Today, I will be at the White House for a meeting that Ivanka Trump is hosting with congressional colleagues, anti-trafficking advocates, and others who have demonstrated a commitment to addressing this issue. We will talk about the need to pass this legislation, get it to the President's desk for signature, and begin to help women and children across our country who are currently being exploited online.

We will probably talk about lots of different kinds of trafficking this afternoon, including work trafficking and other human trafficking, but the one I want to focus on this afternoon is sex trafficking, and the reason is that we think we have a legislative solution for addressing the biggest problem.

Unbelievably, right now in this country, sex trafficking is actually increasing. That is based on all the best data we are getting from all the experts around the country. They say that it is increasing primarily for one simple reason, and that is the internet. The great increase is happening online.

As some have said, this is because of the ruthless efficiency of selling people online. When I am back home in Ohio, victims tell me: Rob, this has moved from the street corner to the smartphone. There is a ruthless efficiency about it.

Anti-trafficking organizations, such as the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, Shared Hope International, and others, have told us that the majority of the online sex trafficking they encounter occurs through one single website, and that is backpage.com.

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children says that backpage

is involved in about 75 percent of the online trafficking reports it receives from the public. Shared Hope International says it is more than that.

I chair the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. Learning about what is going on online, we decided to do an in-depth investigation to find out what is really happening and how we could address it. We spent 18 months studying this, and studying online trafficking quickly led us to backpage.com because, again, that is where the majority of this commercial sex trafficking is occurring.

What we found was really shocking. Not only was backpage—as other websites have in the past—selling women and children online, but this organization and others are actually complicit in these crimes; in other words, they knew much more than we had previously thought. We found that backpage was actually knowingly selling people online.

We did this through a subpoena process that had to be approved here in the U.S. Senate because the company objected to responding to our subpoenas. For the first time in 21 years, we had to come to the U.S. Senate to get approval to actually enforce the subpoena. We then had to take it all the way to the Supreme Court because they appealed it all the way up, and we won.

Through this, we were able to get about 1 million documents. We went through these documents to find out what was happening. What we learned was that this website actually was actively and knowingly involved in selling people online. When a user would post an ad that might have a word indicating that the girl they were selling was underage—for instance, it might say "cheerleader" or it might simply reference the age of the girl being 16, 17 years old or younger sometimes—instead of rejecting that ad, knowing that it was of course illegal, they would instead clean up the ad; in other words, they would edit out the words that indicated someone was underage. They didn't just remove the post because they didn't want to lose the revenue—and you can imagine this is a very lucrative business. They just insisted that the ad be edited.

By the way, this also covered up the evidence of the crime, so it was then harder for law enforcement to find out who was involved in the selling of girls online—and underage girls. Of course, it also increased the company's profits. That is what we found in our investigation.

We also found that for years and years people who had been trying to hold these websites accountable in court had failed, and they had failed and been unsuccessful because of a Federal law that, in essence, said to these websites: You have an immunity to be able to do this. You couldn't do it on the street corner, but online you have an immunity to be able to do it.

I recommend a powerful documentary. It is called "I am Jane Doe." You

can find it on iamjanedoe.com. It is on Netflix. It tells the story of underage girls who have been exploited on backpage. It talks about the trauma they have experienced, and, finally, it also talks about their frustration with their inability to hold these websites accountable.

What might surprise you is the reason these websites are not held accountable—the more we dug into it, the more it became clear—is that Washington basically passed a Federal law, which I believe has been misinterpreted by the courts, but it has been interpreted by the courts to say that these websites have no risk, that they are not liable, and that they have an immunity under Federal law. It is called the Communications Decency Act.

The Communications Decency Act was enacted back in 1996, when the internet was in its infancy. It was intended to protect websites from liability based on third-party posts on that website. I understand the intention of Congress, but it now protects websites when they knowingly allow this criminal activity—the crime of sex trafficking—to occur through their site.

I believe Congress meant well when enacting this law. In fact, part of its original intent was actually to protect children from indecent material on the internet by holding individuals liable for sending explicit material to those children.

Now that same law is being used as a shield by websites that promote and engage in online sex trafficking with immunity. I don't believe Congress ever intended this broad liability protection for websites that actively and knowingly facilitate online sex trafficking, but the legal interpretation of the law has led to this. That is why America's district attorneys, 50 State attorneys general, judges all over the country, and so many others have called on Congress to amend this Communications Decency law and fix this injustice—really, this loophole.

Last year, a Sacramento judge threw out pimping charges against backpage and directly called on Congress to act. Here is what this judge said—again, this sort of message has been repeated by other courts: “If and until Congress sees fit to amend the immunity law, the broad reach of section 230 of the Communications Decency Act even applies to those alleged to support the exploitation of others by human trafficking.” That is not just a suggestion; it is an invitation—an invitation to this Congress to act, calling on us to do what we were sent here to do, which is to craft laws that promote justice.

For too long, victims of online sex trafficking have been denied the justice they deserve, and now we have the opportunity here in the Senate—I hope within the next week—to fix that.

Last August, I introduced legislation called the Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act, or SESTA, with a bipartisan group of 24 cosponsors, including

my coauthor, Senator RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, and Senators JOHN MCCAIN, CLAIRE McCASKILL, JOHN CORNYN, HEIDI HEITKAMP, and others.

SESTA would provide justice for victims of online sex trafficking and hold accountable those websites that intentionally facilitate these crimes. We do this by making two very narrowly crafted changes to Federal law. First, we remove the Communications Decency Act's broad liability protections for a narrow set of bad-actor websites that knowingly facilitate sex trafficking crimes—high standard: knowingly. Second, the legislation allows State attorneys general to prosecute websites that violate existing Federal trafficking laws. SESTA simply says that if you are violating Federal sex trafficking laws and you are knowingly facilitating it, then you have to be held to account. That seems to make all the sense in the world, and it will make a big difference for these girls and women who are being exploited online.

Our bill protects websites that are doing the right thing, by the way. In fact, it preserves what is called the Good Samaritan provision of the Communications Decency Act, which protects good actors who proactively block and screen their sites for offensive material, and thus it shields them from frivolous lawsuits. I think that is appropriate. We simply carve out a very limited exception in the Communications Decency Act's liability protections for those who knowingly facilitate sex trafficking.

By the way, there are already exceptions for things in this law—exceptions for things like copyright infringement. This isn't a new idea. So unless you think protecting copyrights is more important than protecting women and children from the trauma of trafficking, you should be for this. Even those who support section 230 otherwise should strongly support this.

If a prosecutor can prove in court that a website has committed these acts, SESTA allows that website to be held liable and the victims to get the justice they deserve.

By the way, 68 Senators now—more than two-thirds of this body—have signed on as cosponsors of this legislation, a majority of Republicans and a majority of Democrats. That doesn't happen very often around here. The House of Representatives passed SESTA as an amendment to a broader anti-sex trafficking bill just a couple of weeks ago by an overwhelming margin—more than 300 folks. The Trump administration has endorsed this solution and again shown a commitment to the issue. So SESTA has overwhelming support from the White House, from more than 300 House Members, and from the 68 Senators who signed on to be a part of this solution.

I think one reason it has gotten so much support is because of the logic of the legislation, the fact that we narrowly drew up the legislation not to affect internet freedom, to be sure we

were listening to people who had concerns, but also, and more importantly, because we are all hearing about this issue back home. We are all hearing the stories, and they are powerful, they are compelling, and they are heart-breaking.

Kubiiki Pride came to Congress, to our subcommittee, as we were looking into this issue and told us her story. In testimony, she said: My daughter ran away from home. She had gone missing. She had been missing for several weeks. Obviously, I was very concerned. I couldn't find her. Someone suggested that I look at this website called backpage, so I did. I found my daughter.

She found her daughter—14 years old—but found her daughter in very sexually difficult photographs, horrible photographs of her beautiful daughter. So she called backpage.com and said: I am Kubiiki Pride, and that is my daughter on your website. She is 14 years old. I am so glad I found her. Thank you for taking down that ad. She is 14 years old.

Do you know what the person on the other end of the phone said? They said: Did you post the ad?

This is how evil these people are.

She said: No, I didn't post the ad. That is my daughter. I have been trying to find her. She has been missing for several weeks.

They said: If you didn't post the ad, if you didn't pay for it, you can't take it down and we won't take it down.

That is what we are dealing with here.

Eventually, she found her daughter, got her daughter back. She went through the proper process to be able to hold backpage accountable, and guess what. The court said: Sorry. Under section 230 of the Communications Decency Act—Congress wrote this bill—this website has immunity, even though she is 14 years old and she was being sold online.

So I think that is why 68 Senators have said: Let's step up and do this. This is something we can do around here that is not partisan, that isn't about politics. It is about people. It is about human dignity. It is about ensuring that more girls like Kubiiki Pride's daughter don't have to go through this trauma, that more women and children can live out their life's purpose without having to go through this trauma. I think that is why we have been able to find so many Members who want to step up and do something here and do something that will really make a difference.

So let's vote on this legislation in the next week. Let's get it signed into law so that more children and more women are not exploited through this brutally efficient online process of selling people. If we do this, we are going to be able to provide justice to those victims who deserve it, and we are going to make this world a little better place. I urge the Senate to vote this next week.

For those Members who are not yet a part of this legislation, we urge you to join us. Wouldn't it be great to have everybody on board to correct this injustice, to close this loophole, and to ensure that everybody has the ability to meet their God-given purpose in life?

I yield the floor.

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. 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.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 1551

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, today, I rise once again to urge this body to address the critical issue of securing the border and protecting those young immigrants impacted by the uncertain future of the DACA Program. Last week, I offered legislation to extend DACA protection for 3 years and provide 3 years of increased funding for border security. Unfortunately, some of my colleagues chose to block that measure.

Let me first say, I understand and sympathize with my colleagues' concerns. I, too, believe that DACA recipients deserve a permanent solution, and I have repeatedly stated my strong preference for such a measure. We have tried to find this permanent solution through Republican-led bills, Democratic-led bills, and bipartisan bills. Yet somehow, each time, we are incapable of finding a compromise that can garner 60 votes. It is clear that we cannot achieve this goal right now, and no one is more disappointed about that fact than I am.

I am the first to admit that this solution I propose is far from perfect, but it provides a temporary fix to those crucial and critical problems. It begins the process of improving border security, and it ensures that DACA recipients will not lose protections or be left to face potential deportation. These young immigrants, brought here through no fault of their own, cannot wait for these protections. Likewise, border communities, like those in my home State of Arizona, cannot wait for increased security along the southern border.

As I have said before, we in Congress have too regularly confused action with results and have become entirely too comfortable ignoring problems when they seem too difficult to solve. That is why, if this measure is blocked again today, I will be returning to the Senate floor repeatedly until we can pass some sort of solution. To put it as bluntly as possible, it is simply not something we can ignore any longer.

I would like to again thank Senator HEITKAMP for joining me as a cosponsor of this bill. She has always been a valuable ally in bipartisan efforts to secure

the border and to pass other immigration reform measures. We may not be able to deliver a permanent solution for these problems at this time, but we can't abdicate the responsibility of Congress to, at one point, solve them. There are many people whose lives and well-being depend on our ability to deliver meaningful results.

Therefore, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 300, H.R. 1551. I further ask that the Flake substitute amendment at the desk be considered and agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. PERDUE. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I, for one, really appreciate the Senator's attempt to solve this issue. Our hearts are very similar. But a temporary solution, such as the one the Senator from Arizona has proposed, is not a solution, as he just said. It is, rather, another failure of Congress to provide real border security for the American people. It provides only 25 percent of what we need to secure that border for the next 3 years. Does anybody really think that is acceptable?

Something the President and the American people have in common is that they want border security. In addition, Members of this body and the administration have spent a great deal of time over the last year, as a matter of fact, talking about a potential DACA solution. I am happy to report that people on both sides want this DACA situation solved permanently. I think the Senator from Arizona and I have the same desire there.

Further, as a result of recent decisions by Federal district courts, current DACA recipients are free to continue renewing their status unless and until the Supreme Court overturns those lower court decisions. It will likely be over a year before the Supreme Court would even hear such a case.

It is my opinion that we should take that time right now and continue working on a permanent DACA solution, as well as the other legal immigration issues that we know are within reach, rather than settling for a temporary solution that does not address the problem. That permanent solution should also be one that ensures we are not back here in the future dealing with the same issue again.

The bill the Senator from Arizona is now proposing would only take us further away from fulfilling our congressional responsibility, with a 3-year delay. I will be happy to work with the Senator from Arizona and any of our colleagues in this body to try to address any of the concerns he and they have with the Secure and Succeed Act, which we just voted on a couple of

weeks ago. That bill is exactly what the President said he would sign into law. Therefore, Mr. President, I respectfully object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

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

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

YEMEN WAR POWERS RESOLUTION

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to use an oversized visual poster to be displayed during my remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator WYDEN be added as a cosponsor to my resolution, S.J. Res. 54.

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

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, along with Senator MURPHY and Senator LEE, I rise to talk about one of the most important jobs the U.S. Congress has, and that is to fulfill its constitutional responsibility about whether the United States of America engages in military action.

We can disagree about the merits of this or that military action, but there should be absolutely no confusion that sending men and women of the U.S. military into conflict is the responsibility not of the President of the United States alone but of the U.S. Congress.

Let us be very clear—and I say this especially to my conservative friends who talk about the Constitution all the time. Let me remind them as to what article I, section 8 of the Constitution reads in no uncertain terms: "The Congress shall have Power . . . to declare War." The Founding Fathers gave the power to declare war to Congress—the branch most accountable to the people. For far too long, Congress, under both Democratic and Republican administrations, has, in my view, abdicated its constitutional role in authorizing war. We are moving down a very slippery slope by which Congress is now becoming increasingly irrelevant in terms of that vitally important issue.

In my view, the time is long overdue for Congress to reassert its constitutional authority. That is what Senator LEE, Senator MURPHY, and I are doing with S.J. Res. 54. I am proud to have as cosponsors on that resolution Senator DURBIN, Senator BOOKER, Senator WARREN, Senator LEAHY, Senator MARKEY, Senator FEINSTEIN, and Senator WYDEN.

Many Americans are unaware that the people of Yemen—one of the poorest countries in the world—are suffering terribly today in a devastating

civil war with Saudi Arabia and their allies on one side and Houthi rebels on the other. In November of last year, the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator said that Yemen was on the brink of the “largest famine the world has seen for many decades.”

So far, thousands of civilians have died. The last count that I have seen is about 10,000. Over 40,000 have been wounded in the war. There are 15 million people who lack access to clean water and sanitation in an infrastructure which has been devastated. More than 20 million people in Yemen—over two-thirds of the population—need some kind of humanitarian support, with nearly 10 million people in acute need of assistance. This is a humanitarian disaster.

This very sad picture of a young child who faces starvation is what is taking place throughout this country. Sadly, this is not the only child in that position. Famine is a serious and growing problem in Yemen. Further, more than 1 million suspected cholera cases have been reported, potentially representing the worst cholera outbreak in world history. The pictures I have here today have been taken by photojournalists in Yemen, and they can attest to this human disaster.

One of the problems we have is, unfortunately, foreign policy is not an issue we talk about enough on the floor, and it is certainly not talked about enough in the media. Many Americans today are not aware that American forces have been actively engaged in the support of the Saudi coalition in this war—in its providing intelligence and the aerial refueling of planes whose bombs have killed thousands of people and made this crisis far worse.

My colleagues and I, along with all of our cosponsors, believe that as Congress has not declared war or authorized military force in this conflict, the U.S. involvement in Yemen is unconstitutional and unauthorized and the U.S. military support of the Saudi coalition must end. Without congressional authorization, our engagement in this war should be restricted to providing desperately needed humanitarian aid and diplomatic efforts to resolve this terrible civil war. That is why Senator LEE and Senator MURPHY and I have introduced this joint resolution pursuant to the 1973 War Powers Resolution, which calls for an end to U.S. support for the Saudi war in Yemen.

The War Powers Resolution defines the introduction of U.S. Armed Forces to include the “assignment of members of such Armed Forces to command, coordinate, participate in the movement of, or accompany the regular or irregular military forces of any foreign country or government when such military forces are engaged, or there exists an imminent threat that such forces will become engaged, in hostilities.” Assisting with targeting intelligence and refueling warplanes as they bomb those targets clearly meet this definition.

Here is the bottom line: If the U.S. Congress wants to go to war in Yemen, vote on that war, but I and the cosponsors of this legislation do not believe that the authority to go to war is now appropriate. We think what is going on now is unconstitutional, and unless Congress authorizes this war, it should be ended and ended immediately.

I look forward to a colloquy with Senator LEE and with Senator MURPHY. I now yield to Senator LEE, who has been very active on this issue from day one. I thank the Senator.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I thank Senator SANDERS for his leadership on this issue. It is an honor to be here with my friend and colleague, the Senator from Vermont, to talk about our joint resolution to force a vote on U.S. military involvement in a civil war that is going on in Yemen.

Whether one is present in the Senate Chamber today or whether one is tuning in from home, I hope you will listen closely for the next hour or so, so we can fill you in on the unauthorized Middle East war that your U.S. Government is supporting.

This war in Yemen has killed tens of thousands of innocent victims—human beings, lest we forget—each with immeasurable, innate, God-given dignity. This war has created refugees, orphans, and widows. It has cost many millions of dollars. Believe it or not, at the end of the day, according to at least one U.S. Government report, it has, arguably, undermined our fight against terrorist threats, such as ISIS, rather than to advance those efforts.

I will expand on these uncomfortable facts in a few minutes, but, for now, let’s focus on just one thing. Our military’s involvement in Yemen has not been authorized by the U.S. Congress as is required by the U.S. Constitution. Article I, section 8 of the Constitution is pretty clear on this point. It reads that Congress shall have the power to declare war—Congress, not the President, not the Pentagon—Congress.

This is the branch of government that is most accountable to the people at the most regular intervals. It makes sense that this power would only be granted to that branch of government. Yet, in 2015, President Obama initiated our military involvement in Yemen without having permission from Congress, without having an authorization for the use of military force, without having a declaration of war. The current administration has continued Obama’s war.

Senator SANDERS and I, along with Senator MURPHY and our six other cosponsors, are giving Congress a chance to fix this error by debating and voting on our Nation’s continued involvement in this illegal, unauthorized war in Yemen.

Now, as our opponents claim, if this war is necessary, then, surely, they will be willing to come down to this floor within the Senate Chamber and defend it. Surely they will be willing to come onto the floor of the Senate and

onto the floor of the House and seek authorization from Congress as the Constitution demands. Let’s have an honest reckoning about this war today.

At this very moment, a tragedy is unfolding in Yemen. Very sadly, it is a tragedy for which our Nation shares some blame. Here are just a few facts about this war in Yemen, which is now approaching its third year: Fifteen million human souls in Yemen lack clean water and sanitation, and 8 million are at risk of starvation. The Yemeni people have been visited by the worst cholera outbreak in recorded human history—over 1 million cases. Every 10 minutes, a child under the age of 5 dies of preventable causes. A total of 10,000 civilians have been killed in this war, and 40,000 more civilians have been wounded in this war.

I think it is important to discuss the human toll this war is inflicting. I think it is especially important to have discussions like this one at the outset so that as we go into a conflict, the stakes are clear. For thousands of human beings, the decision we make in this Chamber will make the difference between life and death. This is one of the many reasons it is so important to keep reminding ourselves that the Founding Fathers were very clear about this. They didn’t leave any ambiguity in terms of identifying who has the power to make decisions like this one, who has the power to decide when we go to war. Article I, section 8, says that Congress shall have the power to declare war.

From time to time, I hear it argued that declarations of war are somehow antiquated, that they are outdated, that they are anachronisms akin to ceremonial relics like powdered wigs or a key to the city, akin to a society whose principal mode of transportation involved a horse and a buggy, but that isn’t true. These principles are as true today as they were then. Nothing about those principles has become outdated.

If you read the Founding Fathers, it is very clear that they thought the power to declare war was, in fact, important. They deliberately considered the matter and withheld it from the President for a reason. They did not vest this power in the Office of the Presidency, and that was a conscious, deliberate, and I believe wise choice.

To quote Alexander Hamilton in Federalist No. 69, the Founding Fathers wanted their President to be “much inferior” in power to a King. Kings declare war unilaterally. They can make life-or-death military decisions—on a whim if they want to. They don’t need to go and seek support from the public before doing so. In our system, Presidents, by contrast, have to garner support from the public and the legislative branch before initiating war—far from a unilateral decision. The decision to go to war in America is supposed to be based on collaboration and consensus so that our Nation will be united to the greatest degree possible when we go

through trying conflicts, at that moment when unity is what is so badly needed.

So which does the modern Executive resemble more today—a President as the Founding Fathers understood that term or a King? The answer is uncomfortably clear from the string of unauthorized military excursions that Presidents from both political parties have initiated in recent decades.

Of course, some people claim that the President has broad constitutional authority to make war as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces. They are absolutely right. The President of the United States is, in fact, the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, but this is not the beginning and the end to the question. This does not mean the President may authorize at will military excursions around the globe for any reason or no reason at all without authorization from Congress. It does not mean that. It means nothing close to that. Only Congress can authorize a military campaign. Once Congress has done so, then the President has broad authority, vast discretion to decide how specifically to command the Armed Forces to victory.

There is one important notable exception to this big principle, and that exception arises specifically in the event of an attack on the United States. The Founders were wise. They anticipated that there could be threats to the homeland so serious that it might be physically impossible for Congress to respond quickly enough, so they preserved to the President the power to “repel sudden attacks,” in the words of James Madison.

Clearly, this strategy—we might describe it as a “break glass in case of emergency” kind of strategy. It is that kind of power. It is a “break glass in times of emergency” kind of power. It is supposed to be used only under extreme, extraordinary circumstances where Congress cannot convene in time to save the Nation. The Founders did not intend for the Commander in Chief’s power to be used to justify military intervention in civil wars 8,000 miles away. That authorization can come only from this body in the form of a declaration of war or in the form of an authorization for use of military force. To date, we have not considered either one of these, much less voted on them and passed them in the case of this civil war in Yemen.

So I would ask my colleague, Senator SANDERS from Vermont, how long the American people can be expected to ignore our involvement in a foreign war.

Mr. SANDERS. Before I answer that very important question, I thank Senator LEE for his remarks. He is right on virtually everything he has said.

I want to bring Senator MURPHY into this colloquy. Senator MURPHY has been ahead of his time in focusing attention on what is going on in Yemen. He is one of the original sponsors of this legislation.

If Senator MURPHY would express his thoughts on this issue.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I thank Senator SANDERS and Senator LEE for allowing me to step in and say a few words before we have a short colloquy about the resolution we are bringing to the floor.

I brought this picture to the floor before, and I hesitate to keep it up for more than a few moments. It is very disturbing to look at, but this is the reality of Yemen today. This is the reality of a country in which thousands and thousands of civilians have been killed by a bombing campaign that the United States is facilitating—facilitating with intelligence sharing, facilitating with targeting assistance, facilitating with midair refueling, facilitating with the sale of munitions that end up being dropped on the homes of families like this.

This, as has been stated, is perhaps the worst cholera outbreak in modern history. Let’s talk about why that happens.

Why are over 1 million people in Yemen today suffering from cholera, a disease that is entirely 100 percent preventable? The reason is that the water treatment facilities inside Yemen have been bombed, have been rendered useless such that there is no means by which they can keep the water that these young children drink clean. Bombs sold to the Saudi coalition by the United States, bombs dropped from planes refueled by the U.S. Air Force, bombs that are directed via targeting centers in which U.S. personnel are embedded hit water treatment facilities inside Yemen, and there is now the worst cholera outbreak in our lifetime.

I cannot do a better job than Senator LEE did of explaining to the body why we believe it is so important for Congress to exercise our Article I responsibility to declare war. He laid it out better than I can. The Founding Fathers believed, as he said, that when there were matters of great import to the national security of this country, when there were decisions that the Executive was making with respect to hostilities with other nations that included serious consequences for the United States and the world, that should not be simply an Executive function. Very specifically, as Senator LEE said, that power of declaring war, of entering into hostilities against another nation, is housed here in the Congress. So it is relevant to talk about what is happening in Yemen today. What is the degree of the hostilities, and does it come with serious national security concerns for the United States of America, for the constituents we represent?

We are absolutely engaged in hostilities today. There is no way that what we see in these charts could not be categorized as hostilities. The bombs that ruined this entire neighborhood are made in the United States, are dropped by planes refueled by the United States, are directed by a targeting center that involves U.S. personnel. This is clearly an act of hostility that the United States, in part-

nership with the Saudi coalition, has entered into against the Yemeni people.

Remember, this is a civil war inside Yemen. There are not-so-good people on both sides of this civil war. The Houthis have been responsible for major, catastrophic acts in the country, just as the coalition has, but we are only on one side of that, so it makes sense for us to focus on the hostilities that have been entered into by the United States and the Saudi coalition. But let’s for a second talk about the other implications for U.S. national security.

What has happened inside Yemen as this civil war has persisted? Al-Qaida and ISIS have grown in strength. For a period of time, AQAP—the arm of al-Qaida inside Yemen that has the most direct intention to hit the United States—had captured a major port inside Yemen and was drawing substantial revenue, allowing them to become stronger than ever before. By continuing to feed weapons into this civil war, the United States is helping to expand the reach and the power of the two entities inside Yemen that the administration argues they do have authorization to fight—al-Qaida and ISIS. Many of us would draw issue with the interpretation of an AUMF passed a decade and a half ago as it applies to ISIS, but no doubt the administration has the ability to pursue war against al-Qaida, and al-Qaida is gaining strength because of the continuation of this civil war.

If you talk to Yemeni-Americans, they will tell you that inside Yemen, this is not seen as a Saudi bombing campaign, this is seen as a U.S.-Saudi bombing campaign. And what they will further tell you is that Yemenis are becoming radicalized against the United States because there is a U.S. imprint on every bomb that is dropped and every single death inside that country.

While we may talk a good game about humanitarian relief and we may enter into occasional efforts to settle this conflict through negotiations, all they know is that for 3 years the United States has been supporting a Saudi bombing campaign that does not end. We have been supporting a Saudi-led coalition that has blocked humanitarian relief from entering this country. We may hear a lot about the money that the Saudis are putting into humanitarian relief, but we don’t hear as much about the fact that at one point they completely closed the port through which the majority of humanitarian relief flows. Although now it is technically open, they are still narrowing the channel greatly through which relief supplies get to this country. So nobody should applaud the United States or the Saudis for providing relief to a country that they, indeed, are bombing.

I am not setting aside the culpability of the Houthis for substantial atrocities in this civil war as well, but we are only on one side of it.

This is clearly covered by the powers vested in the U.S. Congress to make war. If it isn't, it unlocks a horrific Pandora's box. If the President can enter into hostilities against another country so long as all they are doing is providing vast logistical support to a coalition partner, then there is no end to what the President can do so long as he doesn't put a troop on the ground.

Our involvement in the Saudi-led coalition has serious national security implications for the United States, aside from the fact that it has resulted in the deaths of thousands of civilians and has set off the worst humanitarian catastrophe the world has seen today. As a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, I just want to bring these consequences to bear for our colleagues to think about—our colleagues who might not think that this rises to the powers vested in the Congress by the Constitution. There are very few more serious conflicts with respect to consequences for the United States than this one. So I guess I would wrap back around that question that Senator LEE posed to Senator SANDERS.

If the United States doesn't weigh in here, then, when? What is the precedent that is set by Congress's continuing to remain silent even when you have a humanitarian catastrophe and a set of consequences for U.S. national security that are this big?

Mr. SANDERS. Well, let me thank Senator MURPHY for his comments and Senator LEE before him. I think they touch on the most important issues. I wish to respond to what Senator LEE and Senator MURPHY both said, but I wish to make a point that needs to be made again and again.

This is not a partisan issue. We are talking about Democratic administrations acting militarily without congressional authorization. We are talking about Republican administrations doing the same. Senator LEE is a conservative Republican. Senator MURPHY is a Democrat. I am an Independent who caucuses with the Democrats. So if you are talking about bipartisanship, you are looking at it right here.

I should tell you that there are many organizations around the country—conservative and progressive—that are raising exactly the same issue that we are raising right here, and that is that Congress has to reassert its congressional authority over the issues of war.

If you want to go to war and you think the war in Yemen makes sense, that is fine. Come down here on the floor and tell us why you feel that way. Tell the American people and tell your constituents why you think it is a good idea to work with Saudi Arabia to wreak utter horror on one of the poorest countries in the world. Fine, come on down here and tell us. What we have to do, from a precedent point of view, is finally to say to our Republican President or a Democratic President: Enough is enough. Listen to the Constitution.

The Founding Fathers of this country were amazingly smart on this

issue, and they understood that before we send our young men—and now women—off to war to die or to get maimed, there better well be a very good reason that we have to explain to the people who elected us—not just somebody sitting up there in the Oval Office. That is why the authority for going to war is vested in the representatives of the people, whether we are elected for 2 years or elected for 6 years.

I would also point out that this is not the first time that the Congress has weighed in on the devastating war in Yemen. In November of last year, the House of Representatives—and I hope my Senate colleagues know this—voted by a vote of 366 to 30. That was not even close. There was overwhelming support among Democrats and Republicans. They passed a nonbinding resolution stating that the United States' involvement in the Yemen civil war is unauthorized. The Democratic leadership supported it, as did the Republican chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, ED ROYCE.

Here is the bottom line. The bottom line is that Congress has ducked its responsibilities for many years, and if we continue to duck our responsibility on the all-important issue of U.S. military intervention, this Congress and, in fact, the people of the United States become increasingly irrelevant on this most important matter.

We are bringing forward a privileged motion. There will be a vote on this issue in one form or another. If you like the war in Yemen, then be prepared to defend why you think it is a great idea to work with the Saudis to destroy the infrastructure and to create a situation where famine and cholera are rampant in that incredibly poor country. Come on down and tell us why you think it is a good idea. If not, I hope you will vote with us to end this war and to allow the United States to get involved in bringing the warring parties together to see if we can bring peace and to see if we can bring humanitarian relief to these terribly suffering people.

I yield to Senator LEE.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to display an oversized visual display.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. JOHNSON). Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LEE. I am not sure what constitutes oversized, but I have it on good authority that the ordinary Senate rules don't allow for a picture this big without unanimous consent. So, therefore, I sought it.

The picture itself paints an image and leaves an impression that itself is oversized and that demonstrates the humanity of this conflict. You see a child standing in what appears to be a school in an ordinary learning environment that has been rendered unusable by the devastating impact of war.

Now, war does happen. Conflicts do arise. This is one of the reasons why it

was built into not only our system of laws but our foundational governing structure in the Constitution. The Founding Fathers understood that war would arise from time to time, but they carefully divided up the power, recognizing how devastating its implications could be, recognizing that bad things are a little bit less likely to happen if you don't allow too much power to be concentrated in the hands of a few.

Over time, Congress and the Presidency have had a little bit of a tug-of-war, as I referenced earlier, about where the Commander in Chief power ends and the war power begins.

In 1973 Congress reasserted its constitutional role and tried to clarify some of what had been described as a gray area by passing the War Powers Resolution. The crisis that led Congress to create this important law in many ways was reminiscent of the conflict that we are discussing today.

The War Powers Act was passed in response to the Vietnam war. That war began with the insertion of just a small handful of U.S. military advisers in 1950, but their ranks grew and grew gradually but steadily, so that our commitment in Vietnam spiraled into a decades-long, bloodied conflict. Presidents from both parties abused their authority in order to wage this far-off war.

Finally, in 1973, Congress decided it was time to bring our boys home. So it repealed the limited legal authority for the war it had granted to then-President Johnson 7 years earlier.

In defiance of Congress, President Nixon continued the war, citing his authority as Commander in Chief. So Congress drafted the War Powers Resolution to give itself a way to remove our armed services personnel from unauthorized, unlawful, and unconstitutional war zones.

The War Powers Resolution states that the President must notify Congress within 48 hours of committing American troops to "hostilities" or "imminent hostilities." The War Powers Resolution goes on to provide that the President must remove troops from the conflict if Congress does not authorize their presence within 60 days or a maximum of 90 days in the case of certain emergencies.

Congress's passage of the War Powers Resolution was a bold assertion of its constitutional responsibility in the face of a chronically overreaching executive branch. In fact, Congress's desire to uphold the Constitution was so strong that it actually overrode President Nixon's veto of the War Powers Resolution.

Members of Congress today could certainly learn a thing or two from their predecessors' commitment to constitutional duties and to the limited power possessed by each branch of government.

Since the War Powers Resolution was passed in 1973, defenders of a royal executive have tried to go around it and

tried to circumvent it altogether by claiming that their unauthorized wars somehow do not qualify as “hostilities.”

We heard this claim by President Obama in response to Libya, and we heard it again in response to Yemen. It is the official position of the U.S. Department of Defense that we are not engaged in “hostilities” in Yemen unless our troops “are actively engaged in exchanges of fire with opposing units of hostile forces.”

To translate, the U.S. Government really claims that it is not engaged in hostilities unless U.S. troops are on the ground being shot at by the enemy.

It stretches the imagination, and it stretches the English language beyond its breaking point to assert that our military is not engaged in hostilities in Yemen. Consider for a moment what it is that the U.S. military is doing as part of the Saudi-led coalition effort against the neighbors of Saudi Arabia, the Yemeni neighbors.

U.S. military personnel are assigned to the joint combined planning cell in Saudi Arabia, where they are sharing military intelligence with the Saudis and helping to target enemies within Yemen for attack. Our forces are also refueling coalition bombers in midair on combat missions. If sending our military men and women to foreign lands to fuel a country's bombers and handpick its targets does not qualify as “hostilities,” then those words have lost their meaning. What does the word “hostility” mean if it cannot be said to encompass that?

As it happens, the War Powers Resolution was designed to stop secret and unauthorized military activities such as these. So Congress is well within its right to vote on whether these activities should continue.

That is why this joint resolution that is authored by Senator SANDERS and cosponsored by Senator MURPHY, myself, and six others represents a big chance—a significant chance, a constitutional moment—for Congress to do the right thing, for Congress to do its job, and for Congress to represent the American people. After all, this is their blood and their treasure that are being put on the line. That is why the Constitution and the War Powers Resolution alike contemplate actions by Congress and not solely unilateral action by the executive branch.

I ask my colleagues Senator SANDERS and Senator MURPHY: Isn't it arguable that by overreaching in this instance, we might in fact be making matters worse? Couldn't we be putting our country in a position of less security rather than more?

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I say to Senator LEE that I think that is an excellent question. That was just the question that I was going to ask of Senator MURPHY, because I think we understand that in recent history, when there is chaos and confusion in a country, it provides an extraordinary opportunity for al-Qaida and their allies to move in.

We have spent billions and billions of dollars fighting al-Qaida and their affiliates, and I fear very much, as you have indicated, that the situation we are creating in Yemen in many ways is making life easier for them.

I would ask this of Senator MURPHY—and maybe listeners might be surprised by this: What side of this battle is al-Qaida on in Yemen right now?

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I thank Senator SANDERS for the question. This is incredibly important to understand.

There was great consternation in the beginning of this civil war, when the United States, under the Obama administration, was beginning to support the Saudi-led coalition. The Saudis were only targeting the Houthis, and as the al-Qaida wing inside of Yemen was getting stronger and stronger, no matter how much we asked, no matter how much we pushed, the Saudi-led coalition would not drop bombs on al-Qaida and would not send any of their forces near them. They were only focused on the Houthis.

The answer as to why that was happening is very simple. The enemy of your enemy tends to be your ally, and inside Yemen, the Houthis were drawing fire from both the Saudi-led coalition and from al-Qaida. In the early stages of this fight, the policy of the Saudi-led coalition was to have hands off of al-Qaida, and that made al-Qaida stronger and stronger and stronger.

Now, admittedly, recently we have been more successful in getting the Emirates, not necessarily the Saudis, to take on targeted missions against al-Qaida, but that is only a recent phenomenon, and it is frankly belied by the fact that we have new information that at the same time that the Emirates are occasionally taking out operations—and sometimes dangerous operations, with risk of life to their forces against al-Qaida—they are also supporting other militias inside Yemen—Salafist militias—that are in many ways just as radical as al-Qaida is and are recruiting the types of recruits that one day may join ISIS and one day may join al-Qaida, targeting against the United States. So this is a very chaotic space in which very purposefully, for a period of time, the coalition allowed for al-Qaida to grow. Even though that policy has changed recently, there are still signs that there are some people who are very dangerous to the United States who are being supported on the ground by members of our coalition.

I know Senator DURBIN is here, so I want to turn it over to him. I just want to say two more quick things on this point. One is to note that our resolution does continue to allow for the United States to target al-Qaida. We built into this resolution a carve-out for any military activities that are currently authorized by the 2001 AUMF, and the administration interprets that to be al-Qaida and affiliated follow-on organizations. So let's be clear that if you care about the United

States targeting al-Qaida, that can continue here.

Finally, to Senator LEE's point about this interpretation of hostilities, let's be clear about how narrow a definition that is. There have to be American troops on the ground exchanging fire in order for the War Powers Act to be triggered. That is not what Congress intended because, in fact, that would then allow the administration to perpetuate an unlimited air campaign, dropping unlimited munitions, devastating, ruining a country, without any input from Congress. Even if one would say “Well, that does involve U.S. personnel flying overhead, so maybe that is potentially putting U.S. troops in the line of fire,” remember, we are also entering an era of robotic warfare, in which U.S. personnel are going to be less instrumental to hostilities that will still have grave consequences for the United States.

Clearly, the notion of war and how you fight it has changed over the years. The Founding Fathers never imagined air campaigns. Yet, the intent and the language of the War Powers Act and of the Constitution are clear. When war is being waged, when hostilities are being entered into, Congress has to have a say. Please, look at any of the pictures that we are putting before you and tell us that the United States is not engaged in hostilities if the effect in the country of Yemen is this.

I thank Senator DURBIN for joining us on the floor today, and I yield to him.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I want to thank my colleagues, Senator SANDERS, Senator MURPHY, and Senator LEE, for this bipartisan effort.

Why are we here today? Why are we discussing wars so far away? We are here because of this book. This is the Constitution of the United States. The Constitution very expressly tells us what we are supposed to be doing here. In article I, section 8, it lays out the things that we, the men and women who serve in Congress, are responsible for. Among the things that Congress shall have the power to do is to “declare war.”

Why did the Founding Fathers make certain that it was clear that Congress would be involved in that decision on the declaration of war? When they created Congress, the idea was that the people of this country, far and wide, would at least have a voice in the decision, through the people they elected, and we would be held accountable for our decisions to declare war or to not declare it because we are up for election. So Congress has this responsibility, and over the years, many times, Congress has not exercised its responsibility in a responsible way.

I have a question. I bet that if I brought in every U.S. Senator and asked them the following question, very few would be able to answer it: How many countries is the United States military currently involved in

fighting? How many countries are we in today, fighting? Would you guess two? Iraq, Afghanistan—all right, for sure, there. Five? Ten? Twenty?

Brown University's Costs of War Project recently published data saying that the United States fought terror through direct fighting, training, or military support to other forces or through drone strikes in 76 countries between October 2015 and 2017. Is that the right number today? I am not sure. None of us know.

We are often surprised to learn we are sending our military and fighting in another country. When something awful occurs—Americans are killed, for example—sometimes Members of Congress hear it for the first time: Oh, we are in what country fighting?

I take this pretty seriously, and I have over the years when it comes to the authorization of using force, because it isn't just a matter of projecting American power; it is life and death. These are decisions that will be made by Congress or by the President—sometimes both—and the net result of it, even under the best of circumstances, is that Americans will perish. Funerals will be held in Illinois and in Utah and in Vermont and in Connecticut and in Wisconsin. That is the reality of the decisions we reach.

I can remember the debate right after 9/11 on the floor. It was one of the most important of my career. It was a question about whether we would authorize the President of the United States—President Bush at the time—to use military force to respond to 9/11. If my colleagues remember the debate, there were two real options on the floor. One was to use military force against those responsible for the attack on the United States and to send that force into Afghanistan. The other was to go after the so-called weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. They were two parallel debates, but two debates that I saw very differently.

I was skeptical from the start about this Iraqi invasion. Nobody ever connected the dots between Saddam Hussein and 9/11. We were talking about the threat that he was to the rest of the world. Yet we voted here on the floor of the U.S. Senate in 2002 to authorize the use of military force to go into Iraq. Sadly, we are still there today. Sadly, Iraq is in shambles, politically and physically, and the war continues.

I voted no. I remember that night. It was in October of 2002. I remember that night because the vote was taken very late, and there were two or three of us who stayed on the floor here, including Kent Conrad, as well as Paul Wellstone of Minnesota. Paul Wellstone was up for reelection. We wondered if that vote would affect him in any way, and I remember going up to him and saying: Paul, I hope your vote against the war in Iraq doesn't cost you the election.

Wellstone said to me: It is all right if it does. People know where I stand. They expect nothing less.

He didn't live to see the election. If my colleagues will remember, he died in a plane crash with his wife and staffers just a few days after that vote.

But that is the gravity of this decision. That is the importance of this decision. And that is why I want to thank my colleagues for bringing us together—just a few of us but enough of us, maybe—in the Senate to remind people of our constitutional responsibility.

The vote on Afghanistan was one I voted for—the invasion of Afghanistan. The message was clear: If you attack the United States, we will come right back after you, al-Qaida, and we did.

I recently asked the Secretary of Defense—when I voted that way in 2002, I did not imagine that 15 or 16 years later, that war would continue. So I asked him: How does this war ever end in Afghanistan? He didn't know the answer. He didn't come up with one. All he could say to me was that if we left, it would be worse.

Well, you can say that about a lot of other countries in the world. But what we are talking about today is what we are going to do in terms of this horrid situation in Yemen. I was in my office looking down on this debate via C-SPAN, and I saw the photos that have been displayed here—the utter human and physical devastation that is taking place.

Senator SANDERS is asking a simple but deeply important question here today, and Senator LEE and Senator MURPHY join him. Here is the question: Who authorized the U.S. military action to help Saudi Arabia fight the Houthis in Yemen? I didn't. I don't remember that there was ever a vote. So how are we doing this? By what authority is our government doing this?

This is not about the merits of the fight or in any way a vindication of the Houthis' troubling role in the horrific Yemeni civil war; it is about whether Congress follows its constitutional responsibilities. It is about whether the American people have a voice in this decision—the same people who will send their sons and daughters to bravely serve in our military.

I am happy to be a cosponsor of this resolution that halts any such U.S. support without any congressional authorization. I call on this Congress to deal with revisiting the 2001 and 2002 authorizations of force that I believe have been stretched by multiple administrations beyond any credible limit.

There are real threats to the safety and security of America out there—al-Qaida and its successors and others. But we in Congress have the responsibility to authorize those conflicts and regularly update them as necessary.

Congress and the Senate have been absent without leave when it comes to article I, section 8, and our authority and responsibility to declare war. We have other looming threats, including North Korea and Iran, but any U.S. war against those countries or others, short

of protecting against an imminent attack as allowed for in the War Powers Resolution, requires the vote of Congress, regardless of who the President may be.

When it comes to the declaration of war, we simply cannot see this as an annoyance. We must do our part. We must follow the Constitution, even when it is difficult.

I yield the floor.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Illinois very much for his perceptive remarks and for reminding us that the time is long overdue for the U.S. Congress to accept its constitutional responsibilities.

I wanted to ask Senator LEE if he—we are running out of time here—has some closing remarks.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Vermont. I appreciate his remarks and his leadership on this, and I appreciate the remarks that Senator DURBIN and Senator MURPHY have added to this discussion.

I want to close by pointing out that in addition to being unlawful and in addition to being unconstitutional, our involvement in Yemen is unproductive in the fight against terrorism. The Houthis we are fighting are a regional force—one that doesn't harbor ambitions of attacking the U.S. homeland. While the Houthis are certainly no friend of ours, neither are they a serious threat to our country. Yet we are diverting considerable resources to fighting the Houthis, resources that would be better spent fighting more substantial threats—threats that harbor, rather openly, ambitions of bringing down the United States, of attacking the United States. These are threats like al-Qaida or ISIS. On that point, the best evidence we have suggests that their involvement in Yemen has arguably undermined our fight against ISIS.

The State Department's most recent study, its most recent "Country Reports on Terrorism"—which, by the way, happens to be the authority on that subject for Congress and the American people—says that we have inadvertently strengthened ISIS by killing off its antagonists, the Houthis. This just reinforces the farcical character that our military excursions in the Middle East have the potential to undertake. We bomb with one hand; we give humanitarian aid with the other hand. We whack a terrorist from one group, and another springs up in its place.

Defenders of our efforts in this war in Yemen often claim that the real reason we are fighting the Houthis is that they are a proxy for Iran, which is the true threat to our Nation and to the world. This would be perhaps a reasonable rationale, but there are conflicting reports about the Houthis and their ties to Iran. Iran has expansionist views; the Houthis do not. Hezbollah is an officially listed as a foreign terrorist organization; the Houthis are not. The Houthis may be a rogue non-

State actor, destabilizing their own country, but they are not a threat to America—at least not yet. By helping the Saudis bomb them, we only give the Houthis reasons to start to hate us. Our involvement in Yemen detracts from our ability to be a diplomatic resource and the peacemaker in the region.

In closing, the substance of the resolution offered by Senator SANDERS and cosponsored by Senator MURPHY, me, and others is simple. It puts our war against the Houthi rebels to a vote. It concerns the Houthis and only the Houthis. If Members are convinced that our fight against the Houthis is worthwhile, then so be it. Congress will have done its part and the fight will go on, but if Members are not willing to pay the heavy pricetag for this war, calculated in dollars and in innocent human lives, then our resolution will bring U.S. operations to a close.

This resolution is an opportunity for Members of Congress to stand up and be counted on a matter of life and death. It is an opportunity to end the Executive's unconstitutional dominance over matters of war and peace and restore in its place a collaborative process whereby Congress declares war and Presidents wage war.

I thank Senator SANDERS.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, let me conclude by thanking Senator LEE, Senator MURPHY, Senator DURBIN this afternoon, thanking Senator BOOKER, Senator WARREN, Senator LEAHY, Senator MARKEY, Senator FEINSTEIN, and Senator WYDEN for their cosponsorship of S.J. Res. 54.

Let me summarize it very briefly in this way: Congress cannot continue to abdicate its responsibility on the all-important issue of how and when the United States becomes involved in military intervention. We cannot continue to run away from that issue.

If you think the war in Yemen is siding with the Saudis on this war makes sense, then come down to the floor of the Senate, make your position clear, tell your constituents what you believe, and then vote for the war but have the courage, at least, to accept your responsibility as a Member of the U.S. Congress and not abdicate it to the President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, we have a series of Senators who are going to be speaking about what is happening as a result of climate change and sea level rise, which is having its effects in my State of Florida, particularly.

Few States are as vulnerable to climate change than what we find particularly in South Florida, Miami Beach being Ground Zero. What is happening as the sea level is rising—and these are not projections, they are not forecasts; these are actually measurements, measurements by NASA and NOAA over the last 40 years that the

sea has risen in South Florida 5 to 8 inches.

We see the effects of that at the seasonal high tides—now, more increasingly, along with the cycles of the Moon each month. Water, typically, is sloshing around in streets and sloshing over the curves. As a result, the city of Miami Beach has had to spend tens of millions of dollars on huge, expensive pumps and has also had to raise the level of the roadbeds.

NOAA's most recent worst-case scenario projections predict a 2-foot sea level rise by 2060 and, if we take it all the way to the end of the century, 6 feet by 2100. Needless to say, in a peninsula that sits in the middle of what we know as Hurricane Highway, 6 feet would inundate so much of the coastal areas. By the way, the population of Florida is 21 million people, and 75 percent is along the coastal regions. That puts all of the entire Nation's low-lying coastal cities at risk of major flooding, not to mention our military installations along the coast.

The seas are not just rising; they are also warming, and they are rising because they are warming. Of course, I have explained this several times on the floor of the Senate: As the Sun's rays come in and hit the Earth, some of the heat is absorbed, but some of it is reflected off the Earth's surface and is radiated out into space.

When you put up an extra abundance of greenhouse gases—mainly carbon dioxide and methane—and they move into the upper atmosphere, they serve like a glass ceiling of a greenhouse; thus, the term, the "greenhouse" effect. Then, as that heat is reflected off the Earth that would normally radiate out into space, it is trapped and, thus, the entire Earth starts to heat.

Two-thirds of the Earth's surface is covered by oceans, and 90 percent of that heat is absorbed into the oceans. What happens to water when it is heated? It expands. So we see the reasons that warmer water means the sea levels rise.

Do you know what else it produces? More frequent and more ferocious hurricanes. After the back-to-back punch of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, imagine how much we would have to spend in Federal disaster aid if we had a hurricane season like last year every year. That is why it is so critical to continue funding climate and weather research and to keep improving NOAA's hurricane models.

This information can make the difference in a life-or-death situation. We saw what havoc the hurricanes visited upon Texas and then Florida after it had already crossed Puerto Rico, but then along comes Maria, and it hits the island directly. As of today, 5, going on 6, months after the hurricane, the poor island of Puerto Rico—our fellow American citizens—17 percent today do not still have electricity. So, indeed, there has been a lot more loss of life as a result of hurricanes.

Our coastline in Florida is blessed, as a hurricane is approaching, with a nat-

ural breakwater. It is called the Florida Reef Tract. It is along the southeastern coast. Of all the major barrier reefs in the entire world, Florida has the third largest. It starts south of Key West and continues all the way up the Keys, north, up to Fort Pierce, FL.

This Florida reef is the only barrier reef in the continental United States. Healthy reefs are able to reduce storm damage by taking a lot of the impact, but climate change, ocean acidification, and an unprecedented coral disease outbreak are hurting Florida's reefs and diminishing their ability to act as a shoreline buffer. I am not even talking about all the other things that reefs do—which is the natural place for all the fish and critters of the sea to gather, swimming in and around and among all of the coral reefs.

That is why, last week, I wrote a letter to the Secretaries of Commerce, Agriculture, and Health and Human Services calling for an interagency strike team to be formed to finally diagnose the coral disease in an attempt to save the remaining reefs.

I want to show an example of the difference between a healthy reef and a diseased reef. Look at the difference. Here is the healthy coral. Look how the diseased reef has actually been bleached out. So time is running out on this third largest barrier reef on the planet. We have to respond to the causes and effects of climate change now. The longer we put it off, the harder and more expensive it is going to be to mitigate.

I thank Senator WHITEHOUSE and my fellow colleagues who are speaking out on this critical mission.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, first, let me thank my good friend from Florida. His State may be more affected by climate change than just about any other. We hear about water lapping up on the shores of Southern Florida already and the constant flooding. We have seen these amazing pictures that equal 1,000 words about the coral reefs—and he even talked about a word we rarely use in Brooklyn, "critters." We want to save the critters too.

So he has been eloquent—not just today but constantly—on the issue of climate and does it in such a practical perspective that just about every American of every ideology, part of the country, and thought process can understand. So I thank him.

Of course, I thank our great leader on this issue, the Senator from Rhode Island, SHELDON WHITEHOUSE. He is passionate, and his passion carries over into effective action. There has been no voice more clarion, more constant, more effective in remembering that we cannot ignore this issue, constantly reminding us how important it is. I thank Senator WHITEHOUSE not only for pulling us all together tonight but for his great strength and constancy on this issue.

I join my colleagues to shed light on the subject of climate change, which has received scant attention, unfortunately, from President Trump and this Republican Senate. Despite decades of incontrovertible evidence that climate change is harming our planet, President Trump and the Republicans have done nothing about it. In fact, worse than doing nothing, they have actively weakened our environmental laws, decrying the very science that has helped us progress, has helped men and women progress through the centuries.

Republicans in Congress have undone the environmental protections that held corporations accountable for polluting our streams. They have undone the rule that increased transparency in the management of public lands. Through an unrelated tax bill, congressional Republicans opened up the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling.

In the executive branch, EPA Administrator Pruitt has implemented an extreme deregulatory agenda, unwinding the rules that keep our air clear, our water clean, and limit carbon emissions that poison our atmosphere and our planet.

Worst of all, President Trump announced that he will pull the United States out of the Paris climate accord, which would make America the only country in the world that isn't a part of the agreement. While the world comes together to negotiate sensible climate change policies, while other nations and other foreign businesses grab the mantle of leadership on green energy, the United States, which used to be such a leader on so many issues, can only sit and watch from the sidelines—all because President Trump decided to pull out of the Paris accord. What a remarkable mistake. It will go down in history as one of the worst days in American history, as the world gets hotter and climate change takes its toll on our country and the world.

Climate change is real, human activity is driving it, and it is happening right now. These are facts. This is not speculation. This is not someone spinning a tale. These are facts not in dispute. Scientists know it. Businesses know it. The world knows it. The American people know it too.

We in New York learned about the devastating impact of Hurricane Sandy. It took so long to rebuild our coastal communities. All of Long Island understood that climate change is real and devastating when you do nothing about it.

The storms are getting more powerful—storms like Sandy—more frequent, and there is no doubt that climate change is playing a role. We watched three recordbreaking hurricanes buffet our cities and our coastlines, devastating parts of Louisiana, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Stronger wildfires have ripped through our Western States. According to NOAA, 2017 was the most expensive year on record for disasters in the

United States, costing hundreds of billions of dollars. We are running out of time to do something about this issue.

Together with my colleagues this evening, led by Senator WHITEHOUSE, who will be giving his 200th “Time to Wake Up” speech—what a great accomplishment; I admire it—I urge all Americans—particularly younger Americans, who understand that this planet will decline if we don't do something, and it is their planet—I urge everyone—younger Americans, older Americans, everybody—to contact Republican Senators and Congressmen and tell them to wake up on climate change.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant Democratic leader.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, for the past 6 years, Senator SHELDON WHITEHOUSE of Rhode Island has delivered weekly addresses to the Senate Chamber on climate change, telling us that it is time to wake up. That is the sign he posts on the floor each time he comes to discuss the disastrous effects of global warming. Today will mark his 200th speech on the Senate floor on this topic.

The urgency of the topic is real. Climate change threatens our national security and our local communities. Climate change drives global conflict and has far-reaching national security implications.

A report by Oxfam states that there is growing evidence that climate change is making droughts more frequent and more severe.

Drought has contributed to the crisis in Syria, migration from West Africa, and rapid urbanization in Somalia. Just last week, “PBS NewsHour” reported that in the last year alone, more than 1 million Somalis have been forced from their homes because of drought.

Herders and farmers used to live among one another, but increasingly severe drought has led to a scarcity of land and water. Some animal herders now carry weapons and fight over fertile land. Farmers who have fled to the city claim herders burned down their homes and turned their farmland into grassland. The fighting and scarcity of land has pushed both farmers and herders to the cities, and most of them end up in ramshackle camps, burdened by poverty—a tinderbox.

Last March, 110 people died from starvation and drought-related illness in 48 hours, prompting President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo to declare the drought a national disaster. Still, 1.2 million children under the age of 5 are projected to be malnourished in 2018.

Somalia is not the only country where the effects of climate change have created and exacerbated regional conflicts. In a few days, Syria will mark the seventh year of civil war. Research published by the National Academy of Sciences reports that climate change has contributed to the crisis in

Syria. Extreme drought in Syria between 2006 and 2009 was most likely due to climate change, and that drought was a factor in the uprisings in 2011, when more than 1 million displaced farmers joined pro-democracy protests.

Just last year, Pulitzer Prize-winning New York Times columnist Tom Friedman wrote about massive migration out of parts of West Africa, through the Sahara Desert, to Libya, where people were hoping to eventually cross the Mediterranean Sea into Europe. The migration is driven in part by drought made more extreme by climate change, which has created widespread humanitarian crises.

As climate instability drives more extreme and frequent droughts and the scarcity of fertile land, water, and food, it will trigger major conflicts over resources, as we have seen in Yemen and Syria. As one of the largest contributors of greenhouse gas emissions, the United States has a moral responsibility to act on this growing crisis.

Here in our country, my constituents in Illinois are already experiencing the adverse effects of climate change. Climate models suggest that if current global warming trends continue, Illinois will have a climate similar to that of the Texas gulf coast by the year 2100. You can't grow a lot of corn in that climate. For Illinois farmers, these changes to the environment have a direct effect on their livelihood—and for all of us, a direct effect on our food supply.

Wetter springs and more frequent flooding will leave farmers struggling to plant their corn and soybeans. Increasingly hot summers and more frequent droughts will stunt the growth and hurt crop yields. This means prices will increase, making it harder for families to put food on the table.

In recent years, Illinois has seen historic storms, floods, and droughts that have caused millions of dollars in damage.

Last week, scientists at the Illinois State Water Survey reported that this February was the wettest on record, beating the previous record precipitation by over half an inch. An average of 5 inches of rain fell statewide. Streator, IL, had over 11 inches of rain, and Aurora had the largest snowfall, with a recorded 26 inches of snow. In the last week of February, rainstorms and melted snow caused flooding across Illinois, with more than 20 counties throughout the State placed under a flood warning. As the water level of rivers continued to rise, several communities had to evacuate for their safety. Multiple communities were evacuated, and in some areas, residents had to be rescued by boat. Flooded roadways claimed the life of an Illinois resident after her car rolled into a rain-filled ditch.

Climate change is likely to increase the frequency and severity of flooding in Illinois, as well, and my constituents are concerned about their ability to recover from repeated flood events.

How much is flood damage costing us in Illinois? Last July, 3,200 residences were impacted by flooding, including 244 with major damage. This damage costs millions but often doesn't rise to the level where anyone qualifies for Federal aid. From 2007 to 2014, flooding in urban areas has caused \$2.3 billion in damages.

Moving forward, repeated flood events will have a high price tag. In the last decade, extreme weather events and fire have cost the Federal Government over \$350 billion, according to OMB. These costs will rise as the climate changes.

The evidence is clear. We need to get serious about addressing the cause and effect of climate change. Ignoring them threatens our national security and our safety. I believe our generation has a moral obligation to leave the world in better shape than we found it. Let's not run away from our responsibility to our children and grandchildren. Let's work toward solving the challenges of climate change.

This is a hard issue to explain from a political point of view. The only major political party in the world today that denies climate change is the Republican Party of the United States of America.

It is hard to imagine that a great party that once was actively engaged in a positive way in this debate is now absent without leave.

It is hard to explain that the party of Richard Nixon, who created the Environmental Protection Agency, now is in complete denial when it comes to climate change and global warming.

It is hard to understand that they are missing the obvious indicators of evidence from every corner of the world about the impact of global warming.

It is almost impossible to understand how they can ignore the impact this will have on the lives of our children and grandchildren. Is it too much to ask our generation to make a little sacrifice to spare them the devastation that will come from climate change? Is it too much to ask us to be a little more sensitive in our use of energy so that our kids and grandkids can enjoy a good life in their years on Earth? That usually is a responsibility most generations accept, but we are being told that it is just too much to ask—to ask current Americans to come forward and do something that is thoughtful, meaningful, to reduce energy consumption and reduce emission and pollution. I think that is a horrible situation. I think it is one we shouldn't be proud of at all.

I thank my friend SHELDON WHITEHOUSE for coming to the floor regularly and reminding us of what is happening in this world today and how we each have a responsibility to future generations to alleviate the suffering, the pain, and the damage that has been caused by this global warming.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I come to the floor this evening inspired by the determined efforts of my colleague SHELDON WHITEHOUSE of Rhode Island.

My colleague has made clear, by delivering his 200th floor speech on climate change, that he is committed to raising awareness about and urging action on this very real threat to our environment.

Let me speak briefly as someone trained in science as a chemist. I am troubled that time and again I am called to this Chamber to defend and advocate for science. We live in a time of unprecedented scientific advances. Throughout our history, we have turned to science to help us solve both domestic and international crises. Science was there, for example, to do battle against the Ebola outbreak, threats from hurricanes and other natural disasters, and the dangers of cigarette smoke and lead exposure. It was scientists who helped find a cure, provide early warning, who educated us, and who influenced politics to lead to policies that led to stronger industry and consumer safety standards in facing all of these threats. The scientific method has saved lives and ensured our survival, so why don't we more widely embrace the science of prediction, mitigation, and adaptation to the effects of climate change?

Climate change is real. We know climate change is already happening, although it is slow, gradual, and often hard to perceive. Its effects will impact human health, agricultural production, national security—an unbelievable range of concerns that should motivate us together. Yet I have colleagues who either aren't convinced or don't understand that climate change is a real and pressing threat.

Let me briefly cite one meta-study of scientific opinion. It surveyed 13,950 peer-reviewed articles and studies on climate change and found that only 24 of them rejected global warming—less than 0.2 percent. Although there is not unanimous opinion, when there is 99.8 percent agreement in the scientific community, we should agree that this degree of certainty is enough to take action.

“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” is an aphorism that dates back to the early 1700s. Why are we waiting? Let's change our ways. Let's work together to lower greenhouse gases, combat pollution, and slow the impact of climate change.

As someone who represents the State of Delaware, I am passionate about this because we are the lowest mean elevation State in America. I have heard from folks up and down the First State—from my colleague Senator CARPER, from our Governor, from our community leaders, and from concerned citizens from Wilmington, to Rehoboth, to Middletown—that they are concerned about sea level rise and its likely impact on our State. We need to do more because, in my small State, sea level rise is happening at twice the

national rate. In about 100 years, everyone in Delaware will finally have a beach house—just not the way they want it.

Let me conclude by saying we need to look forward, not backward, when addressing climate change and sea level rise. We need action, not reaction. We need policy, not politics. We should act today, not tomorrow.

Again, I thank Senator WHITEHOUSE. It was my pleasure to have him visit my home State of Delaware and see what we are doing to plan for and to combat sea level rise as a result of climate change. It was my honor to join him this evening and lend my support to him, to our environment, and to the fight against climate change.

I yield to my senior colleague from our shared home State of Delaware.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. RUBIO). The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I am TOM CARPER, and I approved this message.

I have had the privilege of serving on the Environment and Public Works Committee for—oh, my gosh—17 years and now serve as the senior Democrat on the committee. I have had the opportunity of serving with SHELDON WHITEHOUSE for more than half of those years. He is a senior member of our committee, a good friend, and, I think, someone who is respected by Democrats and Republicans and Independents alike here in the Senate. He is the junior Senator from Rhode Island, but he casts a long shadow on a lot of issues, none less than the issue we are discussing here today.

I join my friend Senator COONS in thanking SHELDON sincerely for his passion and for his persistence in highlighting what the vast majority of the world recognizes as the greatest environmental challenge of our time, and that is climate change.

Our friend from Rhode Island is a well-known climate champion, but what some may not know is that SHELDON has spent over 500 hours here on the Senate floor in reminding all of us that it is long past time to wake up, that it is time to wake up and get serious about addressing this ever-growing threat. I learned early on in the Senate that if we want to get anything done, we have to be persistent, and we have to stay on message. He has been staying on that message through 200 floor speeches, and the theme has always been “time to wake up.” For nearly 6 years now, SHELDON WHITEHOUSE has reiterated what his constituents in the Ocean State and what constituents in our State, the First State, see every day—climate change is real, human beings are making it worse, and it is threatening our economy and our way of life. Those of us living in coastal States also know all too well that we can no longer ignore the issue or wait to take real action.

While our friend from Rhode Island is—what they like to say in Rhode Island—wicked smart, you don't have to

take his word for it that climate change is a growing threat, for leading scientists in our country and around the world have been saying this not just for a couple of years but for decades. Scientists and medical professionals have also linked climate change to increased air pollution, deadly high temperatures, and more pests in our food and water—all of which negatively impact our health and disproportionately affect the most vulnerable among us.

These days, you don't need a degree in science or medicine to see the disastrous effect of climate change on the world in which we live. Rising sea levels and extreme weather events from climate change are the new norm. In 2017 alone, we had multiple category 5 hurricanes—I think maybe for the first time in history. We had the second hottest year on record, catastrophic fires in the West, and severe flooding in the East. These events place extreme burdens on the American people, on our economy, and on our budget, having cost our Federal Government literally hundreds of billions of dollars not over the last 10 years but last year—in 1 year.

The effects of rising sea levels are even more harmful in low-lying, coastal States, like Delaware. Senator COONS explained that Delaware is the lowest lying State in America, where the highest piece of land in our State is a bridge. There is a combination of things going on in coastal States like ours. In our State, the land is sinking, and the sea is rising. That is not a good combination for Delaware or any other place, and our friends from Rhode Island know of what I speak.

I am delighted that Senator WHITEHOUSE is a member of the Environment and Public Works Committee with many of us because, whether we are discussing environmental policy or infrastructure investments, the Senator from Rhode Island never fails to remind our colleagues of the unique and significant challenges that coastal States face as a result of climate change.

Many people may not know this, but as I said before, you can go to Delaware, the lowest lying State. You can come with me and drive south on State Highway 1, past Dover Air Force Base, make a left turn on Prime Hook Road, drive to the edge of Delaware Bay, and look across toward New Jersey. There is a concrete bunker—I don't know—maybe 500 feet out in the water, poking up out of the water. What used to be there at the water's edge was a parking lot, where people used to park their trucks and launch their boats and go out and fish or whatever. That concrete bunker out in the ocean, out in Delaware Bay, used to sit 500 feet west of the dune line. It is now out in the ocean and is largely covered when we have high tide.

I invite my colleagues who deny climate change to visit our State. Come to Delaware and see firsthand what I

just described at Prime Hook Beach. Come with us to a place called Southbridge, which is just at the southern edge of Wilmington, DE, or to the roads that are washing out in Odesa, which is about 30 miles south of Wilmington, where the strongest storms have ravaged our beaches and the sea level has risen, as I mentioned earlier, at Prime Hook Beach.

One colleague who has been to Delaware more than a few times is SHELDON WHITEHOUSE. I like to call him affectionately “the Whitehouse.” A few years back, Senator WHITEHOUSE came to the First State to see a spectacular natural event that Delaware is lucky to host every year—the arrival of the red knots. They fly for literally thousands and thousands of miles, from south to north and north to south. They stop for lunch in Delaware. They eat the eggs of our horseshoe crabs, and they refuel for their journey. Imagine it. They are not this big. They are maybe half the size of the birds that are right here, but they can fly literally thousands of miles—almost 10,000—before stopping to refuel.

Each year, Delaware Bay hosts tens of thousands of tiny but tough birds—the red knots. The red knot regularly migrates some 19,000 miles, it turns out, each year from the southern tip of South America all the way up to the Arctic Circle. It stops in Delaware to feed on horseshoe crab eggs and refuel for the rest of its journey. It is an incredible journey for such a small shorebird. Its arrival on our shores is a must-see event, as our friend from Rhode Island can attest.

You might think that a bird as hearty as the red knot, which flies across the globe every year, might be able to escape the effects of climate change, but warming temperatures, ocean acidification, and sea level rise are threatening their food supply and their nesting grounds all along their journey. If nothing else, we should be working together to ensure that our children and our grandchildren will be able to experience natural phenomena like the arrival of the red knots for years, for decades, for centuries to come. We should also recognize that we share a home with these creatures. It is not just our planet; it is their planet too. If we allow climate change to determine their fate, it will undoubtedly determine ours eventually.

I will close with this. I know that fighting climate change is a personal matter for me. I also know that the same is true for our friend from Rhode Island. We are fighting for our constituents' way of life, and our Senator from Rhode Island and I will continue to speak truth to power.

To the climate science deniers who are still out there, I borrow the fitting words of our Ocean State colleague: It is really time to wake up. Climate change is no longer in the distant future; it is here, it is now, and we need to meet that challenge head-on.

I yield to the Senator from Hawaii.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, the news about climate change certainly feels daunting. In the United States, we have historic wildfires, hurricanes, storms, and floods. Severe weather has upended people's lives, destroyed businesses and homes, and is now costing the economy tens of billions of dollars every year. Around the world, it can sometimes seem even bleaker. Cities are running out of water, and drought has distressed entire regions and pushed people out of their homes and fueled conflict.

Meanwhile, here in Washington, DC, the Trump administration is actively undermining our ability to address climate change. At the EPA in particular, Scott Pruitt is allowing polluters to violate the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act. He plans to eliminate limits on methane emissions and protections that keep toxic chemicals from polluting our waterways. He is rolling back the Clean Power Plan and fuel efficiency standards that keep too much carbon from polluting the air. He has cut the number of fines for polluters by more than half, and he has reduced the EPA's staff so that it is down to the same level that it was in 1984. There are 700 EPA employees, including 200 scientists, who have left since the beginning of the Trump administration. In other words, this administration is not just ignoring climate change and its impacts, it is actually throwing fuel on the fire.

So is there any reason for hope? Let me give you three reasons to actually be hopeful.

First, the rest of the world is going to move forward with or without leadership. Every single nation in the world is working to lower its emissions and meet its commitments as part of the Paris Agreement. Experts said that even without the United States, the Paris Agreement can succeed if nations follow through, and there are some promising signs that this is happening.

In China, experts predicted that coal consumption would peak between the years 2020 and 2040, but Brookings reported earlier this year that the country's consumption of coal has already peaked. One-third of global investments in renewable energy today come from China. In 2018, they will likely make up half of the entire global market for new solar installations.

China is not the only one making progress here. The world is in a race for clean energy. A coalition of 22 countries and the EU is investing more than \$30 billion a year in clean energy research and development.

That brings us to the second reason to have hope on climate change, and that is economics. Here in the United States, financial incentives remain the law regardless of what Scott Pruitt wants the law to be. We still have the investment tax credit and the production tax credit for solar and wind, and they are pushing us toward clean energy. Last year, more than half of the

new energy generation that came online in the United States was that of wind and solar—more than coal and natural gas combined.

The fact is that clean energy is now cheaper than dirty energy. In 2009, coal cost \$111 per megawatt hour, natural gas \$83, wind \$135. Utility-scale solar cost a whopping \$359—about 3½ times the cost of coal. By 2017—listen to these numbers—it was \$102 for coal, \$60 for natural gas, \$45 for wind, and \$50 for utility-scale solar. Now wind and solar are 20 percent cheaper, on average, and coal is twice as expensive as clean energy.

Even the fossil fuel industry understands that we are moving toward a low-carbon economy. That is why their investors are demanding accountability. Last year, a majority of shareholders forced ExxonMobil to start reporting on how the fight against climate change will impact the oil company, which is the largest oil company in the world. TransCanada canceled its plans to build an oil pipeline that would have carried 1.1 million barrels of oil a day because of the changing economic and political calculations.

Third and finally, the United States may not have the President's leadership on climate change, but when it comes to the Paris Agreement, corporations, States, and cities have stood up and declared: We are still in. Thousands of mayors, Governors, CEOs, Tribal leaders, and average Americans are working to meet our commitment to the Paris Agreement. Here is one example at the State level. More than half of the States have clean energy policies in place, and many have capped emissions. In Hawaii, we will transition to 100 percent clean energy by the year 2045, and analysts are optimistic that we may reach our goal sooner than that. These efforts are making a difference. Researchers at Carnegie Mellon found that the United States can meet our original commitment to the Paris Agreement regardless of what Rex Tillerson, Donald Trump, and Scott Pruitt want. Even if the EPA undermines our effort, we are still on track.

George Washington once said that "perseverance and spirit have done wonders in all ages." He also said that "it is infinitely better to have a few good men than many indifferent ones." By these two measures, there is even hope in Congress. Senator SHELDON WHITEHOUSE will be remembered in history as the epitome of perseverance and spirit when it comes to climate change. He understands the moral urgency of this moment. When we look at the Senators joining him on the floor this evening, it is clear that we have more than a few good men and women working on this issue.

We will continue to shine a light on the many ways that this administration is failing the American people by ignoring climate change. We will also continue to hope because the absence of leadership from this President has

not stopped the rest of the country or the rest of the world from acting on climate, and it will not stop us from moving forward.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, I rise today to join the citizens of Massachusetts who are making their voices heard and sending a clear message to President Trump: The Commonwealth of Massachusetts stands strong in opposition to his reckless proposal to expand offshore drilling. We stand strong in opposition to yet another handout to Big Oil executives who are willing to put corporate profits ahead of the health of our coastal families. We stand strong in opposition to this administration's willful ignorance of climate change and the world's ongoing clean energy revolution.

President Trump may say that his drilling plan is about growing jobs, but the truth is that this offshore drilling proposal is a slap in the face to every hard-working coastal family. President Trump is willing to put corporate profits for his Big Oil buddies ahead of shipping crews in Boston, ahead of the fishermen from Gloucester to New Bedford, ahead of the mom-and-pop diners all along the Cape, ahead of every tourism industry worker, and ahead of the families of all of these workers. President Trump is willing to gamble with the livelihoods of over 600,000 North Atlantic coastal and ocean workers. The people of Massachusetts and the people who depend on a clean coast are not willing to take that gamble.

Our coastal communities remember when the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill happened in 2010. One offshore oil well blew and caused Deepwater Horizon's drilling rig to explode. It killed 11 workers, injured 17 others, and unleashed one of the worst environmental disasters in human history. Nearly 5 million barrels of oil gushed into the ocean, contaminating more than 1,300 miles of coastline and nearly 70,000 square miles of surface water. Millions of birds and marine animals died, suffocated by thick coatings of oil and poisoned by other toxic chemicals. The gulf fishing industry lost thousands of jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue. The spill devastated the gulf's coastal tourism economy. The environmental and economic devastation hit working families and small businesses across the region.

But the Trump administration insists on padding the pockets of Big Oil while small coastal towns bear all the risks that something will go wrong. The local towns bear the risk of a devastating oil spill. The local towns bear the risk of climate change impact, including increased coastal habitat destruction, fisheries threatened by ocean acidification, and rising sea levels. President Trump and this Republican Congress want to bury their heads in the sand or bury their heads in the big pile of Big Oil money, but the

reality is this: Climate change has happened, and the evidence is all around us. The consequences are worsening with every single day of inaction.

Make no mistake. We are in the most critical fight of our generation and we are running out of time. We are in a fight to save our coastal towns, a fight to save our farmers, a fight to save our fishermen, a fight to save good-paying clean energy jobs, and a fight for our children's future.

Will winning the fight against climate change be tough? You bet it will. We will need to retool to install offshore wind turbines instead of offshore drilling rigs. We will need to invest in faster clean energy deployment, modernize the electric grid, build sea walls to protect our coastal towns, and much, much more. It is a big job ahead, but there is no country and no workforce in the world that is more willing and more able to tackle the challenges of climate change head-on than the United States of America. Yes, it is hard, but it is what we do. It is who we are.

We are a nation of unrelenting workers who clawed our way out of the Great Depression, who fought two world wars, who put a man on the moon, and who electrified the Nation with 20th century fuels. With a level playing field, we are a nation of workers who can electrify the world all over again with the 21st century fuels of wind, solar, and other clean energy sources.

The American people deserve leadership that understands just how innovative and persistent we are—leadership that knows the fearless strength of the American people; leadership that believes in the innovative, get-it-done attitude of the American worker; leadership that will stand up to Big Oil executives hell-bent on protecting their profits at our expense; and leadership that knows that our best days are ahead of us. But we have to fight for them. They deserve leadership that will not ignore the challenges of climate change; leadership that will not chain our economy to the fossil fuels of yesterday and, instead, will support the good-paying, clean energy jobs of tomorrow; and leadership that refuses to put our coastal families at risk of another devastating oil spill.

The American people deserve leadership that doesn't work for Big Oil. The American people deserve leadership that works for them.

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. BROWN. 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. BROWN. Mr. President, I first wish to thank Senator WHITEHOUSE, one of my best friends in the Senate.

We came to the Senate on the same day. He will go down in history as the best advocate in this body or perhaps the greatest moralist of our time combatting climate change. He has educated Members of the Senate—some more resistant than others.

He has taken to the floor over and over. He has continued to make sure that people listen to something important, and we all appreciate that leadership.

Climate change affects Ohio jobs that rely on Lake Erie. The Great Lakes are vital to our industrial heartland, as the Rockies are to the West, as the Atlantic coastline is to New England, as the Gulf of Mexico is to the Presiding Officer's own State of Florida. In fact, 84 percent of America's freshwater is in the five Great Lakes. Only polar icecaps contain more freshwater than do the Great Lakes.

Lake Erie is one of the biggest lakes in the world. It is also the shallowest of the lakes. This is an amazing statistic. Lake Erie is the shallowest and among the smallest of the Great Lakes in surface area. Lake Erie contains 2 percent of all the water in the Great Lakes, yet it contains 50 percent of the fish in the Great Lakes because it is warmer and shallower and conducive to aquatic life and fish life.

Its shallowness makes it particularly vulnerable to storm water runoff and the algae blooms that it causes. The Maumee River runs through Toledo. The Maumee River Basin is the largest drainage basin of any of the Great Lakes, and the largest river that empties into the Great Lakes is the Maumee.

Climate change makes these algae blooms off the coast of Toledo in the western base of Lake Erie. Climate change makes those blooms worse. It contaminates our lakes, and it threatens the Ohio businesses and communities that rely on Lake Erie. Three summers ago, we had to get bottled drinking water to the citizens of Toledo and the surrounding areas of Northwest Ohio because the water was not potable at that time.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, we know that one effect of climate change in the Great Lakes region has been a 37-percent increase in the gully washers—the heavy rain events that contribute to algae blooms.

I talked to farmers who have been farming in the Western Lake Erie Basin for decades. Just a few weeks ago I did a roundtable in that part of the State. My staff member Jonathan McCracken has done a number of roundtables before. Since talking to these farmers, they tell us they are experiencing heavier rain events more often and with greater intensity compared to even 15 years ago, let alone in the lifespan of many of these farmers.

Hotter summers and shorter winters make this worse. The effects of algae blooms have a profound effect on the ecosystem. That is why this matters.

Protecting our lakes is one of the biggest environmental challenges facing the entire Midwest. It is the biggest challenge facing Ohio.

We have made some progress over the last 8 years, thanks in large part to the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. The GLRI is working. Everybody knows it does. Nobody claims it doesn't.

I remember how polluted Lake Erie was when I was growing up. I grew up an hour or hour and a half from there. My family, a week or two in the summer, would drive north to Gem Beach. I remember the dead fish. I remember the smell of the lake. I remember that this lake was in big, big trouble.

We have made progress cleaning up its tributaries. We increased access to the lake. We approved habitats for fish and wildlife. It has been a bipartisan success story, and it took the Federal Government to do it. The city of Cleveland couldn't do it, nor the city of Loraine, the city of Sandusky, the city of Port Clinton, the city of Ashtabula. They couldn't clean up the lake. The State of Ohio didn't have the ability and the resources to clean this lake up. It took the Federal Government and the U.S. EPA to have the strength and the dollars and the mission to clean up this lake. That is why it has been a bipartisan success story all over our country.

We need to make sure that GLRI has the funding it needs to keep up its work and not eliminate it, as the President again proposed in his budget. Taking a hatchet to GLRI would cost Ohio jobs, and it would jeopardize public health by putting our drinking water at risk.

If you are over 50 years old, you remember what that lake looked like. You remember what that lake smelled like. You remember how people didn't swim there, how people's drinking water was threatened. You remember that before EPA, before there was this bipartisan commitment to clean up one of the greatest of the Great Lakes. You remember that.

Obviously, this President doesn't know this. This President won his election based on winning these Great Lakes States, and he has abandoned these States by drastically cutting funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

Those of us along the Great Lakes didn't stand for a budget that eliminated GLRI last year. Nothing has changed this year. Ohioans on both sides of the aisle will go to the mat for our lake.

I am working with Senator PORTMAN—I am a Democrat; he is a Republican—and my Ohio colleagues from both parties to protect it. Budget cuts are terrible for this; climate change will only make it worse.

When I was young, people wrote off Lake Erie as a polluted, dying lake. As I said, I remember seeing it. I remember smelling it. I remember hearing people talk about it. Many, many peo-

ple thought that there wasn't much future for this Great Lake, that it would be impossible to clean up.

People in the past have had a habit of not just writing off Lake Erie but also writing off my State. We have proved them wrong time and again. We proved them wrong back then, we proved them wrong today, and we will prove them wrong in the future.

Our lake is improving. It is supporting an entire industry. It supports the jobs it creates. It is providing drinking water and recreation and so much more to communities across our State, and we can't allow climate change to ruin that progress. We cannot write off Lake Erie. We cannot write off the millions of Ohioans and people from Indiana, Michigan, Pennsylvania, New York, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota who depend on these five Great Lakes.

I see it up close. I live only 5 or 6 miles from the lake. I know what it means for my community. I know how important this is for the future—the environmental future—of our country, the economic future of my State. It is important for all of us to come together on a bipartisan basis.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I join my colleagues today to discuss climate change. I want to thank Senator WHITEHOUSE for being a vocal advocate for addressing this issue.

Climate change is real. It is happening all around us, and we can't afford to ignore this fact any longer.

This past year, global temperatures were up 1.7 degrees Fahrenheit over the historical average. Millions of Americans came face-to-face with extreme weather events like deadly wildfires and powerful hurricanes, and these extreme weather events are only expected to get worse.

If no action is taken to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the world will warm 7 to 8 degrees Fahrenheit by 2100. Rising temperatures will bring increasingly more severe droughts, destructive floods, deadly wildfires, and strong coastal storms. Rising temperatures are also warming our oceans, threatening to melt both polar icecaps.

Last summer, the world watched as an iceberg the size of Delaware broke free from Antarctica's Larsen C ice shelf. Scientists are now studying how the entire shelf may collapse and projecting what that would mean for the even larger West Antarctic Ice Sheet as oceans continue to warm. That sheet—twice the size of Texas—contains enough ice to raise sea levels by more than 10 feet.

That much sea rise would submerge more than 25,000 square miles of the United States that is home to more than 12 million Americans.

Rising seas and the loss of coastal land aren't the only threats we are facing due to climate change. The effects it is having on our water supply is deeply troubling.

California is home to the largest agriculture sector in the United States.

Our growers need access to plenty of water to help feed the whole Nation. As temperatures rise, we are seeing fewer and fewer days below freezing, greatly reducing mountain snowpack which is a critical source of water in the West. Extreme heat is also making it harder for agriculture workers to safely work outside. In the Central Valley, average temperatures are projected to rise 6 degrees by the end of this century. It is not just people who work outdoors who are feeling the health effects of climate change. Warmer temperatures are expanding the range of disease-carrying pests such as ticks and mosquitos. Lyme disease cases have tripled in the last two decades, and tropical diseases are now appearing as far north as the Gulf Coast.

Californians know all too well the effects of climate change. We are still recovering from an historic drought and the most destructive wildfire season on record. But we may be in another drought by next year if we don't get more rain soon.

In the absence of leadership from the Federal Government, California is stepping up and taking action. California is still honoring the Paris Agreement even though the President pulled the United States out.

By 2030, California will reach 50 percent renewable electricity, double energy efficiency, and reduce emissions to 40 percent below 1990 levels. California has also grown to become the sixth largest economy in the world, showing you can still grow your economy while making smart investments in clean energy.

President Trump and his allies in Congress need to wake up. We can't afford to ignore an issue as important as climate change any longer.

The American people demand action.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I rise today to commemorate the 200th speech the Senator from Rhode Island, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, will make here on the floor of the U.S. Senate on the need to act on climate change.

When global challenges arise, countries throughout the world look to the United States for leadership. Climate change is an issue that affects billions of people worldwide, and the United States can and should be a leading voice in combating it.

Despite making significant progress under President Obama, President Trump has decided to reverse course and take a backseat while the rest of the world tackles this issue head-on. Over the last year, the United States has pulled out of the Paris Agreement, weakened air and water protections here at home, moved away from renewable energy, and implemented drastic funding and staffing cuts at the Environmental Protection Agency, EPA.

President Trump's decision to retreat from our commitment to combating climate change comes at a critical time for the state of our environment. His abdication of responsibility is calamitous. The vast majority of sci-

entists have concluded that climate change is real and caused by human activity, and Americans are already feeling the effects.

Last year, for instance, our Nation experienced one of the most destructive hurricane seasons on record and a series of deadly wildfires. On top of this, sea levels continue to rise at record pace, posing an existential threat to coastal communities throughout the country. This is especially dangerous for the State I represent, as many Marylanders live in areas that are acutely susceptible to rising tides and flood damage. As such, much of our essential communication, transportation, energy, and wastewater management infrastructure is at risk.

This begs the question: What kind of environmental legacy do we want to leave for our children and grandchildren? I believe that it is our responsibility to leave our beaches, farms, towns, and wetlands healthier than we found them.

The most recent research suggests that our actions over the next 5 years will shape the course of sea level rise for generations. Therefore, the time is now to take decisive action on climate change. If we fail to do so, we will be left to explain to the next generation why we failed to act in the face of so much incontrovertible evidence.

Some of my colleagues argue that tackling climate change is too costly an undertaking. They claim that any action we take to protect human health and the environment will inevitably cost jobs and hurt the economy. The reality is that nothing poses a bigger long-term threat to our economic and national security than climate change.

As sea levels and temperatures climb higher, so do the costs of doing business. Changing weather patterns increase risk for homeowners. Our attempts to cool a heating planet will strain our energy supply. These are just a few of the economic consequences that we will face if we fail to take action.

The progress we have seen in Maryland demonstrates that we can preserve our environment while maintaining a robust economy. Marylanders have taken decisive action on a range of environmental issues, and the State is currently on track to meet the guidelines established in the Paris Agreement. Thanks, in part, to the partnerships within the Chesapeake Bay Program, the health of the Bay has been steadily increasing for years.

At the same time, Maryland's farming industry, which employs over 350,000 Marylanders, has remained vibrant. Our success in Maryland is a testament to what we can do as a nation on climate change.

The key to our success will depend on the degree to which we are willing to cooperate with each other. This includes interstate partnerships such as the Chesapeake Bay Program, as well as international partnerships like the

Paris Agreement. We should not let President Trump's decision to remove the United States from the Paris Agreement discourage us from working together to achieve our goals. In the spirit of collaboration, we should continue to partner with the States, localities, universities, and business that have decided to honor the global commitment we made under President Obama.

I am especially proud to see the city of Baltimore, Hyattsville, Takoma Park, the University of Maryland School System, and all the other localities and organizations lead this effort in Maryland by joining the America's Pledge project.

America's Pledge is a new initiative co-led by California Governor Edmund G. "Jerry" Brown, Jr., and the U.N. Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Cities and Climate Change Michael R. Bloomberg, which aims to assess the scope and scale of climate actions being taken by U.S. States, cities, businesses, and other non-Federal actors. I am proud the Center for Global Sustainability at the University of Maryland is among the institutions providing the project their research support.

I encourage my colleagues to put our planet, our environment, and the future of humanity over partisan politics and President Trump's stubborn insistence on retrograde policies. We must do what is best not just for ourselves, but for future generations, too. The United States of America has been a world leader on so many issues, which redounds to our own benefit. Now is not the time to abdicate that role. The world and our children are watching.

We are fortunate to have climate change leaders like Senator WHITEHOUSE. With a dogged persistence, he has come to this Chamber month after month to educate, to cajole, and to inspire us to take action.

Most of all, he has warned us of the grave danger climate change presents. Will we be like the Trojans of ancient Greek mythology, who ignored the prophecies of Cassandra about the imminent destruction of their city? We do so, like the Trojans, at our own peril. Cassandra's prophecies came true. If we listen to Senator WHITEHOUSE and learn from him and take action now, we can change our fate for the better.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I thank my friend Senator SHELDON WHITEHOUSE, and congratulations on his long history of action on climate change.

Six years ago, Senator WHITEHOUSE began a campaign to speak every week about climate change. One need only look at the past 6 years of climate impacts to understand just how important the Senator's pledge is.

The planet has been warming for years, but in the last few years, the disturbing trends have accelerated. The last 4 years have been the hottest on record.

The effects of climate change are already obvious, from the eroding coasts

off Cape Cod to storm surge in Boston Harbor. January's bomb cyclone in Massachusetts broke the flood record in Boston set by the Blizzard of 1978.

Sadly, this is our new normal. Thirteen of the top 20 biggest flood events in Boston have occurred since 2000. While Massachusetts gets overrun by the impacts of climate change, President Trump has plans to expand offshore drilling off the New England coast. This is the very definition of insanity.

Our communities and our oceans are feeling the pressure of the changing climate. But what has the Trump administration decided to do about it? Worse than nothing. It has started to withdraw us from the Paris Climate Accord. It has repealed the Clean Power Plan. It has rolled back historic fuel economy standards, loosened standards for hazardous pollutants, and declared all-out war on climate science.

Throughout the administration, there has been an alarming attack on public information about climate change. On the Environmental Protection Agency's website, more than 5,000 pages of information on climate change have disappeared, either relegated to an unsearchable maze far from public view or simply deleted. Fact sheets on public health and climate change are gone. Resources for States and cities have disappeared. Guides for students and teachers are no more. This isn't transparency; it is a transparent attack on climate science.

It is also an attack on our scientists. More than 200 scientists have left the EPA under the Trump administration. Those 200 scientists have been replaced with only seven new hires. Our top climate scientists are telling us that fear is rampant at EPA and across Federal agencies. The EPA's job is to instill fear into the hearts of corporate polluters, not its own scientists.

We need to encourage more science, not less. We need science to inform the policies we need to provide the solutions that could save our planet. That is what Senator WHITEHOUSE has championed for these past 6 years on the floor and throughout his career in public service.

I thank Senator WHITEHOUSE for asking me to stand with him today and for being an environmental Paul Revere, sounding the alarm on climate change. We cannot be silenced, and we will continue to work together to sound that alarm—because that is what is happening, the Earth's alarm clock has gone off and it is telling us all to wake up. There is no one who is more woke to what is happening to our planet's climate than he.

Thank you.

Mr. BROWN. 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. KING. 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. KING. Mr. President, I rise today to join my colleague from Rhode Island to talk about climate change, but I first want to make a comment about my good friend and an important Member of this body, Senator WHITEHOUSE of Rhode Island, and what he has done.

In the 1930s, a lonely voice stood on the floor of the Houses of Parliament, warning of the impending catastrophe of the rearmament of Germany in the advent of World War II. People didn't listen. Often, he spoke to a lonely House, but his voice was clear, his voice was prescient, and what he said was important. Of course, I refer to Winston Churchill.

Today and over the past many years, Senator WHITEHOUSE has performed that same function of warning us, of trying to wake us up to a challenge that is impending, that is catastrophic, that is significant, and that is also at least somewhat preventable.

Senator WHITEHOUSE has talked about climate change in terms of ocean acidification, temperature changes, sea level rise, drought, famine, and the effects throughout the world. Often this Chamber is empty, but his warnings are important and should be heeded nonetheless.

The first thing I want to do is thank him and compliment him for the work that he has done over these many years and continues to do. I can see his sign—as I see it on C-SPAN and here on the floor—that says “Wake Up,” and wake up is what we need to do.

People often talk about climate change as if it were some abstract thing that is going on, and it is in scientific journals, and it is a kind of environmental movement that doesn't really affect real life that much; it is just sort of something that goes on out there and one of the many issues we have to deal with. But it is real. I will tell you how I know. The fishermen in Maine have told me so.

Just this past Saturday, I spent the evening with a man who has been a fisherman for 40 years in the Gulf of Maine. He said that he has never seen the kinds of changes we have seen in the last 10 years. They are catching fish that have never been seen before in the Gulf of Maine. A lobsterman told me of pulling up a seahorse in his lobster trap. Seahorses aren't supposed to live in the cold water of Maine.

This isn't an abstract question for us. Lobstering is a \$1.7-billion-a-year industry for Maine. Lobstering used to be a major industry in Rhode Island and Massachusetts, and now it is largely gone.

There are multiple explanations, but one of them is that the water is warming, and our species, whether they are lobsters or trees or bears, are sensitive to small environmental changes.

We have had record lobster harvests in Maine in the last 5 to 10 years—although I have to say that in the last 2 years, they have been down. We don't

know whether the declines are a blip or a trend. We deeply hope that it doesn't represent a trend, but we can't ignore what happened to the lobster population to our south.

The water is getting warmer in the Gulf of Maine. The water in the Gulf of Maine is warming at the fastest rate of any body of water on Earth, except for the Arctic Ocean, and it has already wrought changes in the nature of our natural resource-based economy.

Maine is a natural resource State, dependent largely upon fisheries, lobster, agriculture, farming, and forestry. That is who we are. Of course, another part of our economy is the millions of tourists who come to Maine each summer to visit our incredible coastline. Climate change isn't an abstract for us; it is a very real phenomenon.

I want to emphasize not only what my friend the fisherman told me this weekend, but also that I have heard from fishermen all over Maine for the last 4 or 5 years about the changes they are seeing. This guy isn't a scientist, but he is out on the water, and he knows what he is catching. He knows he is catching fish he has never caught before. He has never seen the tropical, warm water fish now being caught in the Gulf of Maine.

I think the other factor we need to talk about is a dollars-and-cents question that relates to sea level rise. We are talking about millions of dollars on the part of the U.S. Government to preserve the coastal infrastructure that we have in connection with our Armed Forces.

The city of Norfolk is already experiencing what are called sunny day floods. The city of Miami—the Presiding Officer's hometown—is experiencing sunny day floods. These are floods that aren't caused by great storms, by great perturbations in the atmosphere; they are caused just by a high tide. The cost of dealing with this in Miami, New Orleans, New York, or Maine is going to be enormous.

We tend to think of the ocean as a fixed commodity, as something that has always been the way it is now. It turns out that we have been fooled. We have been lulled into a sense of confidence about the level of the sea because for the past 8,000 years, it has been the same. But this is a chart that shows the depth of the Atlantic Ocean over the past 24,000 years.

It turns out that 24,000 years ago, which was the height of the glacial period, the waters off the coast of Maine were 390 feet shallower than they are today—390 feet shallower. What you see here is the melting of the glaciers and the refilling of the oceans.

From our historic point of view, the problem is that it got to a plateau about 10,000 years ago, and that is all we know. That is human history, right here. We don't remember this very much because it appeared before recorded human history.

Now, there is an interesting moment in this chart, and it is right in this period about 15,000 years ago, and it is

called the meltwater pulse 1A. That is what scientists call it. We see a very steep rise in the ocean level during this period. Interestingly, this rise is about 1 foot per decade. That is what happened during that time about 15,000 years ago.

Well, a year and a half ago I went to Greenland with two climate scientists, one of whom focuses almost exclusively on sea level rise. The estimates vary quite a bit, I will concede, but their estimate was that what we are facing now is 1 foot of sea level rise per decade for the rest of this century. Has it ever happened before? Yes. Is that an outrageous estimate? No, because it has happened before. It can happen again. Why? Because the last remnants of the glaciers are in Antarctica and Greenland, and between the ice sheets on those two areas is 260 feet of additional sea level rise. Greenland is melting at an unprecedented rate, and there is a huge ice shelf in Antarctica that is poised to fall into the ocean. If that happens, it will cause sea level rise, just as dropping an ice cube in a glass of water does.

The indications are overwhelming of what this issue means for the future of this country. This is not an academic question.

Here is another example of what is happening in a relatively short period of time. The volume of ice in the Arctic Ocean has fallen by two-thirds since 1979—a 40-year period. The Arctic Ocean is more clear today than it has ever been in human history. Anybody who says nothing is happening or it is just routine or the weather changes all the time isn't paying attention to the facts. Again, my concern about this is practical: the cost of seawalls, the cost of shoring up our infrastructure, just the cost to the government of protecting the naval facilities in Norfolk. Of course, one of the problems in the State of the Presiding Officer is, the rock is porous limestone so it is very difficult to build a seawall because the water will simply come under it. So we are talking about a very serious practical issue that is going to cost our society billions, if not trillions, of dollars.

Can we stop it? Probably not. Can we slow it? Yes, but it is going to take action today, and every day we wait, it makes the action harder and more expensive. If we wait until the waves are lapping up over the seawall in New York City or over the dikes in New Orleans or over the streets of Miami or along the coast of Maine at our marshes and low points, it will be too late. Then all we can do is defend and not prevent.

I believe we can make changes now that are not totally disruptive to our economy but will be protective of our economy and will be much cheaper now than they will be 10, 15, 20, 30, 40, or 50 years from now. What we are doing is leaving the problem to our kids, just like we are leaving the deficit to our kids, just like we are leaving broken infrastructure to our kids.

Tom Brokaw wrote a book after World War II called "The Greatest Generation." That was the generation that sacrificed in World War II, and then they built the Interstate Highway System, paid for it, and paid down the debt that was accumulated during World War II. We are just the opposite. We are increasing our debt on all levels at a time of relative prosperity. The economy is at low unemployment. Yet we are passing trillion-dollar tax cuts that add to the deficit that these young people are going to have to pay off.

We are not attending to the problem of climate change. Who is going to have to pay to build those seawalls? Not us; our children and our grandchildren. I believe this is a moral and an ethical issue as well as a practical issue.

So I will return to where I began: to compliment my colleague from Rhode Island for raising the alarm, for pointing out what we can do, how we can do it, the consensus of scientific opinion, and the reality of what we are facing. We can do better. We don't have to avoid and ignore and waste the resources and the time we have now.

The most precious resource we have now to confront this problem is time, and every day that goes by is a day of irresponsibility. It is a day where our children and grandchildren are going to say: Where were you when this was happening? Why didn't you listen to that guy from Rhode Island who told you what was going to happen, who told you how we could do something about it? Why didn't we listen? I don't want to be a person who says I didn't listen because I was too busy or because it was inconvenient or because I was afraid it might change a little bit about how we powered our automobiles or got electricity.

I think it is a question we can face. This body can solve big problems. It has done it in the past, but recently our pattern has been, instead of solving problems, avoiding problems—putting them off until next year, next month, or decades from now when this problem is no longer a problem but a catastrophe.

So I salute and thank my colleague from Rhode Island for keeping the focus on this issue. I look forward to continuing to work with him, as we will continue to urge and plead with our colleagues to join us in reasonable steps that can be taken to ameliorate what is coming at us. This is a moment in time when we have it within our power to do something important for the future of our country and for the future of our children. I hope we can seize that moment and serve not only the American people today but the American people who will come after us and will judge us by the extent to which we confronted a problem and saved them from having to solve it themselves.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DAINES). The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I come to the floor to amplify the efforts of my colleague Senator WHITEHOUSE as he gives his 200th climate speech on the Senate floor. He really has become a modern-day Paul Revere on one of the most critical issues of our time that very well dictates the future of our planet and our way of life as we know it. I believe history will record that Senator WHITEHOUSE riveted the attention of the Senate—or attempted, certainly, to do so—and the Nation on the real threat that is climate change. Climate change may be an inconvenient truth to some, but it is a threat to New Jersey, to the United States, and to the security and stability of our world. It is a challenge we cannot afford to ignore.

I agree with my distinguished colleague from Rhode Island that it is well past time for this Congress to wake up and demand climate action from this administration.

We often hear the Trump administration officials, and even some of our colleagues in Congress, suggest that "we don't know enough" about climate change to take action, when the truth is, we know too much not to take action.

We know about the greenhouse effect and how gases like carbon dioxide trap heat in our atmosphere. We know that since 2010, we have experienced the five warmest years on record and that momentary cold snaps in our weather do not detract from the indisputable reality that around the world, temperatures are steadily rising. We know that 97 percent of scientists agree that man-made climate change is real and that the burning of fossil fuels and other human activities have led to unprecedented levels—unprecedented levels—of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere and in our oceans.

We know experts at NOAA have concluded that since the Industrial Revolution, our oceans have become 30 percent more acidic—the greatest increase in 300 million years.

Likewise, we know the Arctic is warming at twice the rate of the rest of the world and that as icecaps melt, our sea levels rise, endangering the coastal communities that drive so much of America's economy.

In New Jersey, we know the real threat posed by climate change, and we know that threat is real. My constituents bore the brunt of Superstorm Sandy when it devastated the Jersey shore. We know rising sea levels and the powerful storms that accompany them jeopardize our coastal communities. From tourism to commercial fishing, to coastal property values totaling nearly \$800 billion, millions of families across New Jersey depend upon a healthy coast and a safe climate. While I may be partial to the Jersey shore, the reality is, nearly 40 percent of the American people live along a coast. That is 40 percent of our country threatened by rising sea levels, stronger storm surges, and more extreme flooding.

Of course, climate change is far from just a coastal problem. From life-threatening heat waves to crop-debilitating droughts, to record-breaking wildfires, the perils of a warming planet are not up for debate. The fact is, climate change will impact every human being and every living thing on this planet if—if—we fail to take action, and the American people know it.

In October of 2017, the Associated Press found that over 61 percent of Americans want us to respond to this historic challenge—61 percent. Even President Trump's Department of Defense gets it. Earlier this year, the Pentagon reported that about 50 percent of all Department of Defense sites already—already—face risks from climate change and extreme weather events. As the ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I am particularly concerned that we have done little to address climate change's role as a threat multiplier.

Whether it is disruptions to the food supply or forced migration from sea level rise or destruction wreaked by more powerful storms, climate change will likely exacerbate conflict and humanitarian crises around the world. President Trump's willful ignorance of these threats risks leaving the United States unprepared for the 21st century.

There is no question that this willful ignorance is born out of this administration's cozy relationship with the fossil fuel industry. From the Department of Energy to the Environmental Protection Agency, to the Department of the Interior, President Trump has stacked his Cabinet with individuals who seem more concerned about Big Oil profits than the safety of our people and the future of our planet.

Nearly a year ago, the President announced his plan to withdraw the United States from the Paris climate accord, leaving us isolated on the global stage.

Now is not the time to hand our precious waters and protected public lands over to special interests. Now is the time for Congress to incentivize the investments that will modernize our energy infrastructure, create new high-paying jobs, and grow our clean energy economy.

That is why I have introduced the COAST Anti-Drilling Act to permanently ban offshore drilling in the Atlantic and protect the coastal communities so vital to New Jersey and other States. That is why I introduced legislation with 22 of my colleagues to level the playing field and eliminate taxpayer-funded subsidies for the five biggest oil companies. That is why I have worked on the Senate Finance Committee to extend incentives for wind and solar and other clean energy technologies. That is why I have backed legislation that would help harness the potential for limitless clean wind power off our shores.

These initiatives represent modest, commonsense steps toward a thriving clean energy economy, but, ultimately,

it is not enough. We need to think bigger and act boldly. That is why I am here on the floor today with Senator WHITEHOUSE calling for action on climate change. It is time we take action to reduce carbon pollution, create new, high-paying jobs, and accelerate the adoption of innovative clean energy technologies. It is time this administration wake up and put the long-term economic, environmental, and security interests of the United States ahead of fossil fuel profits. It is time the United States reclaims its rightful place as the global leader on climate change.

The American people demand it, and the future of our planet depends on it. That future, to a large degree, is going to be, hopefully, achieved because of individuals willing to stand up for a cause, being principled about it, and willing to fight for it and continue like a laser beam on focusing the attention of the Senate, the Congress, and the American people. Senator WHITEHOUSE is that person, and I salute him as he gives his 200th speech today.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. UDALL. I thank the Presiding Officer for recognizing me.

Mr. President, I know the Presiding Officer hasn't been here the whole time, but many Senators have been speaking about climate change. We see in the Presiding Officer's State, in Glacier National Park—which I think kind of tells it all—a national park created around glaciers, and they are disappearing rapidly.

I come to the floor, first of all, to thank SHELDON WHITEHOUSE for his remarkable leadership on the issue of climate change. His weekly wake-up call speeches have inspired a lot of us. Articles have covered his effort on this. This one is titled, "A Climate 'Wake Up' for the 200th Time." He has been down here religiously taking on this issue.

In this article, a major leader in the environmental movement said about Sheldon's speeches, "[His] speeches have been critically important in drawing attention to the need for climate action." She also said, "Demand for climate action is only growing, and certainly we give him credit for his leadership in that effort." Very true.

I remember traveling with SHELDON WHITEHOUSE to Paris, when all of us were very much enthused to see the world come together and sign the Paris climate agreement. We were all very excited. This effort had been going on for 40 years, and here the countries in the world were finally getting together. I watched Sheldon making those arguments over there. He argued his case persuasively, and he wins converts easily. So we all are here to thank him for his leadership.

In particular, I would also like to talk about climate change, its impact on the Southwest, and where we are headed in my home State of New Mexico and the Greater Southwest. Cli-

mate change is here and now. I want to talk about that impact in the Southwest, which is severe. My home State of New Mexico is right in the bull's-eye.

Our Nation and our Earth cannot afford for us to sit back and do nothing for the next 3 years, but this is precisely what is happening under this administration and this Congress. Our executive and legislative branches are not only sitting on their hands in the face of climate change disruption and devastation; they are aggressively halting all progress we are making.

I was so discouraged when I saw the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency take down a climate change website that had gone from a Republican administration to a Democratic administration. I think it had been going on for almost 10 years. This was covered in the Washington Post. Administrator Pruitt, on taking office, took it down and said: We are going to update it. Here we are, more than a year, and if you try to look at that website, it just says: We are in the process of updating it. I don't think we are ever going to see it again, would be my guess.

Let's look at some of the reasons and how the progress is being halted here. There are a number of reasons for this, but I think the biggest and most insidious is money—billions of dollars in campaign contributions.

The President and congressional majority are delaying, suspending, and stopping policies and programs that combat climate change because of the dark money in politics. Oil and gas, coal, power companies, and other special interests feed their campaign and PAC coffers while the clear public interest is ignored. We must reform our campaign finance system or our climate and the American people will pay a greater and greater price.

SHELDON WHITEHOUSE has made a contribution there with his book, "Captured," where he talks about this dark money indepth. That is another piece of scholarship that really adds to what is happening on this campaign finance front.

While the President, his EPA Administrator, and his Interior Secretary are openly hostile to climate change science, career government scientists and professionals are still hard at work doing their jobs evaluating climate impacts.

Last November, the U.S. Global Change Research Program, consisting of 13 Federal agencies, issued volume I of the "Fourth National Climate Assessment." It is the most authoritative Federal Government resource on climate change.

It concludes, "This period is now the warmest in the history of modern civilization" with "record-breaking, climate-related weather extremes," and human activities—especially greenhouse gas emissions—are the "extremely likely" "dominant cause." A pretty strong statement from the scientists.

With climate change, the Southwest is expected to get hotter and much drier, especially in the southern half of the region. In the last 18 years, New Mexico has seen one reprieve from drought, and the trend is unmistakable. We are seeing less snowpack, earlier melting, and less runoff. Even when we do get snow, new research shows we are getting less runoff from it. Our scarce water resources are even more strained.

Here is a drought map of New Mexico from just last week, March 6. Virtually the entire State faces drier conditions. We can see it here, talking about the northern part of the State with extreme drought, most of the middle and northern part of the State in severe drought, and then the southern part of the State in moderate drought. Virtually, the entire State of New Mexico is in a very serious drought situation.

Some experts are saying we need to stop thinking about this phenomenon as a drought but instead as a dry region becoming permanently drier. This is a direct threat to our way of life in New Mexico and the Southwest.

Elephant Butte Reservoir is our biggest reservoir in New Mexico. It was built close to 100 years ago for flood control and irrigation. Its supply comes from the Rio Grande, our largest river in New Mexico and, as we know, a 1,900-mile river that flows through several States. It is a border for close to 1,000 miles or more, and it flows into the Gulf of Mexico, but for the decade ending 2010, on the Rio Grande, flows in the Rio Grande decreased 23 percent—almost one-quarter—from the 20th century average.

Here are photos of Elephant Butte Reservoir from 1994 and 2013. These photos were taken from a satellite. This top photo is from 1994, and we can see a remarkable reservoir and how deep and extended that reservoir is. Now we jump forward about 20 years, and here is Elephant Butte Reservoir in 2013. The picture says a thousand words: The reservoir is rapidly, rapidly disappearing. We can see the dramatic decrease in supply over that short time. Our farmers and ranchers depend on this supply, and they are struggling. This year, the snowpack in the Upper Rio Grande is half of what it should be, and that will force the reservoir even lower.

Across the Southwest, the average annual temperature has increased about 1.5 degrees Fahrenheit. The last decade, from 2001 to 2010, was the warmest in over a century. Now, New Mexico is really feeling the heat. We are the sixth fastest warming State in the Nation. Since 1970, our average annual temperature increased about 0.6 degrees per decade—or about 2.7 degrees over 45 years—and it is not over. Average annual temperatures are projected to rise 3.5 to 8.5 degrees by 2100.

Difficult-to-control wildfires have multiplied because of dry conditions killing trees and other vegetation, threatening lives, destroying homes,

and costing billions of dollars. New Mexico experienced its largest wildfire in 2012—the Whitewater-Baldy Complex fire—that burned almost 290,000 acres. The fire burned in the southwestern part of the State but caused air pollution hundreds of miles away in Las Cruces to the east and Santa Fe to the northeast.

Agriculture is a mainstay for the Southwest's economy. We produce more than half of the Nation's high-value specialty crops, and crop development is threatened by warming and extreme weather events.

Likewise, another key economic sector—tourism and recreation—is threatened by reduced streamflow and a shorter snow season. Ski Santa Fe used to always open Thanksgiving weekend. That hardly ever happens anymore. Reduced snow and higher temperatures have been an economic disaster for the slopes all over New Mexico.

The Southwest's 182 federally recognized Tribes are particularly vulnerable to climate changes such as high temperatures, drought, and severe storms. Tribes may lose traditional foods, medicines, and water supplies.

Similarly, our border communities are in greater jeopardy because they don't have the financial resources to protect against climate change impacts. They are vulnerable to health and safety risks like air pollution, erosion, and flooding.

The President and his administration have taken aim at Federal programs that would address all these impacts to my State and the Southwest. The President unilaterally withdrew from the Paris Agreement. EPA put the Clean Power Plan on hold. Secretary Zinke has done all he can to halt BLM's methane waste prevention rule. Public lands are open for coal and oil and gas drilling. The President's budget slashed climate science funding. The list goes on and on. This is not what the American people want. They believe science, they understand that human activity is causing climate change, and they want robust policies in response.

Climate change presents the greatest threat our Nation and world now confront. It is the moral test of our age. We will be judged by future generations by how we respond now. We owe it to our children, our grandchildren, and beyond to meet this challenge head-on. I call upon my colleagues across the aisle to listen to the science and the American people and to work with us to take action.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I believe Senator WHITEHOUSE's colleague, the senior Senator from Rhode Island, is here to speak next.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, let me thank Senator UDALL for his kind remarks and his great leadership.

I rise today to add my voice to his voice and to that of so many of my colleagues in calling attention to the

growing threat of climate change, and to encourage the Senate to take meaningful action. First, let me join all of my colleagues in recognizing and thanking my colleague, Senator SHELTON WHITEHOUSE from Rhode Island. His tireless work to raise awareness about the devastating impacts of climate change has truly made a remarkable difference in our country and around the world.

Senator WHITEHOUSE comes to the Senate floor every week to tell us why it is "time to wake up," and I am pleased to be able to join him as he gives his 200th such speech. These 200 speeches provide at least 200 reasons why we should be acting quickly and decisively to address climate change. Just one of those reasons, which I would like to highlight, is the impact of climate change on our national security. Climate change acts as a threat multiplier, exacerbating other problems in unstable areas around the world. It is already creating conflict related to a lack of resources, whether it is access to food, water, or energy.

I was just traveling through Djibouti and Somalia—adjacent to Yemen—and one of the great crises in Yemen is not just the conflict on the ground, but it is a water crisis that is causing massive drought. Then I moved on up to Jordan, and there spoke with our representatives. There is a water crisis in Jordan also and another threatened drought.

These national security problems are climate problems, and these climate problems are national security problems. When it comes to our national security, decisions are made through a careful evaluation of risks, and we must be sure to include risks caused by climate change. It is particularly troubling to me to see that the current Administration is instead choosing to ignore the reality of scientific consensus by removing all references to climate change from documents like the "National Security Strategy" and the "National Defense Strategy."

The Department of Defense must be able to execute its missions effectively and efficiently. So it is disconcerting that climate-related events have already cost the Pentagon significant resources—measured in both monetary costs as well as in negative impacts on military readiness.

In fact, Secretary Mattis, who understands these issues very well, and despite the official publication of the Department of Defense speaks very candidly and directly, has declared the following before the Senate Armed Services Committee:

Where climate change contributes to regional instability, the Department of Defense must be aware of any potential adverse impacts. . . . climate change is impacting stability in areas of the world where our troops are operating today. . . . and the Department should be prepared to mitigate any consequences of a changing climate, including ensuring that our shipyards and installations will continue to function as required.

Across the globe, we see our forces in conflict. They are in the Horn of Africa. They are there facing not just radical fighters, but drought and environmental issues. Here at home, we have shipyards and naval bases on the coast that are seeing rising waters that are going to cost us hundreds of millions of dollars to remediate so they can continue to function. If we don't respond, if we put our heads in the sand on the issues of climate change, our national security will be in endangered.

I was very pleased as the Ranking Member of the Armed Services Committee to support my colleagues when they included in the fiscal year 2018 National Defense Authorization Act a direction that the Department of Defense conduct a threat assessment and deliver a master plan for climate change adaptation. That was a bipartisan bill led by Chairman MCCAIN and supported by vast numbers on both sides of the aisle who understand that climate change must be addressed. It also codified several findings related to climate change and expressed the sense of Congress that climate change is a threat to our national security. We are on record as a Congress saying that national security is jeopardized by climate change. That has to be embraced by the whole of government, not just the Senate or the House acting together.

I must commend our colleague—Sheldon's and my colleague—Congressman JIM LANGEVIN of Rhode Island because he pushed for the same measure in the House of Representatives, and he was successful.

Just like other threats to our national security, it is critical that we recognize, plan for, and take steps to address climate change. Combating climate change may not seem as urgent as other threats we are facing today, but I would argue otherwise. If we don't begin to take aggressive action to protect ourselves from the effects of climate change, we will face ever increasing and severe consequences. Because of his clarion call to pay attention to climate change, Senator WHITEHOUSE is advancing our national security interests in an important way, and I stand here to commend him and thank him.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, I rise to join and thank Senator WHITEHOUSE for his ongoing commitment to give a voice to the issue of climate change and the threat it poses to our country and, frankly, our world. Senator WHITEHOUSE has provided real, moral leadership on this issue, and I wish to express my gratitude for his unrelenting focus.

Let there be no doubt that climate change is real. The question is not whether it is happening but how we will address it. Are we going to do all that we can to leave the next generation a safer and healthier world?

As my friend from Rhode Island has impressed upon us with due urgency week in and week out, climate change will be tremendously costly to our economy and to our very way of life. The longer we wait to act, the more costly these impacts will be.

The State of Wisconsin has been a proud home to environmental leaders who have worked to pass on a stronger environment to future generations. I think of Aldo Leopold. I think of John Muir. I think of Senator Gaylord Nelson, the founder of Earth Day.

As a Senator for our great State, it is one of my top priorities to follow in this legacy and to preserve our natural resources and quality of life for future generations. It is not hard to see why Wisconsinites deeply value environmental protection. From looking out at the crystal clear waters of Lake Superior from its South Shore to standing atop Rib Mountain and gazing at the forests and farmlands of Central Wisconsin, to casting your fishing rod in the world-class trout streams of the Driftless region in the southwest of our State, there is no question that we are blessed. We are blessed with natural beauty in the State of Wisconsin.

The impact of climate change can already be seen on these very landscapes and the economies they support. We see it in agriculture. Growing seasons are shifting, and extreme weather events are harming our crops. We have increasing concerns about drought and groundwater. In fact, NASA recently warned that droughts will not only become more severe, but our ecosystems will be increasingly slower to recover from those droughts. Decreased soil moisture will put stress on farmers and their livestock, on private wells, and on our municipal drinking water systems.

These prolonged droughts, combined with the increased intensity of storms and changing temperature patterns, will force farmers to change how and what they grow. It is extremely troubling as agriculture is an \$88 billion industry in the State of Wisconsin.

We also see the negative effects of climate change on our Great Lakes. In Lake Michigan, for example, we see changes in precipitation and evaporation patterns due to climate change that may cause more dramatic fluctuations in lake levels than we have already seen. Data from the Environmental Protection Agency shows that average surface water temperatures have increased in all five Great Lakes since 1995. Warmer surface water temperatures disrupt the food chain and facilitate the spread of invasive species, threatening our native fish with disease. Changing water levels create challenges for property owners and communities along the Great Lakes. Each of these changes will strain our local economies.

Tourism is also a major part of Wisconsin's economy. The Northwoods is a beloved place to fish, camp, hunt, and snowmobile. But last year, for only the

second time in its 45-year history, Wisconsin's famous Birkebeiner cross-country ski race was canceled because of warm temperatures and a lack of snow.

The impacts on tourism, recreation, and the landscapes that we hold near to our hearts are already here. They will only become more drastic. The threats may be daunting, but we cannot allow the challenges to overwhelm us into inaction.

Wisconsin's motto is just one word—"forward." The people of Wisconsin have never been afraid of the challenges we face. We have a strong progressive tradition of confronting our challenges and working together to shape our future for the next generation. Many of Wisconsin's most successful companies are leaders in energy efficiency, renewable energy, and clean technology.

In 2014, one of Wisconsin's major healthcare systems became the first in the Nation to use entirely renewable energy. Wisconsin companies are strong innovators and provide opportunities for workers of today and tomorrow as they lead the way.

I believe in smart investments by governments at all levels, by companies and institutions, and by citizens. This will help us confront the challenge of climate change while positioning Wisconsin for economic and ecological resiliency. This opportunity is great, and we must meet the challenge head-on—going forward, the Wisconsin way.

I would like, once again, to thank Senator WHITEHOUSE for his laser focus on this issue that is so critical to our home States, as well as the Nation and the world, that we will pass on to the next generation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, let me thank the Senator from Wisconsin.

Like Wisconsin, Rhode Island has a one-word motto as well. Hers is "Forward." Ours is "Hope." Together, they point in the right direction.

Americans are dissatisfied. Opinion surveys tell us that only 35 percent of Americans believe our country is headed in the right direction. Why this alarming dissatisfaction? We don't have to guess. Popular opinion tells us quite plainly. In a survey taken after the 2016 election, 85 percent of voters agreed that the wealthy and big corporations were the ones really running the country. That includes 80 percent of voters who supported Trump. It is not just opinion. Academic studies have looked at Congress and confirmed that the views of the general public have statistically near zero influence here—that we listen to big, corporate special interests and their various front groups.

Even our Supreme Court is not immune. In a 2014 poll, more respondents believed, by 9 to 1, that our Supreme

Court favors corporations over individuals rather than vice versa. Even among self-identified conservative Republicans, it was still a 4-to-1 margin.

So hold that thought: The wealthy and powerful corporations control Congress, and people know it.

As I give my 200th "Time to Wake Up" speech, the most obvious fact standing plainly before me is not the measured sea level rise at Naval Station Newport; it is not the 400 parts per million carbon dioxide barrier we have broken through in the atmosphere; it is not the new flooding maps that coastal communities like Rhode Island's must face; it is not the West aflame; it is not even the uniform consensus about climate change across universities, National Laboratories, scientific societies, and even across our military and intelligence services, which warn us, as Senator REED indicated, that climate change is fueling economic and social disruption around the world.

No. The fact that stands out for me, here at No. 200, is the persistent failure of Congress to even take up the issue of climate change. One party will not even talk about it. One party in the executive branch is even gagging America's scientists and civil servants and striking the term "climate change" off of government websites. In the real world, in actual reality, we are long past any question as to the reality of climate change. The fact of that forces us to confront the questions: What stymies Congress from legislating or from even having hearings about climate change? What impedes certain executive agencies to forbid even the words?

Mr. INHOFE. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. No. I intend to give my remarks, but I appreciate the Senator's intervention.

Before the Citizens United decision was delivered up by the five Republican appointees on the Supreme Court—a decision, by the way, that deserves a place on the trash heap of judicial history—we were actually doing quite a lot about climate change in the Senate. There were bipartisan hearings. There were bipartisan bills. There were bipartisan negotiations. Senator McCAIN campaigned for President under the Republican banner on a strong climate platform.

What happened? Here is what I saw happen: The fossil fuel industry went over and importuned the Supreme Court for the Citizens United decision; the five Republican-appointed judges on the Court delivered the Citizens United decision; and the fossil fuel industry was ready and set at the mark when that decision came down.

Since the moment of that decision, not one Republican in this body has joined one serious piece of legislation to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Our Senate heartbeat of bipartisan activity was killed dead by the political weaponry unleashed for big special interests by those five judges.

The fossil fuel industry then made a clever play. It determined to control

one party on this question. It determined to silence or punish or remove any dissent in one political party. This created for the fossil fuel industry two advantages.

First, it got to use that party as its tool to stop climate legislation, and it has. Remember the movie "Men in Black"? I would make the analogy that today's Republican Party bears the same relation to the fossil fuel industry as to climate change that the unfortunate farmer in "Men in Black" bore to the alien who killed him and occupied his skin for the rest of the movie—complete occupation with nothing left but the skin.

The second advantage for the fossil fuel industry is that it could camouflage its own special interest special pleading as partisanship and not just the muscle and greed of one very big industry that wanted to have its way.

That is why we are where we are. That is why one's talking to Republicans about climate change resembles one's talking to prisoners about escape. They may want out, but they can't have their fossil fuel wardens find out.

Climate change is a prime example of how our institutions are failing in plain view of the American people. It is a small wonder the public holds Congress in low esteem and thinks we don't listen to them. Frankly, it is amazing that there is any shred of esteem remaining given our behavior.

Congress remains a democratic body on the surface with all the procedural veneer and trappings of democracy as we hold votes and as there are caucuses and hearings. Yet, on issues like climate change, which most concern the biggest special interests, Congress no longer provides America a truly functioning democracy.

Underneath the illusory democratic surface runs subterranean rivers of dark money. Massive infrastructures have been erected to hide that dark money flow from the sunlight of public scrutiny to carve out subterranean caverns through which the dark money flows.

If you want to understand why we do nothing on climate, you have to look down into those subterranean chambers, understand the dark money, and not be fooled by the surface spectacle. Of course, it is not just the spending of dark money that is the problem. When you let unlimited money loose in politics, particularly once you let unlimited dark money loose in politics, you empower something even more sinister than massive anonymous political expenditures; you empower the threat of massive anonymous political expenditures—the sinister whispered threat. Once you let a special interest spend unlimited dark money, you necessarily let it threaten or promise to spend that money.

Those sinister threats and promises will be harder to detect even than the most obscured dark money expenditures. You may not know who is behind a big dark money expenditure, but at

least you will see it. You will see the smear ads. You may not know what is up, but you will know something is up. But a threat? A couple of people, a back room, and a silent handshake are enough. If you give a thug a big enough club, he doesn't even have to use it to get his way. This is the great, insidious evil of Citizens United, and this, I believe, is why we are where we are.

In the Gilded Age, the Senate was described as having Senators who didn't actually represent States but "principalities and powers in business." One Senator represents the Union Pacific Railway system, another the New York Central, still another the insurance interests of New York and New Jersey. We cannot pretend it is impossible for the United States to be disabled and corrupted by special interests. Our history refutes that thought. So, as Americans, we need to keep our guard up against corrupting forces, and this unlimited dark flow of money into our politics is a corrupting force.

Congress's embarrassing and culpable failure to act on climate change is one face of a coin. Turn it over, and the obverse of that coin is corruption exactly as the Founding Fathers knew it—the public good ignored for special interests' wielding power. In this case, it is the power of money—climate failure, dark money; dark money, climate failure. They are two sides of the same evil coin. If that thought is not cheerful enough, wait. There is more.

There is the phony science operation that gives rhetorical cover to the dark money political muscle operation. This phony science operation is a big effort, with dozens of well-funded front groups that participate that are supported by bogus think tanks, well described as the "think tank as the disguised political weapon."

Today's phony science operation has a history. It grew out of the early phony science operation run by the tobacco industry, which was set up to create doubt among the public that cigarettes were bad for you. How did that work out? I will tell you how. That effort was so false and so evil that it was determined in court to be fraud—a massive corporate-led fraud.

After the tobacco fraud apparatus was exposed, it didn't disappear. It morphed into an even more complex apparatus to create false doubt about climate science. The goal, exactly like the tobacco companies' fraud, is to create something that looks enough like science to confuse the public but which has the perverse purpose of defeating and neutralizing real science. It is a science denial apparatus. By the way, this fossil fuel-funded science denial apparatus has some big advantages over real science.

First, the science denial apparatus has unlimited money behind it. The IMF has put the subsidy of the fossil fuel industry at \$700 billion per year in the United States alone. To defend a \$700 billion annual subsidy, you can spend enormous amounts of money, so money is no object.

Second, the science denial apparatus doesn't waste time with peer review—the touchstone of real science. Slap a lab coat on a hack, and send him to the talk shows. That is enough. The science denial apparatus is public relations dressed up as science so it behaves like public relations and goes straight to its market—an inept public—to work its mischief.

Third, it has the advantage of Madison Avenue tacticians to shape its phony message into appealing sound bites for the public. Have you read a scientific journal lately? The Madison Avenue message gets through a lot more sharply.

Fourth, the science denial apparatus doesn't need to stop lying when it is caught. As long as it is getting its propaganda out, the truth doesn't matter. This is not a contest for truth; it is a contest for public opinion. So debunked, zombie arguments constantly rise from the Earth and walk again.

Finally, it doesn't have to win the argument. It just has to create the illusion, the false illusion, that there is a legitimate argument. Then the political muscle those five Justices gave this industry can go to work.

I suggest, 200 speeches in, that it is time we stopped listening to the industry that comes to us bearing one of the most flagrant conflicts of interest in history. It is time we stopped listening to their fraudulent science denial operation. It is time we put the light of day on this creepy dark money operation and stopped listening to its threats and promises.

If we are going to stop listening to all of that, whom should we listen to? How about Pope Francis, who called climate change “one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day.” How about the scientists—we pay hundreds of them across our government—whose salaries our appropriators are funding right now and who, under President Trump, released this report? This report reads that there is “no convincing alternative explanation” for what it calls “global, long-term, and unambiguous warming” and “record-breaking, climate-related weather extremes.” It is our human activity.

How about listening to our intelligence services, whose “Worldwide Threat Assessment,” issued under President Trump and signed by our former colleague, the Director of National Intelligence, Dan Coats, actually has a chapter titled “Environment and Climate Change.” Here are the identified consequences in that report: “humanitarian disasters, conflict, water and food shortages, population migration, labor shortfalls, price shocks, and power outages,” and most dangerously, the prospect of—and I quote the “Worldwide Threat Assessment” here—“tipping points in climate-linked earth systems” that can create “abrupt climate change.”

Or how about listening to Donald Trump, Donald Trump, Jr., and Ivanka Trump, Eric Trump, and the Trump or-

ganization in 2009, when they took out this full-page ad in the New York Times saying that the science of climate change was “irrefutable,” and its consequences would be “catastrophic and irreversible.” Donald J. Trump, chairman and president—where did that guy go?

How about listening to our own home State universities. Every one of us can go home to Old Miss or Ohio State, to the University of Alaska or LSU, to Utah State or West Virginia University or Texas A&M. We can each go home to our home State's State university. They don't just accept climate change; they teach it. They teach it.

If you can listen quietly, you can listen to the oceans. They speak to us, the oceans do. They speak to us through thermometers, and they say: We are warming. They speak to us through tide gauges, and they say: We are rising along your shores. They speak to us through the howl of hurricanes powered up by their warmer sea surfaces. They speak to us through the quiet flight of fish species from their traditional grounds as the seawater warms beyond their tolerance.

If we know how to listen, through simple pH tests, the oceans will tell us that they are acidifying. The oceans will tell us that they are beginning to kill their own corals and oysters and pteropods. We can go out and check and see the corals and the oysters and the pteropods corrode and die before our eyes. It is happening.

The fishermen who plow the oceans' surface can speak for the oceans. As one Rhode Islander said to me: “Sheldon, it's getting weird out there.”

“This is not my grandfather's ocean,” said another. He had grown up trawling with his granddad on those oceans.

It is not just oceans. I went on Lake Erie with seasoned, professional fishermen who told me that everything they had learned in a lifetime on the lake was useless because the lake was changing on them so unknowably fast.

We choose here in Congress to whom we are going to listen, and it is time we started to listen to the honest voices and the true voices. If you don't like environmentalists or scientists, listen to your ski industry. Listen to your fishermen and lumbermen. Listen to your gardeners and birders and hunters. Listen to those who know the Earth and the oceans and who can speak for the Earth and the oceans.

It is an evil mess we are in, and if there is any justice in this world, there will one day be a terrible price to pay if we keep listening to evil voices.

The climate change problems we are causing by failing to act are a sin, as Pope Francis has flatly declared, but that is not the only sin. To jam Congress up, fossil fuel interests are interfering with and corrupting American democracy, and to corrupt American democracy is a second and a grave sin.

The science denial apparatus—to mount a fraudulent challenge to the

very enterprise of science, that is a third grave sin.

Perhaps worst of all is that the world is watching. It is watching us as the fossil fuel industry, its creepy billionaires, its front groups, its bogus think tanks all gang up and debauch our democracy.

From John Winthrop to Ronald Reagan, we have held America up as a city on a hill, with the eyes of the world upon us. From DANIEL WEBSTER to Bill Clinton, we have spoken of the power of our American example as greater in the world than any example of our power. Lady Liberty in New York Harbor holds her lamp up to the world, representing our American beacon of truth, justice, and democracy.

I have a distinct memory, traveling with our friend JOHN MCCAIN to Manila and waking up early in the morning to go visit our American military cemetery, the Sun coming up over the rows of white gravestones standing over our dead, the massive, gleaming marble arcade of names, carved on walls stretching high over my head, of the Americans whose bodies were never recovered—over 17,000 in all, remembered in that cemetery.

After their sacrifice, after the accomplishments of the “greatest generation,” can we not do better than to sell our democracy to the fossil fuel industry? What do you suppose a monument to that would look like? I wonder.

America deserves better, and the world is watching us; we, this city on a hill.

With gratitude to the many colleagues who have joined me today, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, when we discuss climate change, we often speak about the future—a future in which rising temperatures and seas displace millions from their homes around the globe, devastate agriculture, and damage critical infrastructure. This future is not far off.

Climate change will impact every State in our country and every country in the world. In island and coastal communities like Hawaii, the impact will be particularly severe.

Climate scientists across the world agree that without decisive action, seas will likely rise by at least 3.2 feet by the end of the century. To put this in context, a child born today will likely experience these effects in their lifetime.

I will focus my remarks today on the foreseeable impact on Hawaii.

The State of Hawaii investigated and issued a chilling report about what a 3.2-foot sea level rise would mean for our State. The report concluded that 3.2 feet of sea level rise would inundate more than 25,000 acres of land across Hawaii. Over 6,500 hotels, malls, small businesses, apartments, and homes would be compromised or destroyed, and 20,000 residents would be displaced in the process.

The economic cost of this damage—\$19 billion. If anything, this is a conservative estimate of the total economic cost of climate change in Hawaii. The State report, for example, doesn't estimate the total cost of damage to Hawaii's critical infrastructure.

Climate change and sea level rise would damage sewer lines in urban Honolulu and other low-lying areas across the State. These phenomena would also lead to chronic flooding across 38 miles of major roads, such as the Kuhio Highway on Kauai, Kamehameha Highway on Oahu, and Honoapiilani Highway on Maui.

The State's report certainly outlines the serious challenges that climate change will pose for the future, but we are already living with its effects.

Each summer and winter, the specific placement of the sun and moon combined with the rotation of the Earth produce extraordinarily high tides. We call them king tides. Most years, scientists can predict when these tides will happen and how bad they will be. Last year's king tides, however, were the worst on record. Scientists believe that these historic king tides provide a glimpse of the increasing severity and frequency of the coastal flooding driven by climate change. Hawaii also experienced an exceptionally rare king tide on New Year's Day, and a larger than normal north swell caused major coastal erosion on Oahu's north shore.

Coastal erosion is a critical issue for Hawaii, where our beaches draw millions of visitors from around the world every year. According to research from the University of Hawaii Sea Grant College Program, 70 percent of the beaches in Hawaii are eroding, and 13 miles of public beach have eroded completely. In other words, they are gone.

During last year's king tides, Sea Grant mobilized citizen scientists to document their impact on the State. From Sea Grant's research we learned that record-high water levels caused localized flooding and erosion across every island in the State. Waikiki Beach was particularly impacted last year when the king tides overwashed the shoreline during peak tourist season. Climate change will make events like this more frequent and severe, adversely impacting our environment and our economy.

Waikiki Beach on Oahu alone generates \$2.2 billion for Hawaii's economy every year, and it could be completely submerged by the end of the century. There is a clear urgency to act, and we need our President and the Federal Government to acknowledge the threat and to lead.

We need more funding for programs like Sea Grant that help State and local governments develop plans and policies to help our beaches, our coasts, and our economy adapt to climate change. But at a time when we should be increasing funding for Sea Grant colleges, the Trump administration is zeroing out this funding. We were able to protect funding for Sea Grant last

year, and I will continue to fight during this year's budget and appropriations cycle to make sure it receives the money it needs to do its important work.

We also need our Federal agencies to invest in research that will help us better understand climate change's long-term impact on our States and communities. But Donald Trump has appointed—and his Republican allies in the Senate have confirmed—regressive, dangerous, and extreme nominees who are undermining critical climate change research.

Last May, the Department of Interior under the leadership of Ryan Zinke, put out a news release about a report on climate change-related sea level rise, coauthored by two Hawaii scientists without ever mentioning in their release the words "climate change."

Earlier today, I asked Secretary Zinke at a hearing to comment on this incident and to clarify whether it is the Department's policy to censor announcements about climate change research produced by his Department. Secretary Zinke acknowledged that the content of the press release is his prerogative but that he would not censor the contents of documents and reports themselves. However, by not referencing the term "climate change" in a press release on a report about how climate change drives sea level rise, he is toeing the President's line that climate change is a hoax. The problem is that press releases from agencies like the Interior Department serve as indicators of the Federal Government's priorities. By eliminating references to climate change in these releases, the Department is sending a clear signal that climate change is not a priority.

In the absence of Federal action, States like Hawaii are stepping up and taking the lead. Hawaii was the first State in the country to enact legislation to implement the Paris climate agreement after President Trump announced that he would withdraw the United States from this agreement without much reason.

Standing up to the challenge of climate change also means developing our renewable resources of energy and moving away from dependence on fossil fuels. Hawaii has set the forward-thinking goal of generating 100-percent renewable electricity by 2045. Through decisive action, Hawaii is already generating 27-percent renewable electricity while cutting oil imports by 41 percent since 2006. As the most oil-dependent State in the country, this is significant progress.

Over 97 percent of climate scientists agree that the climate is changing due to human activity, and the vast majority of the American public also acknowledges this. Our Nation's military recognizes the threat that climate change poses to our national security and the urgent need to confront it.

Mr. President, I agree with my colleague from Rhode Island that it is time to wake up.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise today to join my friend and colleague Senator WHITEHOUSE on the day of his 200th weekly climate change floor speech. We came in the same class. So I have been a witness to this. For years he has come to the floor every week that the Senate is in session, often to an empty Chamber, to speak on this critical issue. He has been a leader and an unwavering voice on climate change, calling for action week after week and, I think, that is why so many of us are here tonight. Two hundred speeches is truly a milestone, and you can just look at the wear and tear of his "Time to Wake Up" floor sign to know that this actually happened.

Not only does Senator WHITEHOUSE come to the floor to talk about this issue and to share new data and information with all of us on the need to act now, but I have also seen him take on climate change deniers as a member when I was on both the Environment and Public Works Committee and also on the Judiciary Committee. I have experienced his dedication to moving the needle on this issue as a member of the Senate Climate Action Task Force that he has led for several years.

I have been part of the meetings where he has pulled together Senators and advocacy group leaders to strategize on how to move forward on legislation and meetings where he has brought together Senators and private sector leaders, such as Greg Page, the former CEO of Cargill, to talk about how we change the private dialogue about sustainability in supply chains. He is truly committed to finding solutions, and I am pleased to join him tonight for his 200th speech.

People talk about climate in many places in my State—from hunters and snowmobilers in Northern Minnesota to business leaders in the Twin Cities, to students at the University of Minnesota.

When President Trump announced that the United States would withdraw from the climate change agreement this summer—the worldwide, international climate change agreement—I heard an outpouring of concern. Now, 195 countries made a pledge to come together to combat climate change. In withdrawing, the United States was one of only three countries that wouldn't be in the agreement. The other two were Syria and Nicaragua. Then, Syria and Nicaragua signed the accord. So now the United States is the only country not to sign the accord. It is a big step backward. It is the wrong decision for our economy, and it is the wrong decision for the environment.

As military and security experts have reminded us, climate change is a threat to our national security, increasing the risks of conflict, humanitarian crisis—as we have already seen because of droughts, with subsistence

farmers in Africa coming up as refugees—and damage to crucial and critical infrastructure.

I am a former prosecutor, and I believe in evidence. Every week seems to bring fresh evidence of the damage climate change is already causing. Minnesota may be miles away from rising oceans, but the impacts are not less of a real threat in the Midwest—more severe weather, heat waves that could release our water supply, extreme rainfall that could damage critical infrastructure, and a decrease in agricultural productivity. It goes on and on. It has an impact on the Great Lakes and people respond.

We are going to keep talking about the importance of making a global commitment and an American commitment to address climate change. We should not be the last one in. We should be the first one. This is a great nation with a history of Democrats and Republicans coming together to conserve our land and care about our environment. We are going to keep pushing climate change deniers on their facts, and we are going to keep working on policies that encourage energy efficiency, renewable energy, and a decrease in greenhouse gasses.

Many of the businesses in Minnesota, such as Cargill, which I already mentioned in the lead, have taken on this cause. They know that when they have business all over the world, it matters. They know that it matters to their shareholders, it matters to their employees, and it matters to their customers.

They also know that we deal with the rest of the world, and when businesses go to meetings in other countries, they don't want to hear: Well, I guess your country is not in the climate change agreement and China is; so maybe we will buy our stuff from China. That is what people are hearing at business meetings.

We need to be a part of the Paris climate change agreement, and we need to lead the way in the United States. In the last administration, we had some commonsense policies put forth to reduce greenhouse gasses, but this administration has pulled back on them. I disagree. I think we could have made that work.

Even though we are not seeing the action we would like out of this administration, we are seeing it in cities, in States, in businesses, and universities. They have said: If this administration doesn't do it, we will.

So I wish to thank Senator WHITEHOUSE for his leadership and let all of those listening to this series of speeches and tributes to doing something about climate change in his 200th speech tonight know that there are those in this Chamber who stand with you and believe in science and believe that we need to do something about climate change.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Minnesota for laying out the case so clearly on the challenge, as I like to call it, of taking on climate chaos.

My wife Mary comes from Minnesota. I know they value the Land of 10,000 Lakes. Every time I have said that before, I always say the "Land of a Thousand Lakes," and Senator KLOBUCHAR corrects me. I just can't quite envision 10,000 lakes.

Minnesota is a land with incredible wildlife, a land that certainly has seen the impacts of climate chaos, as has my home State. So thank you so much for your remarks and for being here to help celebrate our colleague and our friend, the Senator from Rhode Island, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, who spoke tonight just a few minutes ago for his 200th time, to say: Wake up. Wake up, America.

We have a significant challenge, the sort of challenge that you may not notice from one day to the next. We may wake up tomorrow and not realize that the damage being done to our planet is greater than the day before or we may not be able to wake up a week from now and realize that the damage is more. Nonetheless, it is, if looked at over any significant span of time, a huge, huge force wreaking havoc on our planet, and it will just get worse with time if we do not take on this pollution of the atmosphere by carbon dioxide.

Back in 1959, an eminent scientist was asked to speak at the 100th anniversary of the petroleum industry. That scientist was Edward Teller. Edward Teller gave his speech at this 100th anniversary in 1959, but he said to the gathering of the fossil fuel industry: You do realize that you will eventually have to look for a different form of energy to invest in, first, because the amount of fossil fuels in the Earth's crust is limited and it will run out. He said: Second of all, there are some interesting facts that many of you might not be aware of—that when you burn fossil fuels, it creates carbon dioxide, and carbon dioxide might not at first seem like a pollutant because it is invisible and it is odorless, but it has this quality where visible light passes through it, but heat energy is trapped. As a result of trapping heat energy and changing the makeup of our atmosphere, we will start to do major damage to the planet. He talked about how it would affect the melting of ice on the poles, the rising of sea levels, and that humankind lived by the oceans and, therefore, this carbon dioxide would do enormous damage and it would be important to transition off of burning carbon fuels, off of burning fossil fuels. That was in 1959, which is a long time ago that we have had the information about the damage wreaking havoc by this pollutant, carbon dioxide.

Henry David Thoreau, the philosopher, challenged us and said: What is the use of a house if you don't have a tolerable planet to put it on?

Yet everywhere we see our planet crying out for us to pay attention—never as much, however, as in this last year. Here in America, there were fierce forest fires from Montana, across Idaho, into Washington, down to Oregon, and into California clear into December. Smoke covered much of my State for month after month this last summer, having an impact on people's health and certainly having an impact on our economy.

We could look at the storms of last year—the hurricanes of Harvey, Irma, and Maria assailing Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Those storms were unusually damaging, and part of the reason for that is because the energy of those storms is taken from the temperature of the ocean, and the ocean has been collecting 90 percent of the increased heat on the planet from carbon dioxide pollution and, therefore, producing more powerful hurricanes.

So we saw it in the fires, and we saw it in the hurricanes, but you really can start to see it almost everywhere. You can see that the pine beetles are doing much better because the winters aren't cold enough to kill them, and the trees are doing much worse. You can see that the ticks in New England and Maine and on through Minnesota are doing much better because the winters are not cold enough to kill them. Therefore, they are killing the moose. You can see the impact of the rising ocean temperature on coral reefs around the world, which are a small part of the ocean but have a significant role in the fisheries on our planet.

In my home State in Oregon, the warmer temperatures and the acidity in the ocean caused a billion baby oysters to die in 2008. Well, that is quite an impact on our seafood industry. I can tell you that scientists were mystified because they couldn't imagine, at first, that it had to do with the water quality. They thought it must be a virus or it must be some form of bacteria, but it just turned out that the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere not only results in the warming of the ocean, but it is absorbed in the ocean and becomes carbonic acid. That greater acidity of the ocean damages the ability of baby oysters to form shells. So now we have to artificially buffer the ocean water.

We see it in spreading diseases, like malaria, as they follow the mosquitoes, and Zika, as it follows the mosquitoes into greater territory, or leishmaniasis, which is a real diabolical disease that now has come to the United States with sand flies.

My point is that everywhere you look, if you open your eyes, climate chaos is having a big impact and hurting us.

The answer is simple. We have to stop burning fossil fuels. This is where the 100-percent notion comes from, from my bill of last year—100 percent by 50, 100 by 50, or, if you prefer, mission 100. It just means we have to transition from the energy that we gain

from fossil fuels to substituting energy from clean and renewable sources—100 percent. Stop burning fossil fuels.

A few years ago, folks said: Well, that will cause great damage to our economy because renewable energy is so much more expensive than cheap fossil fuels. But we have been blessed. We have been blessed in taking on this challenge because it is no longer true that renewable energy is more expensive than fossil fuel energy.

We have had an incredible drop in the price of solar energy over a short period—from 35 cents per kilowatt hour down to 5 cents per kilowatt hour. Then Xcel Energy in Colorado put out a proposal this year. The proposal came back at 2 cents per kilowatt hour. In other words, it is cheaper to have new and clean renewable energy than to burn coal in an already depreciated fossil fuel coal electric plant. Wind has gone from 13 cents or so per kilowatt hour to 5 cents per kilowatt hour. Xcel Energy in Colorado brought in a bid at 3 cents per kilowatt hour.

As we have seen these prices drop dramatically on solar and wind, we have seen the installations of solar and wind surge. On the solar side, in 2017 we installed about 12 gigawatts of capacity—12 gigawatts, or 12,000 megawatts. That is a lot of energy. To put it differently, one-fourth of the total installed capacity of the United States of America went in just in 2017. That is a dramatic upsurge in installation. Think of a world where we can have every flat business roof and every manufacturing plant with solar rays on its surface or canopies over its parking lot because this energy is so cheap to collect, and we can collect it in places where the grid already exists. For wind, in 2016, 8 gigawatts of new capacity went in. Again, there is a tremendous upsurge in the amount of wind installed.

Now we are seeing roughly half of our utilities scale new capacity with renewable energy rather than with fossil fuel energy. The transition is underway, but we need to accelerate it. We need to move it much more quickly, and then we need to move our consumption of energy over to the electric grid. What does that mean? For example, it means heating your house with a heat pump, which uses electricity, rather than a gas furnace. It means changing the way you heat water from a gas hot water heater to an electric hot water heater. It means getting a plug-in vehicle, an electric vehicle.

Let's stop and talk a little bit about electric vehicles. While we have been seeing the production of carbon dioxide from making electricity come down in America, we are seeing the carbon dioxide from driving vehicles go up, so it is a major area we have to take on.

Five years ago, I bought a Volt, which is a plug-in hybrid. It has a range of about 35 miles of electricity, and it also has a gas backup. That car really worked exceedingly well. We drove 3 out of 4 miles on electricity,

even though we used gasoline to drive all the way to South Dakota and back. What we found was that the cost per mile on electricity was only about 3 cents a mile, and the cost of running it on gasoline—with oil, maintenance, and so forth—was closer to 10 cents a mile. So it is three times cheaper to drive it on electricity. So there is a big incentive.

Unfortunately, my son had an auto accident, and we had to replace that car. Because the range has increased over 5 years, we were able to get a fully electric car, a Nissan LEAF. The range had gone up in 2016 from roughly 80 miles to about 107. That extra 27 miles is enough that my wife could do her work in home hospice, potentially being assigned to a house way on the west side of the Monona County area and then way on the east side and back and forth several times a day and still make it completely on a single-charged battery.

With the proliferation of driving stations, now we are starting to see the ability to operate much more closely to the way we behaved, if you will, previously with gasoline vehicles—being able to drive hundreds of miles and then recharge. We have seen that with the Volt that just came out to replace the Bolt, which now goes over 200 miles on just its battery alone and more if you drive cautiously.

Buses are another big piece of this. I went down to Eugene, OR, a couple of weekends ago and rode on their first electric bus, the first one in the State of Oregon. That bus looked just like the old diesel buses that we have had serving our metro systems across America, but it cost a lot more. It cost \$200,000 more than a diesel bus.

You might say "Well, that is way too much," but here is the interesting thing: It saves about \$40,000 to \$45,000 a year on fuel. It doesn't take a math genius to then realize that after 5 years of service, you have paid off that cost, and after that, you are saving money. We are going to see a huge transition simply on the economics.

This is the challenge before us, that we have been given the gift of affordable solar that is cheaper than fossil fuel energy, affordable wind that is cheaper than fossil fuel energy, a greatly declining cost of battery power to help supply meet demand, but at the Federal level, we are paralyzed.

Unfortunately, the Koch brothers are really the puppet masters of this body, this Chamber I am in. This wonderful Senate is supposed to be the place where we deliberate to have government of, by, and for the people, but right now we have deliberations here that are of, by, and for the Koch brothers; of, by, and for the wealthy and the well-connected. That is not the vision of America. We have to reclaim the vision of America. The people of America understand that we have this enormous challenge that we must undertake to save our beautiful, blue and green planet.

Since the Federal Government isn't operating, we see companies and cities and places of worship jumping in to fill the gap, adopting 100 percent resolutions—resolutions to transition to 100 percent cleaner renewable energy, to stop burning the fossil fuels that are damaging our planet.

Burlington, VT, is now using a mixture of biomass and hydro wind and solar so that 100 percent of electricity comes from renewable generation. Fifty-eight other cities across America have committed to making that 100 percent transition, and they are handing out an action plan—this year we can do this, and this year we can do that. Families can do the same, places of worship can do the same, and companies are doing the same all across our Nation. We see many of our Fortune 500 companies stepping forward to be real leaders in this. They want to attract employees who know that they care about our planet. They care about stopping this pollution that Edward Teller, an eminent scientist, pointed out in 1959.

When Henry David Thoreau said "What is the use of a house if you haven't got a tolerable planet to put it on?" he asked a question we should always ask ourselves in terms of the different threats to this beautiful orb that we call home. So let's fight to save this beautiful planet. It is the only one we have. We have no other. It is under serious threat, and we in this Chamber need to tell the Koch brothers to go and sit on their fossil fuel fortune, invest it as they want somewhere else, but to join us in the most important work they could possibly be part of in the years that they have remaining to live here in America, and that is this fight to take on climate chaos and win.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. ROUNDS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session for the consideration of the following nomination: Executive Calendar No. 298.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Gilbert B. Kaplan, of the District of Columbia, to be Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nomination.

Mr. ROUNDS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nomination with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the

table; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nomination be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

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

The nomination was confirmed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. ROUNDS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

PUBLIC SCHOOLS WEEK

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the following statement be printed in the RECORD on behalf of AASA; the School Superintendents Association; Afterschool Alliance; Alliance for Excellent Education; American Association of School Librarians; American Association of School Libraries; American Federation of Teachers; American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations; American Library Association; American School Counselor Association; Americans for Democratic Action; Americans United for Separation of Church and State; Association of Educational Service Agencies; Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents; Association of School Business Officials International, ASBO; Center for American Progress; Clearinghouse on Women's Issues; Council for Exceptional Children; Council of Administrators of Special Education; CUE; EDGE; Education Networks of America; Every Child Matters; GLSEN; Higher Education Consortium for Special Education; Learning Disabilities Association of America; Learning Forward; MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership; National Association of Secondary School Principals; National Association for Bilingual Education; National Association of Black School Educators; National Association of Elementary School Principals; National Association of School Psychologists; National Association of State Directors of Special Education; National Black Justice Coalition; National Center for Learning Disabilities; National Council of Jewish Women; National Council of Teachers of English; National Council of Teachers of Mathematics; National Education Association Retirees Organization, NEARO; National Education Association; National PTA; National Rural Education

Advocacy Consortium; National Rural Education Association; National School Boards Association; National School Public Relations Association; National Science Teachers Association; Network for Public Education; New Teacher Center; People for the American Way; Project Tomorrow; School Social Work Association of America; Stop Sexual Assault in Schools; Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children; and University Council for Educational Administration.

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

We issue this joint statement in support of public education and our continued commitment to the highest quality public education for all students in honor of the students, teachers, and communities who work together to support our public schools during Public Schools Week.

Public education is the foundation of our 21st Century democracy. Our public schools are where our students come to be educated in the fullest sense of the word as citizens of this great country. We strive every day to make every public school a place where we prepare the nation's young people to contribute to our society, economy and citizenry.

Ninety percent of American children attend public schools. We must call on local, state, and federal lawmakers to prioritize support for strengthening our nation's public schools and empower local education leaders to implement, manage and lead school districts in partnership with educators, parents, and other local education stakeholders and learning communities. This support would also provide for such necessities as counseling, extra/co-curricular activities, and mental health supports that are critical to help students engage in learning.

We must support and value inclusive and safe high-quality public schools where children learn to think critically, problem solve and build relationships. We must support an environment where all students can succeed beginning in the earliest years, regardless of their zip code, the color of their skin, native language, disability, gender/gender identity, immigration status, religion, or social standing.

As advocates for public education, we believe we must promote advancing equity and excellence in public education, and implementing continuous improvement and evidence-based practices. Every child has the right to an education that helps them reach their full potential and to attend schools that offer a high quality educational experience.

We support stable, equitable, predictable and adequate funding for great public schools for every student in America so that students have inviting classrooms and school libraries with up-to-date resources as well as well-prepared and supported educators. These educators include teachers, paraprofessionals and principals who provide a well-rounded and complete curriculum and create joy in learning. Our school buildings should have class sizes small enough to allow one-on-one attention and have access to support services such as health care, nutrition, and after-school programs for students who need them.

We believe that public tax dollars should only support public schools that are publicly governed and accountable to parents, educators and communities. In no way should local, state or federal funding be taken away

from public schools and given to private schools that are unaccountable to the public.

We reiterate our love for public education and pride in our public schools. We will continue to promote the promise and purpose of public education, to elevate the great things happening every day in our public schools, and to engage communities about strategies that help students succeed. We affirm our commitment to fight for resources and supports for public schools, and will be steadfast in our efforts to protect students and their families, public schools, and our communities from any policies that would undermine these values.

PLACEMENT OF STATUE OF MARY MCLEOD BETHUNE IN NATIONAL STATUARY HALL

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, Florida recently approved the placement of a statue of a truly inspirational woman, Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, in the National Statuary Hall here in Washington, DC.

Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune was an American educator, stateswoman, philanthropist, humanitarian, and civil rights activist. In 1904, Dr. Bethune founded Literature and Industrial Training School for African-American students in Daytona Beach, FL, now Bethune-Cookman University. She founded and was the president of the State Federation of Colored Women's Club, where she led the fight against school segregation and healthcare inequality. Dr. Bethune also served as president of the National Association of Colored Women's Club and founded the National Council of Negro Women.

Dr. Bethune became the first African-American woman to head a Federal agency when President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed her administrative assistant for Negro Affairs of the National Youth Administration. She advised the President on concerns of African Americans and helped deliver his message and achievements with the African American community. Dr. Bethune became known as the First Lady of the Struggle because of her commitment to improve the lives of African Americans.

Dr. Bethune maintained high standards and attracted tourists and donors to Bethune-Cookman College. She was president of the college from 1923 to 1942 and 1946 to 1947, one of the few women in the world to serve as a college president at that time.

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

The Acting President pro tempore (Mr. CORNYN) announced that on today, March 13, 2018, he had signed the following enrolled bills, which were previously signed by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. UPTON) of the House:

H.R. 294. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 2700 Cullen Boulevard in Pearland, Texas, as the "Endy Nddiobong Ekpanya Post Office Building".

H.R. 452. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at

324 West Saint Louis Street in Pacific, Missouri, as the "Specialist Jeffrey L. White, Jr. Post Office".

H.R. 1208. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 9155 Schaefer Road, Converse, Texas, as the "Converse Veterans Post Office Building".

H.R. 1858. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 4514 Williamson Trail in Liberty, Pennsylvania, as the "Staff Sergeant Ryan Scott Ostrom Post Office".

H.R. 1988. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 1730 18th Street in Bakersfield, California, as the "Merle Haggard Post Office Building".

H.R. 2254. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 2635 Napa Street in Vallejo, California, as the "Janet Capello Post Office Building".

H.R. 2302. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 259 Nassau Street, Suite 2 in Princeton, New Jersey, as the "Dr. John F. Nash, Jr. Post Office".

H.R. 2464. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 25 New Chardon Street Lobby in Boston, Massachusetts, as the "John Fitzgerald Kennedy Post Office".

H.R. 2672. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 520 Carter Street in Fairview, Illinois, as the "Sgt. Douglas J. Riney Post Office".

H.R. 2815. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 30 East Somerset Street in Raritan, New Jersey, as the "Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone Post Office".

H.R. 2873. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 207 Glenside Avenue in Wyncote, Pennsylvania, as the "Staff Sergeant Peter Taub Post Office Building".

H.R. 3109. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 1114 North 2nd Street in Chillicothe, Illinois, as the "Sr. Chief Ryan Owens Post Office Building".

H.R. 3369. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 225 North Main Street in Spring Lake, North Carolina, as the "Howard B. Pate, Jr. Post Office".

H.R. 3638. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 1100 Kings Road in Jacksonville, Florida, as the "Rutledge Pearson Post Office Building".

H.R. 3655. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 1300 Main Street in Belmar, New Jersey, as the "Dr. Walter S. McAfee Post Office Building".

H.R. 3821. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 430 Main Street in Clermont, Georgia, as the "Zack T. Addington Post Office".

H.R. 3893. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 100 Mathe Avenue in Interlachen, Florida, as the "Robert H. Jenkins, Jr. Post Office".

H.R. 4042. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 1415 West Oak Street, in Kissimmee, Florida, as the "Borinqueneers Post Office Building".

H.R. 4285. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 123 Bridgeton Pike in Mullica Hill, New Jersey, as the "James C. 'Billy' Johnson Post Office Building".

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. THUNE, from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation:

Report to accompany S. 1015, a bill to require the Federal Communications Commission to study the feasibility of designating a simple, easy-to-remember dialing code to be used for a national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline system (Rept. No. 115-213).

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. HELLER:

S. 2539. A bill to amend the Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2015, to reauthorize certain projects to increase Colorado River System water; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Ms. STABENOW (for herself, Mr. BURR, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. WARNER, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. PETERS, Mr. MORAN, Mr. NELSON, and Mr. HELLER):

S. 2540. A bill to provide predictability and certainty in the tax law, create jobs, and encourage investment; to the Committee on Finance.

By Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. MANCHIN, and Mr. KAINE):

S. 2541. A bill to amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to authorize spouses of servicemembers to elect to use the same residences as the servicemembers, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. VAN HOLLEN (for himself, Mr. TESTER, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. CASEY, Mrs. SHAHEEN, and Ms. HASSAN):

S. 2542. A bill to amend part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act to provide full Federal funding of such part; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Ms. HEITKAMP (for herself and Mr. YOUNG):

S. 2543. A bill to amend part B of title IV of the Social Security Act to provide grants to develop and enhance, or to evaluate, kinship navigator programs, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

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

By Mr. TESTER (for himself, Mr. WYDEN, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Ms. HASSAN, and Mr. MERKLEY):

S. Res. 433. A resolution expressing the sense of the Senate that the Marketplace Fairness Act of 2017 would harm the economy of the United States and place an undue burden on small businesses and multiple States across the United States; to the Committee on Finance.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 382

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. SMITH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 382, a bill to require the Secretary

of Health and Human Services to develop a voluntary registry to collect data on cancer incidence among firefighters.

S. 569

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

S. 681

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 681, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the benefits and services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs to women veterans, and for other purposes.

S. 804

At the request of Mr. HELLER, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 804, a bill to improve the provision of health care for women veterans by the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

S. 948

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) was added as a cosponsor of S. 948, a bill to designate as wilderness certain Federal portions of the red rock canyons of the Colorado Plateau and the Great Basin Deserts in the State of Utah for the benefit of present and future generations of people in the United States.

S. 980

At the request of Mrs. CAPITO, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 980, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for payments for certain rural health clinic and Federally qualified health center services furnished to hospice patients under the Medicare program.

S. 1112

At the request of Ms. HEITKAMP, the names of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET), the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS), the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) and the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL) were added as cosponsors of S. 1112, a bill to support States in their work to save and sustain the health of mothers during pregnancy, childbirth, and in the postpartum period, to eliminate disparities in maternal health outcomes for pregnancy-related and pregnancy-associated deaths, to identify solutions to improve health care quality and health outcomes for mothers, and for other purposes.

S. 1864

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1864, a bill to expand the

use of open textbooks in order to achieve savings for students.

S. 2046

At the request of Mrs. MURRAY, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. HASSAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2046, a bill to amend titles 5 and 44, United States Code, to require Federal evaluation activities, improve Federal data management, and for other purposes.

S. 2060

At the request of Ms. WARREN, her name was added as a cosponsor of S. 2060, a bill to promote democracy and human rights in Burma, and for other purposes.

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the name of the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2060, *supra*.

S. 2076

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the name of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2076, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to authorize the expansion of activities related to Alzheimer's disease, cognitive decline, and brain health under the Alzheimer's Disease and Healthy Aging Program, and for other purposes.

S. 2109

At the request of Mr. CARPER, the name of the Senator from Virginia (Mr. KAINE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2109, a bill to count revenues from military and veteran education programs toward the limit on Federal revenues that certain proprietary institutions of higher education are allowed to receive for purposes of section 487 of the Higher Education Act of 1965, and for other purposes.

S. 2135

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2135, a bill to enforce current law regarding the National Instant Criminal Background Check System.

S. 2236

At the request of Mrs. GILLIBRAND, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2236, a bill to require covered discrimination and covered harassment awareness and prevention training for Members, officers, employees, interns, fellows, and detailees of Congress within 30 days of employment and annually thereafter, to require a biennial climate survey of Congress, to amend the enforcement process under the Office of Congressional Workplace Rights for covered discrimination and covered harassment complaints, and for other purposes.

S. 2263

At the request of Mr. DONNELLY, the name of the Senator from Wisconsin (Ms. BALDWIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2263, a bill to amend the Agricultural Act of 2014 to require base acres planted to fruits, vegetables, and wild rice to be considered planted to a

covered commodity for purposes of any recalculation of base acres.

S. 2334

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the names of the Senator from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE) and the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) were added as cosponsors of S. 2334, a bill to amend title 17, United States Code, to provide clarity with respect to, and to modernize, the licensing system for musical works under section 115 of that title, to ensure fairness in the establishment of certain rates and fees under sections 114 and 115 of that title, and for other purposes.

S. 2353

At the request of Mr. COTTON, the name of the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2353, a bill to require the Secretary of the Treasury to report on the estimated total assets under direct or indirect control by certain senior Iranian leaders and other figures, and for other purposes.

S. 2356

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2356, a bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to address staffing and other issues at facilities, including underserved facilities, of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

S. 2383

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the names of the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY), the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE) were added as cosponsors of S. 2383, a bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to improve law enforcement access to data stored across borders, and for other purposes.

S. 2421

At the request of Mr. DONNELLY, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2421, a bill to amend the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 to provide an exemption from certain notice requirements and penalties for releases of hazardous substances from animal waste at farms.

S. 2497

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2497, a bill to amend the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 and the Arms Export Control Act to make improvements to certain defense and security assistance provisions and to authorize the appropriations of funds to Israel, and for other purposes.

S. 2500

At the request of Mr. CASEY, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2500, a bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal, collectively, to the women in the United States who

joined the workforce during World War II, providing the vehicles, weaponry, and ammunition to win the war, that were referred to as "Rosie the Riveter", in recognition of their contributions to the United States and the inspiration they have provided to ensuing generations.

S. 2525

At the request of Mr. LEE, the name of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2525, a bill to ensure that the Federal Government shall not take any discriminatory action against a person, wholly or partially on the basis that such person speaks, or acts, in accordance with a sincerely held religious belief or moral conviction that marriage is or should be recognized as a union of one man and one woman, or two individuals as recognized under Federal law, or that sexual relations outside marriage are improper.

S.J. RES. 54

At the request of Mr. SANDERS, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) was added as a cosponsor of S.J. Res. 54, a joint resolution to direct the removal of United States Armed Forces from hostilities in the Republic of Yemen that have not been authorized by Congress.

S. RES. 386

At the request of Mr. FLAKE, the names of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY), the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 386, a resolution urging the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to fulfill its agreement to hold credible elections, comply with constitutional limits on presidential terms, and fulfill its constitutional mandate for a democratic transition of power by taking concrete and measurable steps towards holding elections not later than December 2018 as outlined in the existing election calendar, and allowing for freedom of expression and association.

S. RES. 424

At the request of Ms. BALDWIN, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 424, a resolution honoring the 25th anniversary of the National Guard Youth Challenge Program.

AMENDMENT NO. 2107

At the request of Mr. MERKLEY, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2107 intended to be proposed to S. 2155, a bill to promote economic growth, provide tailored regulatory relief, and enhance consumer protections, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2134

At the request of Mr. KENNEDY, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2134 intended to be proposed to S. 2155, a bill to promote economic growth, provide tailored regulatory relief, and enhance consumer protections, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2157

At the request of Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, the name of the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS) was added as a sponsor of amendment No. 2157 intended to be proposed to S. 2155, a bill to promote economic growth, provide tailored regulatory relief, and enhance consumer protections, and for other purposes.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 433—EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE THAT THE MARKETPLACE FAIRNESS ACT OF 2017 WOULD HARM THE ECONOMY OF THE UNITED STATES AND PLACE AN UNDUE BURDEN ON SMALL BUSINESSES AND MULTIPLE STATES ACROSS THE UNITED STATES

Mr. TESTER (for himself and Mr. WYDEN, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Ms. HASSAN, and Mr. MERKLEY) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Finance:

S. RES. 433

Whereas the Internet has continued to drive economic growth, productivity, and innovation over the last several decades;

Whereas the Internet promotes a nationwide economic environment that facilitates innovation, promotes efficiency, and empowers small businesses and entrepreneurs, especially those in rural communities in the United States, to broadly share their goods and services;

Whereas small businesses and entrepreneurs rely heavily on Internet access to provide them with access to new markets, additional consumers, and opportunities to compete in a global economy;

Whereas the exemptions in the Marketplace Fairness Act (S. 976) (referred to in this preamble as the "Marketplace Fairness Act") are wholly inadequate to ensure that small businesses and entrepreneurs are not harmed by the Marketplace Fairness Act;

Whereas it should not be the role of small businesses and entrepreneurs to help shore up the finances of States and localities through an online sales tax;

Whereas, if enacted, the Marketplace Fairness Act would—

(1) create an online sales tax for all consumers, including consumers in States that have chosen to oppose sales taxes; and

(2) overwhelmingly benefit large corporate entities at the expense of small businesses and entrepreneurs; and

Whereas compliance with the Marketplace Fairness Act would place an undue burden on small businesses and entrepreneurs by—

(1) requiring small businesses and entrepreneurs to remit taxes to nearly 10,000 different tax jurisdictions across the United States and its territories;

(2) exposing small businesses and entrepreneurs to the risk of unnecessary and costly audits in nearly 10,000 different tax jurisdictions; and

(3) forcing small businesses and entrepreneurs to spend time and money purchasing expensive technology and hiring staff to ensure compliance with the Marketplace Fairness Act: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes the unique role that the Internet plays in helping small businesses,

entrepreneurs, and rural communities in the United States to be economically viable;

(2) declares that enactment of the Marketplace Fairness Act of 2017 (S. 976) would harm the economy of the United States and place burdensome and bureaucratic policies on small businesses and entrepreneurs; and

(3) recognizes that enactment of the Marketplace Fairness Act of 2017 (S. 976) would provide no economic benefit to States that do not have sales taxes or small businesses in those States.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 2209. Mr. ROUNDS (for Mr. CORKER) proposed an amendment to the bill S. 2286, to amend the Peace Corps Act to provide greater protection and services for Peace Corps volunteers, and for other purposes.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 2209. Mr. ROUNDS (for Mr. CORKER) proposed an amendment to the bill S. 2286, to amend the Peace Corps Act to provide greater protection and services for Peace Corps volunteers, and for other purposes; as follows:

On page 13, line 9, insert "the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate, the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives," after "Senate".

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I have 8 requests for committees to meet during today's session of the Senate. They have the approval of the Majority and Minority leaders.

Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committees are authorized to meet during today's session of the Senate:

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The Committee on Armed Services is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, March 13, 2018, at 9:30 a.m. to conduct a hearing.

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, March 13, 2018, at 10 a.m. to conduct a hearing.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Committee on Foreign Relations is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, March 13, 2018, at 2:30 p.m. to conduct a hearing entitled, "State Fragility, Growth, and Development: Designing Policy Approaches that Work."

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

The Committee on the Judiciary is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, March 13, 2018, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing entitled "The Freedom of Information Act: Examining the Administration's Progress on Reforms and Looking Ahead."

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

The Select Committee on Intelligence is authorized to meet during

the session of the Senate on Tuesday, March 13, 2018, at 2:30 p.m., to hold a closed hearing.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CYBERSECURITY

The Subcommittee on Cybersecurity of the Committee on Armed Services is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, March 13, 2018, at 10 a.m. to conduct a hearing.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATION, TECHNOLOGY, INNOVATION, AND THE INTERNET

The Subcommittee on Communication, Technology, Innovation, and the Internet of the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, March 13, 2018, at 10 a.m. to conduct a hearing entitled, "Rebuilding Infrastructure in America: Investing in Next Generation Broadband."

SUBCOMMITTEE ON SURFACE TRANSPORTATION AND MERCHANT MARINE INFRASTRUCTURE, SAFETY AND SECURITY

The Subcommittee on Surface Transportation and Merchant Marine Infrastructure, Safety and Security of the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, March 13, 2018, at 10 a.m. to conduct a hearing entitled, "Rebuilding Infrastructure in America: Investing in State and local Transportation Needs."

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. KING. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that a fellow in my office, Carissa Cyran, be granted floor privileges for the remainder of the session.

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

NICK CASTLE PEACE CORPS REFORM ACT OF 2018

Mr. ROUNDS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 308, S. 2286.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2286) to amend the Peace Corps Act to provide greater protection and services for Peace Corps volunteers, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Foreign Relations, with amendments, as follows:

(The parts of the bill intended to be stricken are shown in boldface brackets and the parts of the bill intended to be inserted are shown in italics.)

S. 2286

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the "Nick Castle Peace Corps Reform Act of 2018".

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

- Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.
Sec. 2. Definitions.

TITLE I—PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

- Sec. 101. Peace Corps volunteer medical care reform.
Sec. 102. Post-service Peace Corps volunteer medical care reform.
Sec. 103. Peace Corps impact survey.
Sec. 104. Extension of positions for Peace Corps employees.

TITLE II—PEACE CORPS OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- Sec. 201. Peace Corps volunteer access to Inspector General.
Sec. 202. Consultation with Congress required before opening or closing overseas offices and country programs.
Sec. 203. Publication requirement for volunteer surveys.

TITLE III—CRIME RISK REDUCTION ENHANCEMENTS

- Sec. 301. Independent review of volunteer death.
Sec. 302. Monitoring training records.
Sec. 303. Additional disclosures to applicants for enrollment as volunteers.
Sec. 304. Additional protections against sexual misconduct.
Sec. 305. Immediate victim advocacy notification.
Sec. 306. Extension of the Office of Victim Advocacy.
Sec. 307. Reform and extension of the Sexual Assault Advisory Council.
Sec. 308. Definitions.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—The term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

- (A) the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate;
(B) the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate;
(C) the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives; and
(D) the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives.

(2) DIRECTOR.—The term “Director” means the Director of the Peace Corps.

(3) PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER.—The term “Peace Corps volunteer” means an individual described in section 5(a) of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2504(a)).

TITLE I—PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

SEC. 101. PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER MEDICAL CARE REFORM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2501 et seq.) is amended by inserting after section 5 (22 U.S.C. 2504) the following:

“SEC. 5A. HEALTH CARE FOR VOLUNTEERS AT PEACE CORPS POSTS.

“(a) HEALTH CARE MEDICAL OFFICERS SELECTION CRITERIA.—In selecting medical officers and support staff for overseas Peace Corps posts, the Director shall strive to hire well-qualified and capable personnel to support the effectiveness of health care for Peace Corps volunteers by evaluating each candidate’s—

- “(1) medical training, experience, and accreditations or other qualifications;
“(2) record of performance;
“(3) administrative capabilities;
“(4) understanding of the local language and culture;
“(5) ability to work in the English language;
“(6) interpersonal skills; and

“(7) such other factors that the Director considers to be appropriate.

“(b) REVIEW AND EVALUATION.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The Director, acting through the Associate Director of the Office of Health Services and the country directors, shall review and evaluate the performance and health care delivery of all Peace Corps medical staff, including medical officers—

“(A) to ensure compliance with all relevant Peace Corps policies, practices, and guidelines; and

“(B) to ensure that medical staff complete the necessary continuing medical education to maintain their skills and satisfy licensing and credentialing standards, as designated by the Director.

“(2) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—The Director shall include, in the annual Peace Corps congressional budget justification, a confirmation that the review and evaluation of all Peace Corps medical staff required under paragraph (1) has been completed.

“(c) ANTIMALARIAL DRUGS.—The Director shall consult with experts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention regarding recommendations for prescribing malaria prophylaxis, in order to provide the best standard of care within the context of the Peace Corps environment.”

(b) IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE INSPECTOR GENERAL OF THE PEACE CORPS.—

(1) INSPECTOR GENERAL REPORT.—As promptly as practicable, the Director shall implement the actions outlined in the agency response for all open recommendations of the Inspector General of the Peace Corps set forth in the report entitled “Final Program Evaluation Report: OIG Follow-up Evaluation of Issues Identified in the 2010 Peace Corps/Morocco Assessment of Medical Care” (Report No. IG-16-01-E).

(2) SEMIANNUAL REPORTS.—

(A) INITIAL REPORT.—Not later than 6 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Director shall submit a report to the appropriate congressional committees that describes the Director’s strategy for implementing the recommendations referred to in paragraph (1).

(B) SUBSEQUENT REPORTS.—Not later than 6 months after the submission of the report required under subparagraph (A), and semi-annually thereafter, the Director shall submit a report to the appropriate congressional committees that describes the progress in implementing the recommendations referred to in paragraph (1) until all such recommendations have been implemented in accordance with the agency’s response to the report referred to in such paragraph.

(3) NOTIFICATION.—After the submission of each report required under paragraph (2), the Inspector General of the Peace Corps may notify the appropriate congressional committees of any recommendations from the report referred to in paragraph (1) that the Inspector General determines remain unresolved.

SEC. 102. POST-SERVICE PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER MEDICAL CARE REFORM.

Section 8142 of title 5, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(d)(1) The Secretary shall authorize the Director of the Peace Corps to furnish medical benefits to a volunteer, who is injured during the volunteer’s period of service, for a period of 120 days following the termination of such service if the Director certifies that the volunteer’s injury probably meets the requirements under subsection (c)(3). The Secretary may then certify vouchers for these expenses for such volunteer out of the Employees’ Compensation Fund.

“(2) The Secretary shall prescribe the form and content of the certification required under paragraph (1).

“(3) A certification under paragraph (1) will cease to be effective if the volunteer sustains compensable disability in connection with volunteer service.

“(4) Nothing in this subsection may be construed to authorize the furnishing of any medical benefit that the Secretary of Labor is not otherwise authorized to reimburse for former Peace Corps volunteers who receive treatment for injury or disease proximately caused by their service in the Peace Corps in accordance with this chapter.”

SEC. 103. PEACE CORPS IMPACT SURVEY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Beginning not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act and once every 2 years for the following 6 years, the Director shall conduct a survey of former Peace Corps volunteers.

(b) SCOPE OF SURVEY.—The survey required under subsection (a) shall assess, with respect to each former Peace Corps volunteer completing the survey, the impact of the Peace Corps on the former volunteer, including the volunteer’s—

- (1) well-being;
(2) career;
(3) civic engagement; and
(4) commitment to public service.

(c) REPORT.—The Director shall submit a report containing the results of the survey conducted under subsection (a) to—

- (1) the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate;
(2) the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives;
(3) the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate; and
(4) the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives.

(d) PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT EXEMPTION.—Subchapter I of chapter 35 of title 44, United States Code (commonly known as the “Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980”), shall not apply to the collection of information through the survey required under this section.

SEC. 104. EXTENSION OF POSITIONS FOR PEACE CORPS EMPLOYEES.

Section 7(a) of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2506(a)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(8) DESIGNATION OF CRITICAL POSITIONS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—The Director of the Peace Corps may designate Peace Corps positions as critical management or management support positions that require specialized technical or professional skills and knowledge of Peace Corps operations. Such positions may include positions in the following fields:

- “(i) Volunteer health services.
“(ii) Financial management.
“(iii) Information technology.
“(iv) Procurement.
“(v) Personnel.
“(vi) Legal services.
“(vii) Safety and security.

“(B) AUTHORITY.—Subject to subparagraphs (C) and (D), with respect to positions designated pursuant to subparagraph (A), the Director may make or extend renewable appointments or assignments under paragraph (2) notwithstanding limitations under subparagraphs (A) and (B) of paragraph (2) and paragraph (5).

“(C) REQUIREMENTS.—In exercising authority under subparagraph (B), the Director shall ensure that all decisions regarding the appointment, assignment, or extension of employees to any such position—

- “(i) are consistent with Federal law and Peace Corps policy; and
“(ii) are based upon operational and programmatic factors.

“(D) DURATION OF APPOINTMENTS.—The term of any appointment or assignment to any position designated under subparagraph (A) may not exceed 5 years.”

TITLE II—PEACE CORPS OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

SEC. 201. PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER ACCESS TO INSPECTOR GENERAL.

Section 8 of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2507) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by striking “he” and inserting “the President”; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

“(c) AVAILABILITY OF THE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL.—

“(1) TRAINING REQUIREMENT.—As part of the training provided to all volunteers under subsection (a), and in coordination with the Inspector General of the Peace Corps, the President shall provide all volunteers with—

“(A) information regarding the mandate of the Inspector General and the availability of the Inspector General as a resource for volunteers; and

“(B) the contact information of the Inspector General.”

“(B) the contact information of the Inspector General.”

“(C) information regarding the mandate of the Office of Victim Advocacy and the availability of the Office of Victim Advocacy as a resource for volunteers; and

“(D) the contact information of the Office of Victim Advocacy.

“(2) FREQUENCY OF TRAINING.—The President shall ensure that volunteers receive the information described in paragraph (1) not less frequently than—

“(A) once during pre-enrollment training; and

“(B) once during each significant training provided by the Peace Corps to volunteers after enrollment.”.

SEC. 202. CONSULTATION WITH CONGRESS REQUIRED BEFORE OPENING OR CLOSING OVERSEAS OFFICES AND COUNTRY PROGRAMS.

The Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2501 et seq.) is amended by inserting after section 10 (22 U.S.C. 2509) the following:

“SEC. 10A. CONSULTATION WITH CONGRESS REQUIRED BEFORE OPENING OR CLOSING OVERSEAS OFFICES AND COUNTRY PROGRAMS.

“(a) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in subsection (b), the Director of the Peace Corps may not open, close, significantly reduce, or suspend a domestic or overseas office or country program unless the Director has notified and consulted with the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives.

“(b) WAIVER.—The Director may waive the application of subsection (a) if an action described in such subsection is necessary to ameliorate a substantial security risk to Peace Corps volunteers or other Peace Corps personnel.”.

SEC. 203. PUBLICATION REQUIREMENT FOR VOLUNTEER SURVEYS.

Section 8E of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2507e) is amended—

(1) in subsection (b), by inserting after the first sentence the following: “The President shall ensure that each performance plan established under this subsection for a Peace Corps representative includes a consideration of the results, with respect to such representative and the country of service of such representative, of each survey conducted under subsection (c).”; and

(2) in subsection (c)—

(A) in the first sentence, by striking “2018” and inserting “2023”; and

(B) by adding at the end the following: “The President shall publish, on a publicly available website of the Peace Corps, a report summarizing the results of each survey related to volunteer satisfaction in each country in which volunteers serve, and the early termination rate of volunteers serving

in each such country. The information published shall be posted in an easily accessible place near the description of the appropriate country and shall be written in an easily understood manner.”.

TITLE III—CRIME RISK REDUCTION ENHANCEMENTS

SEC. 301. INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF VOLUNTEER DEATH.

Section 5 of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2504) is amended by inserting after subsection (c) the following:

“(d)(1) Consistent with the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.), the Inspector General of the Peace Corps may independently review the facts and circumstances surrounding the death of a volunteer and the actions taken by the Peace Corps in responding to such incident.

“(2) Not later than 10 days after receiving notification of the death of a volunteer, the President shall provide a briefing to the Inspector General, which shall include—

“(A)(i) the available facts and circumstances surrounding the death of the volunteer, including a preliminary timeline of the events immediately preceding the death of the volunteer, subsequent actions taken by the Peace Corps, and any information available to the Peace Corps reflecting on the cause or root cause of the volunteer’s death; and

“(ii) a description of any steps the Peace Corps plans to take to inquire further into the cause or root cause of the volunteer’s death, including the anticipated date of the completion of such inquiry; or

“(B) an explanation of why the Peace Corps has determined that no further inquiry into the cause or root cause of the volunteer’s death is necessary, including—

“(i) a description of the steps the Peace Corps took to determine further inquiry was not necessary; and

“(ii) the basis for such determination.

“(3) If the Peace Corps has performed or engaged another entity to perform a root cause analysis or similar report that describes the root cause or proximate cause of a volunteer death, the President shall provide the Inspector General of the Peace Corps with—

“(A) a copy of all information provided to such entity at the time such information is provided to such entity or used by the Peace Corps to perform the analysis;

“(B) a copy of any report or study received from the entity or used by the Peace Corps to perform the analysis; and

“(C) any supporting documentation upon which the Peace Corps or such entity relied to make its determination, including the volunteer’s complete medical record, as soon as such information is available to the Peace Corps.

“(4) If a volunteer dies, the Peace Corps shall take reasonable measures, in accordance with local laws, to preserve any information or material, in any medium or format, that may be relevant to determining the cause or root cause of the volunteer’s death, including personal effects, medication, and other tangible items belonging to the volunteer, as long as such measures do not interfere with the legal procedures of the host country if the government of the host country is exercising jurisdiction over the investigation of such death. The Inspector General of the Peace Corps shall be provided an opportunity to inspect such items before their final disposition.

“(5) For the purposes of undertaking a review under this section, an officer or employee of the United States or a member of the Armed Forces may be detailed to the Inspector General of the Peace Corps from another department of the United States Gov-

ernment on a nonreimbursable basis, as jointly agreed to by the Inspector General and the detailing department, for a period not to exceed 1 year. This paragraph may not be construed to limit or modify any other source of authority for reimbursable or nonreimbursable details. A nonreimbursable detail made under this section shall not be considered an augmentation of the appropriations of the Peace Corps.

“(6) Upon request, the Peace Corps may make available necessary funds to the Inspector General of the Peace Corps for reviews conducted by the Inspector General under this section. The request shall be limited to costs relating to hiring, procuring, or otherwise obtaining medical-related experts or expert services, and associated travel.

“(7) The undertaking of a review under this section shall not be considered a transfer of program operating responsibilities to the Inspector General of the Peace Corps.”.

SEC. 302. MONITORING TRAINING RECORDS.

Section 8 of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2507), as amended by section 201, is further amended by adding at the end the following:

“(d) TRAINING RECORDS.—The President shall implement procedures to maintain a written record verifying the attendance of each individual completing the training required under this section and sections 8A, 8B, and 8F.”.

SEC. 303. ADDITIONAL DISCLOSURES TO APPLICANTS FOR ENROLLMENT AS VOLUNTEERS.

Section 8A(d) of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2507a(d)) is amended to read as follows:

“(d) INFORMATION REGARDING CRIMES AND RISKS.—Each applicant for enrollment as a volunteer shall be provided, with respect to the country in which the applicant has been invited to serve, with information regarding crimes against and risks to volunteers, including—

“(1) an overview of past crimes against volunteers in such country;

“(2) the current early termination rate of volunteers serving in such country;

“(3) health risks in such country; and

“(4) the level of satisfaction reported by volunteers serving in such country.”.

SEC. 304. ADDITIONAL PROTECTIONS AGAINST SEXUAL MISCONDUCT.

Section 8B(a) of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2507b(a)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (5), by striking “and” at the end;

(2) in paragraph (6), by striking the period at the end and inserting a semicolon; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

“(7) maintains a record of the resignation of any employee or volunteer of the Peace Corps who resigns before a determination has been made regarding an allegation that such person committed a sexual assault or other serious misconduct;”

“(7) maintains a record documenting the resignation of any employee or volunteer of the Peace Corps who resigns before a determination has been made regarding an alleged violation of the sexual misconduct policy or other serious policy violations;”

“(8) takes into account the record maintained under paragraph (7) before such employee or volunteer is hired, is enrolled, or otherwise work with the Peace Corps; and

“(9) provides orientation to families who host volunteers regarding the awareness and prevention of sexual assault.”

“(9) provides orientation or information regarding the awareness and prevention of sexual assault to—

“(A) Peace Corps-selected host families; and

“(B) a designated person of authority at the volunteer’s initial workplace.”.

SEC. 305. IMMEDIATE VICTIM ADVOCACY NOTIFICATION.

Section 8B(a)(3) of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2507b(a)(3)) is amended by striking “SARLs to immediately contact” and inserting “the Peace Corps to designate the staff at each post who shall be responsible for providing the services described in subsection (c) and for immediately contacting”.

SEC. 306. EXTENSION OF THE OFFICE OF VICTIM ADVOCACY.

Section 8C of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2507c) is amended—

(1) in the heading to subsection (a), by striking “VICTIMS” and inserting “VICTIM”; and

[(2) in subsection (e), by striking “2018” and inserting “2023”.]

(2) by striking subsection (e).

SEC. 307. REFORM AND EXTENSION OF THE SEXUAL ASSAULT ADVISORY COUNCIL.

Section 8D of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2507d) is amended—

(1) in subsection (b), by striking “not less than 8 individuals selected by the President, not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this section,” and inserting “not fewer than 8 and not more than 14 individuals selected by the President”; and

(2) in subsection (g), by striking “2018” and inserting “2023”.

SEC. 308. DEFINITIONS.

Section 26 of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2522) is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsections (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f), and (g) as paragraphs (1), (6), (2), (3), (8), (7), and (5), respectively, by arranging such redesignated paragraphs in numerical order, and by moving such paragraphs 2 ems to the right;

(2) in paragraph (1), as redesignated, by striking “(1)” and inserting the following:

“In this Act:

“(1)”;

(3) by inserting after paragraph (3), as redesignated, the following:

“(4) The term ‘medical officer’ means a physician, nurse practitioner, physician’s assistant, or registered nurse with the professional qualifications, expertise, and abilities consistent with the needs of the Peace Corps and the post to which he or she is assigned, as determined by the Director of the Peace Corps.”.

Mr. ROUNDS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported amendments be agreed to and the Corker amendment at the desk be agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The committee-reported amendments were agreed to.

The amendment (No. 2209) was agreed to, as follows:

(Purpose: To require the Director of the Peace Corps to notify and consult with the Committees on Appropriations before opening, closing, significantly reducing, or suspending a domestic or overseas office or country program)

On page 13, line 9, insert “, the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate, the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives,” after “Senate”.

Mr. ROUNDS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time.

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

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

Mr. ROUNDS. Mr. President, I know of no further debate on the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

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

The bill (S. 2286), as amended, was passed, as follows:

S. 2286

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the “Nick Castle Peace Corps Reform Act of 2018”.

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.

Sec. 2. Definitions.

TITLE I—PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

Sec. 101. Peace Corps volunteer medical care reform.

Sec. 102. Post-service Peace Corps volunteer medical care reform.

Sec. 103. Peace Corps impact survey.

Sec. 104. Extension of positions for Peace Corps employees.

TITLE II—PEACE CORPS OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Sec. 201. Peace Corps volunteer access to Inspector General.

Sec. 202. Consultation with Congress required before opening or closing overseas offices and country programs.

Sec. 203. Publication requirement for volunteer surveys.

TITLE III—CRIME RISK REDUCTION ENHANCEMENTS

Sec. 301. Independent review of volunteer death.

Sec. 302. Monitoring training records.

Sec. 303. Additional disclosures to applicants for enrollment as volunteers.

Sec. 304. Additional protections against sexual misconduct.

Sec. 305. Immediate victim advocacy notification.

Sec. 306. Extension of the Office of Victim Advocacy.

Sec. 307. Reform and extension of the Sexual Assault Advisory Council.

Sec. 308. Definitions.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—The term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(A) the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate;

(B) the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate;

(C) the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives; and

(D) the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives.

(2) DIRECTOR.—The term “Director” means the Director of the Peace Corps.

(3) PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER.—The term “Peace Corps volunteer” means an individual described in section 5(a) of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2504(a)).

TITLE I—PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER SUPPORT**SEC. 101. PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER MEDICAL CARE REFORM.**

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2501 et seq.) is amended by inserting after section 5 (22 U.S.C. 2504) the following:

“SEC. 5A. HEALTH CARE FOR VOLUNTEERS AT PEACE CORPS POSTS.

“(a) HEALTH CARE MEDICAL OFFICERS SELECTION CRITERIA.—In selecting medical officers and support staff for overseas Peace Corps posts, the Director shall strive to hire well-qualified and capable personnel to support the effectiveness of health care for Peace Corps volunteers by evaluating each candidate’s—

“(1) medical training, experience, and accreditations or other qualifications;

“(2) record of performance;

“(3) administrative capabilities;

“(4) understanding of the local language and culture;

“(5) ability to work in the English language;

“(6) interpersonal skills; and

“(7) such other factors that the Director considers to be appropriate.

“(b) REVIEW AND EVALUATION.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The Director, acting through the Associate Director of the Office of Health Services and the country directors, shall review and evaluate the performance and health care delivery of all Peace Corps medical staff, including medical officers—

“(A) to ensure compliance with all relevant Peace Corps policies, practices, and guidelines; and

“(B) to ensure that medical staff complete the necessary continuing medical education to maintain their skills and satisfy licensing and credentialing standards, as designated by the Director.

“(2) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—The Director shall include, in the annual Peace Corps congressional budget justification, a confirmation that the review and evaluation of all Peace Corps medical staff required under paragraph (1) has been completed.

“(c) ANTIMALARIAL DRUGS.—The Director shall consult with experts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention regarding recommendations for prescribing malaria prophylaxis, in order to provide the best standard of care within the context of the Peace Corps environment.”.

(b) IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE INSPECTOR GENERAL OF THE PEACE CORPS.—

(1) INSPECTOR GENERAL REPORT.—As promptly as practicable, the Director shall implement the actions outlined in the agency response for all open recommendations of the Inspector General of the Peace Corps set forth in the report entitled “Final Program Evaluation Report: OIG Follow-up Evaluation of Issues Identified in the 2010 Peace Corps/Morocco Assessment of Medical Care” (Report No. IG-16-01-E).

(2) SEMIANNUAL REPORTS.—

(A) INITIAL REPORT.—Not later than 6 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Director shall submit a report to the appropriate congressional committees that describes the Director’s strategy for implementing the recommendations referred to in paragraph (1).

(B) SUBSEQUENT REPORTS.—Not later than 6 months after the submission of the report required under subparagraph (A), and semi-annually thereafter, the Director shall submit a report to the appropriate congressional committees that describes the progress in implementing the recommendations referred to in paragraph (1) until all such recommendations have been implemented in accordance with the agency’s response to the report referred to in such paragraph.

(3) NOTIFICATION.—After the submission of each report required under paragraph (2), the Inspector General of the Peace Corps may notify the appropriate congressional committees of any recommendations from the report referred to in paragraph (1) that the Inspector General determines remain unresolved.

SEC. 102. POST-SERVICE PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER MEDICAL CARE REFORM.

Section 8142 of title 5, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(d)(1) The Secretary shall authorize the Director of the Peace Corps to furnish medical benefits to a volunteer, who is injured during the volunteer’s period of service, for a period of 120 days following the termination of such service if the Director certifies that the volunteer’s injury probably meets the requirements under subsection (c)(3). The Secretary may then certify vouchers for these expenses for such volunteer out of the Employees’ Compensation Fund.

“(2) The Secretary shall prescribe the form and content of the certification required under paragraph (1).

“(3) A certification under paragraph (1) will cease to be effective if the volunteer sustains compensable disability in connection with volunteer service.

“(4) Nothing in this subsection may be construed to authorize the furnishing of any medical benefit that the Secretary of Labor is not otherwise authorized to reimburse for former Peace Corps volunteers who receive treatment for injury or disease proximately caused by their service in the Peace Corps in accordance with this chapter.”.

SEC. 103. PEACE CORPS IMPACT SURVEY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Beginning not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act and once every 2 years for the following 6 years, the Director shall conduct a survey of former Peace Corps volunteers.

(b) SCOPE OF SURVEY.—The survey required under subsection (a) shall assess, with respect to each former Peace Corps volunteer completing the survey, the impact of the Peace Corps on the former volunteer, including the volunteer’s—

- (1) well-being;
- (2) career;
- (3) civic engagement; and
- (4) commitment to public service.

(c) REPORT.—The Director shall submit a report containing the results of the survey conducted under subsection (a) to—

- (1) the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate;
- (2) the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives;
- (3) the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate; and
- (4) the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives.

(d) PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT EXEMPTION.—Subchapter I of chapter 35 of title 44, United States Code (commonly known as the “Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980”), shall not apply to the collection of information through the survey required under this section.

SEC. 104. EXTENSION OF POSITIONS FOR PEACE CORPS EMPLOYEES.

Section 7(a) of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2506(a)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(8) DESIGNATION OF CRITICAL POSITIONS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—The Director of the Peace Corps may designate Peace Corps positions as critical management or management support positions that require specialized technical or professional skills and knowledge of Peace Corps operations. Such positions may include positions in the following fields:

- “(i) Volunteer health services.
- “(ii) Financial management.
- “(iii) Information technology.
- “(iv) Procurement.
- “(v) Personnel.
- “(vi) Legal services.
- “(vii) Safety and security.

“(B) AUTHORITY.—Subject to subparagraphs (C) and (D), with respect to positions

designated pursuant to subparagraph (A), the Director may make or extend renewable appointments or assignments under paragraph (2) notwithstanding limitations under subparagraphs (A) and (B) of paragraph (2) and paragraph (5).

“(C) REQUIREMENTS.—In exercising authority under subparagraph (B), the Director shall ensure that all decisions regarding the appointment, assignment, or extension of employees to any such position—

- “(i) are consistent with Federal law and Peace Corps policy; and
- “(ii) are based upon operational and programmatic factors.

“(D) DURATION OF APPOINTMENTS.—The term of any appointment or assignment to any position designated under subparagraph (A) may not exceed 5 years.”.

TITLE II—PEACE CORPS OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY**SEC. 201. PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER ACCESS TO INSPECTOR GENERAL.**

Section 8 of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2507) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by striking “he” and inserting “the President”; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

“(c) AVAILABILITY OF THE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL.—

“(1) TRAINING REQUIREMENT.—As part of the training provided to all volunteers under subsection (a), and in coordination with the Inspector General of the Peace Corps, the President shall provide all volunteers with—

“(A) information regarding the mandate of the Inspector General and the availability of the Inspector General as a resource for volunteers;

“(B) the contact information of the Inspector General;

“(C) information regarding the mandate of the Office of Victim Advocacy and the availability of the Office of Victim Advocacy as a resource for volunteers; and

“(D) the contact information of the Office of Victim Advocacy.

“(2) FREQUENCY OF TRAINING.—The President shall ensure that volunteers receive the information described in paragraph (1) not less frequently than—

“(A) once during pre-enrollment training; and

“(B) once during each significant training provided by the Peace Corps to volunteers after enrollment.”.

SEC. 202. CONSULTATION WITH CONGRESS REQUIRED BEFORE OPENING OR CLOSING OVERSEAS OFFICES AND COUNTRY PROGRAMS.

The Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2501 et seq.) is amended by inserting after section 10 (22 U.S.C. 2509) the following:

“SEC. 10A. CONSULTATION WITH CONGRESS REQUIRED BEFORE OPENING OR CLOSING OVERSEAS OFFICES AND COUNTRY PROGRAMS.

“(a) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in subsection (b), the Director of the Peace Corps may not open, close, significantly reduce, or suspend a domestic or overseas office or country program unless the Director has notified and consulted with the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate, the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate, the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives, and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives.

“(b) WAIVER.—The Director may waive the application of subsection (a) if an action described in such subsection is necessary to ameliorate a substantial security risk to Peace Corps volunteers or other Peace Corps personnel.”.

SEC. 203. PUBLICATION REQUIREMENT FOR VOLUNTEER SURVEYS.

Section 8E of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2507e) is amended—

(1) in subsection (b), by inserting after the first sentence the following: “The President shall ensure that each performance plan established under this subsection for a Peace Corps representative includes a consideration of the results, with respect to such representative and the country of service of such representative, of each survey conducted under subsection (c).”; and

(2) in subsection (c)—

(A) in the first sentence, by striking “2018” and inserting “2023”; and

(B) by adding at the end the following: “The President shall publish, on a publicly available website of the Peace Corps, a report summarizing the results of each survey related to volunteer satisfaction in each country in which volunteers serve, and the early termination rate of volunteers serving in each such country. The information published shall be posted in an easily accessible place near the description of the appropriate country and shall be written in an easily understood manner.”.

TITLE III—CRIME RISK REDUCTION ENHANCEMENTS**SEC. 301. INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF VOLUNTEER DEATH.**

Section 5 of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2504) is amended by inserting after subsection (c) the following:

“(d)(1) Consistent with the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.), the Inspector General of the Peace Corps may independently review the facts and circumstances surrounding the death of a volunteer and the actions taken by the Peace Corps in responding to such incident.

“(2) Not later than 10 days after receiving notification of the death of a volunteer, the President shall provide a briefing to the Inspector General, which shall include—

“(A)(i) the available facts and circumstances surrounding the death of the volunteer, including a preliminary timeline of the events immediately preceding the death of the volunteer, subsequent actions taken by the Peace Corps, and any information available to the Peace Corps reflecting on the cause or root cause of the volunteer’s death; and

“(ii) a description of any steps the Peace Corps plans to take to inquire further into the cause or root cause of the volunteer’s death, including the anticipated date of the completion of such inquiry; or

“(B) an explanation of why the Peace Corps has determined that no further inquiry into the cause or root cause of the volunteer’s death is necessary, including—

“(i) a description of the steps the Peace Corps took to determine further inquiry was not necessary; and

“(ii) the basis for such determination.

“(3) If the Peace Corps has performed or engaged another entity to perform a root cause analysis or similar report that describes the root cause or proximate cause of a volunteer death, the President shall provide the Inspector General of the Peace Corps with—

“(A) a copy of all information provided to such entity at the time such information is provided to such entity or used by the Peace Corps to perform the analysis;

“(B) a copy of any report or study received from the entity or used by the Peace Corps to perform the analysis; and

“(C) any supporting documentation upon which the Peace Corps or such entity relied to make its determination, including the volunteer’s complete medical record, as soon as such information is available to the Peace Corps.

“(4) If a volunteer dies, the Peace Corps shall take reasonable measures, in accordance with local laws, to preserve any information or material, in any medium or format, that may be relevant to determining the cause or root cause of the volunteer's death, including personal effects, medication, and other tangible items belonging to the volunteer, as long as such measures do not interfere with the legal procedures of the host country if the government of the host country is exercising jurisdiction over the investigation of such death. The Inspector General of the Peace Corps shall be provided an opportunity to inspect such items before their final disposition.

“(5) For the purposes of undertaking a review under this section, an officer or employee of the United States or a member of the Armed Forces may be detailed to the Inspector General of the Peace Corps from another department of the United States Government on a nonreimbursable basis, as jointly agreed to by the Inspector General and the detailing department, for a period not to exceed 1 year. This paragraph may not be construed to limit or modify any other source of authority for reimbursable or non-reimbursable details. A nonreimbursable detail made under this section shall not be considered an augmentation of the appropriations of the Peace Corps.

“(6) Upon request, the Peace Corps may make available necessary funds to the Inspector General of the Peace Corps for reviews conducted by the Inspector General under this section. The request shall be limited to costs relating to hiring, procuring, or otherwise obtaining medical-related experts or expert services, and associated travel.

“(7) The undertaking of a review under this section shall not be considered a transfer of program operating responsibilities to the Inspector General of the Peace Corps.”.

SEC. 302. MONITORING TRAINING RECORDS.

Section 8 of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2507), as amended by section 201, is further amended by adding at the end the following:

“(d) **TRAINING RECORDS.**—The President shall implement procedures to maintain a written record verifying the attendance of each individual completing the training required under this section and sections 8A, 8B, and 8F.”.

SEC. 303. ADDITIONAL DISCLOSURES TO APPLICANTS FOR ENROLLMENT AS VOLUNTEERS.

Section 8A(d) of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2507a(d)) is amended to read as follows:

“(d) **INFORMATION REGARDING CRIMES AND RISKS.**—Each applicant for enrollment as a volunteer shall be provided, with respect to the country in which the applicant has been invited to serve, with information regarding crimes against and risks to volunteers, including—

- “(1) an overview of past crimes against volunteers in such country;
- “(2) the current early termination rate of volunteers serving in such country;
- “(3) health risks in such country; and

“(4) the level of satisfaction reported by volunteers serving in such country.”.

SEC. 304. ADDITIONAL PROTECTIONS AGAINST SEXUAL MISCONDUCT.

Section 8B(a) of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2507b(a)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (5), by striking “and” at the end;

(2) in paragraph (6), by striking the period at the end and inserting a semicolon; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

“(7) maintains a record documenting the resignation of any employee or volunteer of the Peace Corps who resigns before a determination has been made regarding an alleged violation of the sexual misconduct policy or other serious policy violations;

“(8) takes into account the record maintained under paragraph (7) before such employee or volunteer is hired, is enrolled, or otherwise work with the Peace Corps; and

“(9) provides orientation or information regarding the awareness and prevention of sexual assault to—

“(A) Peace Corps-selected host families; and

“(B) a designated person of authority at the volunteer's initial workplace.”.

SEC. 305. IMMEDIATE VICTIM ADVOCACY NOTIFICATION.

Section 8B(a)(3) of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2507b(a)(3)) is amended by striking “SARLs to immediately contact” and inserting “the Peace Corps to designate the staff at each post who shall be responsible for providing the services described in subsection (c) and for immediately contacting”.

SEC. 306. EXTENSION OF THE OFFICE OF VICTIM ADVOCACY.

Section 8C of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2507c) is amended—

(1) in the heading to subsection (a), by striking “VICTIMS” and inserting “VICTIM”; and

(2) by striking subsection (e).

SEC. 307. REFORM AND EXTENSION OF THE SEXUAL ASSAULT ADVISORY COUNCIL.

Section 8D of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2507d) is amended—

(1) in subsection (b), by striking “not less than 8 individuals selected by the President, not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this section,” and inserting “not fewer than 8 and not more than 14 individuals selected by the President”; and

(2) in subsection (g), by striking “2018” and inserting “2023”.

SEC. 308. DEFINITIONS.

Section 26 of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2522) is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsections (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f), and (g) as paragraphs (1), (6), (2), (3), (8), (7), and (5), respectively, by arranging such redesignated paragraphs in numerical order, and by moving such paragraphs 2 ems to the right;

(2) in paragraph (1), as redesignated, by striking “(1)” and inserting the following:

“In this Act:

“(1)”;

(3) by inserting after paragraph (3), as redesignated, the following:

“(4) The term ‘medical officer’ means a physician, nurse practitioner, physician's assistant, or registered nurse with the professional qualifications, expertise, and abilities consistent with the needs of the Peace Corps and the post to which he or she is assigned, as determined by the Director of the Peace Corps.”.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. ROUNDS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, the postcloture time on Senate amendment No. 2151, as modified, expire at 3:45 p.m. on Wednesday, March 14; further, that if cloture is invoked on S. 2155, the time count as if invoked at midnight, Wednesday, March 14.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDERS FOR WEDNESDAY, MARCH 14, 2018

Mr. ROUNDS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 9:30 a.m. on Wednesday, March 14; further, that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and morning business be closed. Finally, I ask that following leader remarks, the Senate resume consideration of S. 2155 under the previous order.

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

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:30 A.M. TOMORROW

Mr. ROUNDS. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 8 p.m., adjourned until Wednesday, March 14, 2018, at 9:30 a.m.

CONFIRMATION

Executive nomination confirmed by the Senate March 13, 2018:

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

GILBERT B. KAPLAN, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF COMMERCE FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE.