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Senate

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

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, we place our trust in You. During this season, when we sing about good will toward humanity, many forces seek to turn that dream into a nightmare.

Make our lawmakers instruments of Your peace. Where there is discord, may they bring harmony. Where there is cynicism, may they bring faith. Where there is sadness, may they bring joy. And where there is despair, may they bring hope. Use these stewards of liberty to make the rough places smooth and the crooked places straight.

Lord, thank You for bringing hope to the helpless and for hearing and comforting the oppressed.

We pray in Your Holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

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

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HELLER). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

NOTICE

If the 114th Congress, 1st Session, adjourns sine die on or before December 24, 2015, a final issue of the *Congressional Record* for the 114th Congress, 1st Session, will be published on Thursday, December 31, 2015, to permit Members to insert statements.

All material for insertion must be signed by the Member and delivered to the respective offices of the Official Reporters of Debates (Room HT–59 or S–123 of the Capitol), Monday through Friday, between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. through Wednesday, December 30. The final issue will be dated Thursday, December 31, 2015, and will be delivered on Monday, January 4, 2016.

None of the material printed in the final issue of the *Congressional Record* may contain subject matter, or relate to any event, that occurred after the sine die date.

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By order of the Joint Committee on Printing.

GREGG HARPER, *Chairman.*

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 3 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

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

DISCRIMINATION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, yesterday the Supreme Court heard oral arguments in the case of Fisher v. University of Texas. In that case the plaintiff was challenging the affirmative action program the University of Texas has.

During those oral arguments, conservative Justice Scalia asked whether affirmative action harms minority students by placing them in environments that are too academically challenging for them. Justice Scalia said the following about African-American students: ''There are those who contend that it does not benefit African Americans to get them into the University of Texas where they do not do well, as opposed to having them go to a less advanced school, a slower-track school where they do well.''

Justice Scalia further argued that African-American students ''come from lesser schools where they do not feel that they're . . . being pushed ahead in . . . classes that are too . . . fast for them'' and that the University of Texas should not take really qualified African-American students because that means ''the number of . . . really competent blacks admitted to lesser schools turns out to be less.''

But that wasn't enough. This is what else he said: ''I don't think it stands to reason that it's a good thing for the University of Texas to admit as many blacks as possible.''

It is stunning that a man of his intellect—and I have always acknowledged his intellect, but these ideas that he pronounced yesterday are racist in application if not intent. I don't know about his intent, but it is deeply disturbing to hear a Supreme Court Justice endorse racist ideas from the bench of the Nation's highest Court. His endorsement of racist theories has frightening ramifications, not the least of which is to undermine the academic achievements of Americans, African Americans especially.

Earlier this week I spoke about the Republican platform, which has a lot of hate in it. As we speak, Donald Trump is proposing to ban Muslim immigration. Other leading candidates are proposing religious tests, tossing around slurs on a daily basis.

The top two Republican leaders in the United States have said they will support Donald Trump if he is nominated. And now a Republican-appointed Justice is endorsing racist ideas from the Supreme Court bench. The only difference between the ideas endorsed by Trump and Scalia is that Scalia has a robe and a lifetime appointment. Ideas such as these don't belong on the Internet, let alone the mouths of the Nation's leaders.

The idea that African-American students are somehow inherently intellectually inferior to other students is despicable. It is a throwback to a time that America left behind half a century ago. The idea that we should be pushing well-qualified African-American students out of the top universities into lesser schools is unacceptable. That Justice Scalia could raise such an uninformed idea shows just how out of touch he is with the values of this Nation. It goes without saying that an African-American student has the same potential to succeed in an academically challenging environment as any other student.

I firmly continue to believe the United States of America is the greatest Nation in the world because of our ability to embrace men and women of diverse backgrounds and provide them with the opportunity to succeed. Colleges and universities that welcome diversity provide their students with an opportunity many in the world can never hope to obtain. Learning with people from different backgrounds spurs creativity and innovation. Research has shown that increased racial diversity on campuses produces higher levels of academic achievement for all students, and Fortune 500 companies agree that embracing diversity is good for the bottom line.

The Supreme Court previously has acknowledged that diversity provides a substantial and compelling contribution to our educational system. Yet Justice Scalia's comments paint a picture of two disturbing realities.

Despite the progress our Nation has made on diversity and inclusion, there is still much work to do to ensure we are giving every American a fair shot regardless of race, ethnicity, or religion. As a nation, we still have the responsibility to direct adequate resources to our educational system to prepare all students for higher education.

Generations of discrimination and legally sanctioned inequality have produced racial disparities in our educational system—sad but true. These disparities must be addressed by embracing diversity in our schools, workplaces, markets, and neighborhoods while investing in adequate resources for all students, from pre-K to higher education.

Our Nation was founded on the values of liberty, justice, and equality. Justice Scalia's distressing comments are a reminder that we must remain vigilant to safeguard opportunity for all Americans. Embracing diversity is not only the right thing to do, it is the American way.

Lyndon Johnson said:

> It is not enough just to open the gates of opportunity. All our citizens must have the ability to walk through those gates.

It is our responsibility as a nation to open the gates of opportunity for all Americans, in spite of what Justice Scalia said yesterday.

Mr. President, has the Chair announced the business of the day?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. It has been announced.

Mr. REID. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE NEW SENATE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, what a difference a new Senate can make—what a difference.

Some may have thought Washington would never agree on a replacement for No Child Left Behind. Years of inaction on the Senate floor gave ample cause for doubt. Some may have been skeptical when a new Senate with a new approach resolved to finally solve the problem—but no longer.

Yesterday, the new Senate voted overwhelmingly to deliver the most significant K–12 education reform in well over a decade. The President will sign the bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act later this morning.

Here is what this bipartisan law will do: replace a broken law with conservative reform that will help students succeed instead of helping Washington grow. That means swapping one-size-fits-all Federal mandates for greater State and local flexibility. That means bringing an end to the ability of faraway bureaucrats to impose common core. That means strengthening charter schools. That means putting education back in the hands of those who know students' needs best—parents, teachers, States, and school boards.

The Every Student Succeeds Act is conservative reform passed on a bipartisan basis. The Wall Street Journal calls it ''the largest devolution of federal control to the states in a quarter-century,'' and it is an important achievement for our kids and for our country.

So I want to thank again the Senators who worked together to make this possible—Senator ALEXANDER, a Republican from Tennessee, and Senator MURRAY, a Democrat from Washington. They took advantage of the opportunities a new and more open Senate provided. They put good legislation together and then placed personal stakes in its success. They worked hard. They labored over many months, and they didn't lose sight of what a legislative exercise like this one should really be about: good policy, better outcomes for our country, and, with the bill we passed yesterday—the bill the President will sign today—greater opportunities for every student to succeed.

Senator ALEXANDER was right when he said that ''this bill is just one more example that Congress is back to work.'' It is worth noting a point he made the other day as well: ''This has

been one of the most productive Senate years in a long time,'' he said. ''The Republican Senate majority is making a real difference, particularly [for] 100,000 public schools, [for] 3.5 million teachers, and [for] 50 million children.''

But perhaps the American people are wondering why. Perhaps they are wondering why the Senate is suddenly back to work this year. Perhaps they are wondering why some issues are suddenly passing now when they weren't passing previously. Let me turn back to the rest of what Senator ALEXANDER said, because I think the answer for a bill like ESSA is really quite simple. ''We're doing it,'' he said, ''by working in a bipartisan way with our colleagues, which is, I think, the way the American people want us to govern.''

Here is the idea. Give Senators of both parties more of a say in the process, and Senators of both parties are likely to take more of a stake in the outcome. That is why, on this bill, we saw a more open process that started way back in the committee stage. Senator ALEXANDER and Senator MURRAY, the top Republican and the top Democrat on the education committee, understood that No Child Left Behind had to be fixed after years of inaction. So they worked together on a bipartisan basis, and the Senate passed the most significant K–12 education reform in years.

Take another example. Senator INHOFE and Senator BOXER, the top Republican and top Democrat on the public works committee, understood that crumbling roads and bridges had to be fixed after years of inaction. So they worked together on a bipartisan basis, and the Senate passed the first long-term transportation bill in a decade.

How about this one: Senator BURR and Senator FEINSTEIN, the top Republican and top Democrat on the Intelligence Committee, understood that Americans' online privacy and financial transactions deserved some protection after years of inaction. So they worked together on a bipartisan basis, and the Senate passed an important cyber security bill.

Across the new Congress, we saw several other stuck issues come unstuck too: a decisive end to Washington's annual doc fix drama, strong action to help knock down foreign trade barriers, and extending a hand of compassion to victims of modern slavery. All of it passed in the new Congress, and all of it passed on a bipartisan basis.

Now, let me be clear. No one is saying that all of the Senate's challenges have been ironed out. Of course we know that our work is ongoing. Of course we know there will always be bumps along the way.

But here is what we can say for sure. The new Senate has taken serious steps to foster a more open atmosphere on many issues. The new Senate has seen real progress made for our country, often on a bipartisan basis, and we are proud of that. We are proud of that. Whether we are Republican or Democrat, I think that is something we can all take pride in as Americans.

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.

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

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

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business for up to 15 minutes.

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

SENATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, I rise today to highlight the positive change our new Republican majority has brought to the U.S. Senate in 2015.

As a first-year Senator—and I will remind everybody that I spent a lot of time on the other side of the Capitol observing the Senate—I came to the body looking to improve this institution that for far too long was not working for American families. Not only did the Senate fail to pass legislation that would help our seniors, students, and workers, it failed to even debate critical issues. Looking from the House side across the hall in the Capitol, we really couldn't understand that.

In 2014 the Senate only voted on 15 amendments. This year, under new leadership, we have taken hundreds of amendment votes and committees are hard at work. We debated issues, clearly stated our policy priorities, and broke the gridlock that defined the previous Congress.

Allowing Senators from both sides of the aisle to offer amendments, participate in the process, and take votes is the best way to achieve bipartisan legislation. It is common sense. Isn't that the way it is supposed to be? It is kind of how I thought it should be, and I am glad to know that this year, that is what we are doing. Working together is the only way to enact policies that will improve the lives of the American people.

The new Senate work has borne tremendous fruit, particularly in the past week. We passed the first major overhaul of elementary and secondary education in more than a decade, and the President is poised to sign this into law. Eighty-five Senators voted for it; that is a big bipartisan majority.

The Every Student Succeeds Act strikes the proper balance between flexibility and accountability. The bill ends education waivers and the Federal common core mandate that had turned Washington bureaucrats into basically a national school board. No one cares more about a student's success than a child's parents and their teachers, and those closest to our children should be the ones empowered to make those decisions. At the same time, accountability matters.

I have three children who went through the school system, and testing done properly is a good thing. A parent wants to know where their child stands. We want to know what their weaknesses and successes are, and we want to know where the school stands. But under this bill, States will have multiple measures of student achievement, not just testing. Test results will just be a part of that evaluation, and States will have broad discretion to measure other factors. High schools will now report on the rate of graduates going on to higher education. Whether graduates are prepared to continue education is, in my view, an important measure of success.

This bill also recognizes the importance of technology and education, not just in the classroom but also at home. It includes language that Senator KING and I introduced to study the homework gap. Students who lack access to fast and reliable broadband at home need to be able to continue learning outside the classroom.

If the teacher gives an assignment and students are given a device and they take it home, if they don't have the connectivity, they are behind. But if they do have the connectivity—the access—they can continue their education at home and be prepared the next day.

States will now have flexibility to use Federal resources to improve this access to technology. This is a significant step forward, I think, for the education system that is outdated and out of step with the needs of our students. It is particularly hard-hitting in rural communities.

Last week we passed and the President signed the first long-term highway bill in 17 years. Since 2009, Congress has lurched from one short-term patch to another, leaving officials across the country unable to plan future highway and transit projects.

The shameful inability to make a lasting investment in our infrastructure came to an end last week. The FAST Act invests $2.5 billion in West Virginia's roads and bridges over 5 years. I can say after going home last weekend that the biggest issue raised to me in a congratulatory way was this: Thank you for passing the highway bill. With it, the completion of Route 35 in West Virginia and Corridor H will bring economic potential to our State. Key projects such as the King Coal Highway and the Coalfields Expressway will help isolated communities attract businesses and provide jobs. States will also now have more flexibility, which is exactly what they want and need, to spend Federal dollars.

New permitting reforms will help taxpayer dollars go farther and enable projects to be completed more quickly. Time is money, and if we can complete in a shorter time span and do the regulatory obligations at the same time—

concurrently—it can save States, the Federal Government, and localities money.

This highway bill is truly a jobs bill not only for the workers who will build and repair America's roads and bridges, but these investments will also bring broader economic benefits to our communities.

Another good thing this bill does that will help further job growth in West Virginia is it reauthorizes the Appalachian Regional Commission. This reauthorization includes bipartisan language to establish a high-speed broadband development initiative for underserved areas in Appalachia.

Just this Sunday, the Charleston Gazette-Mail wrote about how the lack of broadband was hindering efforts to provide telemedicine in small West Virginia towns. The ARC reauthorization is a tangible step towards getting this region connected. Broadband access can power these communities.

So passage of the education and highway bills are tremendous recent achievements, and they follow earlier bipartisan accomplishments this year.

With our entitlement programs hurdling towards bankruptcy, it was important for Congress to act. In April, we permanently eliminated Medicare's sustainable growth rate, or SGR, putting an end to the long series of temporary patches that had vexed our Nation's seniors and doctors. These reforms will encourage competition, save taxpayer dollars, and provide a more reliable system for our seniors. We know there is more to do, but this marks a good first step to preserve Medicare for future generations.

This same legislation extended funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program—a program I have been intimately involved with in West Virginia since my early days as a member of the house of delegates.

We passed legislation to help veterans heal from the unseen wounds of war and to support victims of human trafficking.

We renewed trade promotion authority to facilitate new trade agreements that can expand American jobs. And we did all of this by working together to find common ground on behalf of the people we serve.

Even when consensus cannot be achieved or the President chooses to go it alone, the Senate should debate the tough issues and show the American people where we stand. We say where we stand when we are running for election. We should be saying where we stand now that we are elected. We shouldn't be shying away from that.

The President's relentless environmental campaign to expand Washington bureaucracy at the expense of our economy is an issue I have been deeply concerned about. Energy-producing States have been hit the hardest. My State of West Virginia now has the largest and highest unemployment rate after enduring thousands of layoffs and WARN notices. Nationwide, coal mining employment has dropped by 30 percent since 2011. When I was a Member of the House of Representatives, I took action to rein in the President's regulatory agenda, but often legislation that passed the House could not garner enough support here in the Senate.

So as a newly elected Senator, I committed to change that and to lead the legislative response to protect affordable, reliable energy. Just last month, we succeeded. The Senate passed two resolutions to avoid the Clean Power Plan that are now headed to the President's desk, including the one that I led. Under new leadership, the Senate strongly opposed policies that are devastating our energy economy and have negligible environmental benefit.

ObamaCare is another costly disaster that has placed great burdens on the American people. The new Republican-led Senate recently delivered on its promise to pass legislation that repeals the broken law. Basically, ObamaCare is failing. Americans are facing skyrocketing premiums and deductibles. Countless people have lost access to the doctor and health care plan of their choice. Even insurance companies are threatening to pull out of the system, and the Nation's largest one is one of those.

President Obama and the Democrats are fighting to use taxpayers' dollars to bail out the big insurance companies in a misguided attempt to save their failed health care policy.

The repeal legislation we passed last week would reduce taxes by more than $1 trillion, strengthen Medicare, and provide significant resources for a problem plaguing our country—substance abuse and mental health treatment. We know the President will veto the bill, but new leadership in the Senate has put a repeal bill on his desk for the first time. And this legislation will serve as a model for efforts to repeal and replace ObamaCare in the next Congress.

This year, we have addressed the concerns of many Americans and the serious challenges that we face. We have solved problems and delivered real results. And under Leader MCCONNELL's management, we have been able to debate critical issues on behalf of the Americans we serve, offer new reforms and ideas through the amendment process, and enact important bipartisan legislation.

But this is just the beginning. While much has been accomplished, our work is far from done, and I look forward to building on this record of bipartisan achievement in the year ahead.

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

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

MENTAL HEALTH CARE

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I rise to talk about an opportunity we have in the midst of all the negotiations going on to do something incredibly meaningful, that has bipartisan support, and literally will address a group of diseases that affect one out of four people every year—one out of four people who work here, one out of four people in our families. A set of diseases right now for which less than 40 percent of those with the disease get the treatment they need, but when they do, it is manageable and they can go on and lead productive lives. What I am talking about is mental illness. One out of four people every year has some kind of mental illness which is treatable and with medications and with treatment—just like any other disease—can allow someone to go on and live their life.

We have started the process in public policy of doing what we call mental health parity by saying now that insurance can't discriminate whether it is a behavioral disease, mental health, substance abuse or physical health, but we don't yet have the services in the community. So what happens is we pay dearly. Not only do individuals pay with their lives, their livelihoods, their families, and communities pay, but we pay as taxpayers.

It was interesting to me, speaking at a conference a couple of days ago here in DC with law enforcement and mental health professionals coming together, to hear about the Cook County Jail in Chicago, a huge facility. The sheriff there now has appointed a psychiatrist as the director of the jail. Why? Because one-third of the people housed in the jail have psychiatric problems. They shouldn't be in the jail. They may have committed some minor infraction because they didn't have a job or maybe they were on the street. Maybe they were hearing voices in their head and didn't hear the police officer and didn't respond in a way—or where it was considered belligerent. We now know from papers today in Michigan that studies show that people who are mentally ill are 16 times more likely to be killed in a year by a police officer. I am not suggesting that it is at all on purpose but it is because of the nature of the behavioral problems and what ends up happening in the real world when people aren't getting the treatments they need. We know what happens in terms of violence and people committing crimes, although someone who has a mental health disease is much more likely to be a victim than a perpetrator.

We have people in the emergency rooms of our hospitals. I have talked to hospital administrators and doctors who say what we need is to make sure we have a 24-hour emergency psychiatric facility, a place where someone can go or family members can call or the police can use if they find someone who needs help, not the hospital emergency room and certainly not the jail.

The good news is that we have started a bipartisan effort that can fix this. My partner and colleague in this, Senator BLUNT, and I, over a year ago, authored a provision that was passed by the House and Senate to begin something called the Excellence in Mental Health Act. We now have in law a definition of quality behavioral health services. We have federally qualified health centers in the community where people without insurance can go and get preventive care and get the physical health services they need, but the health clinics can't get reimbursed for mental health or substance abuse services. So we now have a definition. We have standards for what quality behavioral health care, mental health, and substance abuse care looks like. We have standards. We begin to provide dollars so that communities can provide those services if they meet the standards.

A couple of years ago when we put together money for the first step by saying we are going to provide money for 8 States to be able to meet those standards—8 out of 50—the good news was that half the States in the country responded and said: We want to be one of those eight States. Twenty-four States across our country now have signed up. They have received planning grants to assess their community mental health services, what they are doing, and how they can meet these new high standards, how they can make sure they include 24-hour psychiatric emergency services in their community so their citizens have the help they need as well as ongoing help for families and individuals. Twenty-four States have said: Sign me up. We are willing to do the work.

We have funding for eight of those States to actually be able to do it, to change lives; eight of those States to be able to provide services, treatment, hope for individual families, help for the sheriff, and relief for the emergency room. What we are proposing now and what is under consideration is to fund the 24 States. We have 24 States that have stepped forward. Let's provide them the resources. In the context of what we are talking about in the budget, it is a very small amount of money. We could say to the communities across this country and virtually half of the States that we are going to give them the resources to meet higher quality standards, to be able to provide the services desperately needed for one out of four people every year who have some kind of mental illness. The ramifications of doing nothing are severe in so many ways.

The reality is that we are at a point where we have the opportunity to say that as a country we are going to recognize and treat diseases above the neck the same as diseases below the neck and support communities that step up with higher quality standards and services. In the world in which we live, this would be a huge bipartisan victory.

I know this is under discussion, and I am hopeful that as the leadership moves forward, they will join us—the bipartisan coalition in the House and the Senate—in saying yes to give the people an opportunity to live their lives, be successful, work, and manage their diseases in the community just like any other disease.

I wish to say in closing that if you are a diabetic, you check your insulin every day. If you check your sugar and take your insulin, you manage your disease. It is not debilitating. You can go out and live your life. I imagine there are many people who work in the Senate who are managing diabetes. You can do the same thing if you are bipolar. It is a chemical imbalance of the brain. It is just a different organ, a different part of the body. If, in fact, you have the medication to stabilize and you have the support and treatment you need, you can manage that disease, go on with your life, be successful, work, have a family, and be able to live with dignity. That is what we are talking about. We are talking about giving people who have diseases in the brain the same opportunity for treatment and management of those diseases to live healthy, hopeful, successful lives as we do for people who have diseases in any other organ of the body. We have the opportunity to do that. At the end of next week, I deeply hope we will be able to celebrate that we have done something incredibly important for families across America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FLAKE). The Senator from Indiana.

WASTEFUL SPENDING

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, this is the 29th time I have been on the floor over this current session to address what is called, ''Waste of the Week.'' Twenty-nine weeks of this year, I have been on the Senate floor talking about examples of how the Federal Government wastes taxpayers' money through waste, fraud, and abuse. I have laid out specific examples.

Some changes have been made in programs as a result of the publicity it has received not just from me but from the accounting offices that are doing the checking and the inspectors general who are doing the checking.

Sometimes I wonder if anybody is listening, but I am very encouraged by the fact that a number of us now, including the Presiding Officer, are talking about this issue. I hope every Member in this body, all 100 of us, start thinking about ways in which we can make our Federal Government more efficient and effective and stop wasting through fraud and abuse, stop wasting taxpayer dollars. I don't want to keep doing this, but I am going to keep doing this until there is a majority and hopefully a unanimous clarion call saying: Let's clean up this government. Let's go after this waste, fraud, and abuse.

In terms of examples, we have now totaled well over $100 billion. We are coming up with much higher numbers as we come down to the floor every week. The Presiding Officer just issued a book, which I think every Member of this body ought to read, collecting other examples of waste, fraud, and abuse.

All of this is really in honor of a former Member, Senator Tom Coburn of Oklahoma, who really led the charge on this issue. I regret that Tom is not still a Member of the Senate. He had a way of digging out this information that was commendable. He would come to the floor and make a persuasive case through the illustration of various forms of abuse of the taxpayers' dollars.

A number of my colleagues are picking up the clarion call. As I said, we need all 100 of us to come to the conclusion that we don't have to stand here and say we are doing everything we possibly can to manage the people's money when we know that is not true, when we know that inspectors general of virtually every agency in the government have come up with reports that simply say ''Why in the world are you doing this in the first place?'' or ''Look at this amount of fraud.''

One-hundred billion dollars or more is just a drop in the budget, so we are going to continue to expose this waste. Today I had hoped this 29th waste of the week would be the last one of this calendar year, but it looks as if we might be here 1 more week, so we will get the 30th in next week if necessary.

Recently, the inspector general for the Department of Housing and Urban Development conducted a series of audits on HUD's multibillion-dollar portfolio. The results that have been printed are deeply troubling. After reviewing HUD's books, the inspector general found that the agency's finances are missing records, contain inaccurate information, and have even violated Federal laws. He acknowledged that HUD's accounting has lacked appropriate oversight for a long time. This has been going on for a long time.

Let me quote from his report:

> Multiple deficiencies existed in HUD's internal controls over financial reporting, resulting in misstatements on financial statements, noncompliance laws and regulations. We have reported on HUD's administrative control of funds in our audit reports and management reports since fiscal year 2005. HUD continued to not have a fully implemented and complete administrative control of funds system that provided oversight of both obligations and disbursements.

This was exposed in 2005. Ten years later, they are still having the problem. They still haven't cleaned up their act.

This is just one agency. Maybe this is the worst agency—I don't know—in terms of being irresponsible and how they spend money, but I doubt it. I suspect that this statement could have been made by a number of our agencies.

I wish to highlight a couple of specific examples from the inspector general's audits.

One audit examined HUD's Government National Mortgage Administration, commonly known as Ginnie Mae. Ginnie Mae buys mortgages from banks and institutions, bundles those mortgages together, and then sells portions of those bundles to investors. These mortgage-backed securities are fully backed by U.S. Government guarantees.

The IG's audit bluntly noted that HUD's financial records are so bad that it was not even possible to audit the entirety of Ginnie Mae's $25.2 billion portfolio. In other words, the record-keeping for the transactions that took place under HUD was in such disarray, so bad, they couldn't even provide an audit that correctly addressed the problem. From what the IG could review, it found Ginnie Mae's finances contained nine material weaknesses, eight significant deficiencies in internal controls, and six instances of noncompliance with applicable laws and regulations. After reviewing Ginnie Mae's 2015 finances, the inspector general found over $1 billion in abuse and inefficiencies.

If this had happened to any business in America other than the Federal Government, either the business would be bankrupt, the stockholders would have depleted its value, or the board of trustees would have fired its manager. They would have had to reorganize the entire—no way can you run a business this way. No way would it be possible to run it. This would happen only in the Federal Government because we can print money and we can keep it flowing into HUD and these other agencies. And for the 10 years since it was disclosed, they have continued the same practices that have gone on before that don't even allow us the ability to fully understand what they are even doing. They have been warned about it, and they have been talked to about it. They said they are going to clean it up, but it continues.

Let me give another example. The IG also found waste and fraud and mismanagement involving HUD's taxpayer-subsidized housing benefits. The low-income housing program provides affordable housing for households with incomes less than 80 percent of the median income for the area. This program has helped many families put a roof over their head through the years. Unfortunately, because of a loophole in HUD's review policies, households that have too high an income and thus are not qualified to receive Federal support have been able to remain in the taxpayer-subsidized Federal housing program.

The inspector general of HUD found that more than 25,000 over-income families were living in HUD taxpayer-subsidized housing in 2014 alone. So over 25,000 people who don't qualify for the program any longer because their income has improved are still living under the subsidized housing program, which is providing subsidies to them that they are no longer qualified to receive.

One doesn't actually have to have a low income to participate in this taxpayer-subsidized low-income housing; they simply had to have a low income when they applied. But hopefully this helped them as they were having income problems and financial problems—those who are able to come out of the system and who receive a larger income and therefore no longer qualify retained the subsidies, and HUD never took action to basically determine that they no longer qualify for this. There were over 25,000 specific incidents.

In a specific example in New York City, the program's income ceiling for a four-person household is just a little over $67,000. Yet a New York family was legally able to remain in public housing when their annual income was nearly $500,000. In fact, they owned real estate that produced over $790,000 in rental income within only 4 years. So people who had qualified for this had achieved tremendous financial success—from what source, I am not exactly sure. They have moved from a program that said you have to have income below $67,000 to qualify. Their income was over $500,000, and yet they still retained their qualification.

Let's look at a small town. In Oxford, NE, a single-person household earned over $65,000 annually and had assets of nearly $1.6 million—far higher than the city's income cap of $33,500. In other words, to be in the program you could not earn over $33,500. This individual was earning obviously extraordinarily more than that with a $1.6 million value of assets and yet still received subsidized housing.

If this was a one-off, if this was a few people here and there taking advantage of the system and so forth—but we are talking tens of thousands of people on just this single program. Remember, the audit of HUD looked at a whole range of discrepancies. I am talking only about a couple of specific programs.

It is not hard to agree that this waste of taxpayer dollars is something that can be addressed. I am encouraged that my colleagues are looking at this in a number of ways—and the more the better. We do this in respect and honor for what Senator Coburn started, and I am happy to be a part of that. I know the Presiding Officer is also.

I will conclude by saying for just this one agency, I can give a lot more examples of reckless disregard for use of taxpayer money that have been documented by the inspector general and that have been provided to that agency, which has not been able to clean up its act since 2005. They have had 10 years to do it, and it still continues. The inspector general says it is such a mess, it is so disassembled, it is so poorly administered that it can't even come to a conclusion of how bad it is. It is impossible to fully audit the Department of Housing and Urban Development because of their financial ineptness and their financial incapability of keeping records on their very own programs.

Today we are going to add a modest amount. This could be tens of billions. We took only a couple of examples here, and those examples total $1,174,000,000. That is not small change. Think about being about to send this back to the taxpayers who are working their hearts out and having taxes levied on them or think about how we can send this money to higher priorities—maybe to some things related to national security where we are scraping for funds to be able to provide the security this country needs. Whatever the reason, the waste continues to pile up. No one coming down to this floor can say ''We can't cut a penny more of spending'' without addressing this first.

It appears that we will be down here for the 30th ''Waste of the Week'' next week, which I regret. But we have plenty of waste lined up to be talking about.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

SENATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, it is December 10, and Congress is working its way through some final items of business, including a giant spending bill called an omnibus—some might call it an ''ominous''—bill because it is so big it takes all of the discretionary spending that Congress makes for the entire year and wraps it up into one big package. I have to say it did not have to be that way. It shouldn't have been that way.

In the 114th Congress, under new leadership, we actually did something that hadn't been done in 6 years. We actually passed a budget. The purpose of the budget in part is to set caps on spending levels for the Appropriations Committee and for the 12 appropriations bills that should come out—and in fact did come out—of the Appropriations Committee. But the reason we find ourselves here at the end of the year with this ominous Omnibus appropriations process is that our Democratic colleagues filibustered all of those individual appropriations bills.

It would have been so much better to take those up one at a time so the American people and Members of the Senate could read them and understand them. We could debate them, we could offer amendments to try to improve them, and then we could finally pass them and send them on to the President. But because of the desire to force the majority to agree to higher spending levels, our colleagues across the aisle filibustered those appropriations bills. So here we are, at the end of the year, with a few huge pieces of legislation left to consider.

I think most people looking at Washington, DC, these days are tempted to

want to look the other way because so much that happens here seems to be so contentious and, frankly, a reflection of our polarized politics in America. But despite all of the challenges we have—and I know the Democratic leader the other day actually claimed this was one of the most unproductive Senates in recent memory, only to be given three Pinocchios by the Fact Checker at The Washington Post. So I would like to remind the Democratic leader about some of the things we have actually done, working in a bipartisan fashion, to get legislation through the Senate, through the House, and to the President's desk.

Sometimes I think we need a bit of a refresher course on what the Constitution provides in terms of the division of responsibilities in government. The Founders of our great Nation made it hard—not easy. They made it hard to pass laws, and appropriately so, because they viewed the concentration of power and the ability to push through legislation as a potential threat to their individual liberties. So not only did they divide the legislative power between the House and the Senate, but they also created a Presidency that has the ability to veto that legislation.

Sometimes in their enthusiasm for certain policies, some of our own constituents get frustrated and they say: Why couldn't you pass this bill or that bill? Well, the truth is the only way this happens is when there is, first of all, some leadership on the part of the majority party because it is the majority leader and the Speaker, the majority leader in the House, who actually set the agenda. So that is pretty important. A lot of the legislation we considered this year would not have even come up if our Democratic friends had been in charge. But once we have the bill on the floor, it literally takes bipartisan consensus building in order to actually get something done.

I would like to talk about a few of those things that we have been able to get done this year because I don't want them to get lost amidst all of the contentiousness that people read about and watch on their television. It is important that the people we work for understand we have actually been trying very hard to get some important things done.

After the House of Representatives passed the Every Student Succeeds Act with a strong bipartisan vote last week, yesterday the Senate followed suit by passing that legislation with 85 votes. It obviously wasn't perfect because 15 of our colleagues did not vote for it, but that was about as strong a bipartisan vote as you get in the Senate these days.

I think it is important to highlight the time and effort it took many Members of this body to create and ultimately pass this bill. Of course, it took the leadership of Chairman ALEXANDER of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. But the fact is—and I know he would say this if he were standing here on the floor—he could not have done it if it weren't for the partnership of the senior Senator from Washington, Mrs. MURRAY, a member of the other political party. What they showed us is how working together in a bipartisan way can achieve real reform and positive change for the American people. That is the way the process is supposed to work.

Sometimes, though, policies are so bad that the best response is simply to stop it. I don't think we should diminish or deprecate the merits of stopping bad legislation, but where there is an area of common interest, where consensus can be built on what the appropriate legislative response is, that is how it is done—the way Senator ALEXANDER and Senator MURRAY did.

Of course, we are in a political environment where people like to focus on the partisan bickering and gridlock. But passage of this bill serves as just one example of a Senate that has been back to work under new leadership since the last election about a year ago, and we appreciate the willingness of our friends on the other side of the aisle to work with us on a number of areas to try to make those accomplishments a reality.

Another example is in the area of transportation funding. Last week, for the first time in more than a decade, Congress passed a multiyear transportation bill. I think it was more than 30 different times before that Congress had passed short-term patches to those spending bills for transportation, and you can imagine how difficult it was for States to actually plan and then to implement some of their construction projects to improve their transportation infrastructure. In that case, it was the hard work of the senior Senator from Oklahoma, Mr. INHOFE, who chairs the Environment and Public Works Committee, as well as the junior Senator from California, Mrs. BOXER, working together as a team; then, of course, Senator HATCH, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, and Senator WYDEN, the ranking member, a Democrat, working together to try to come up with some of the funding mechanisms. But as the majority leader said last week, it would not have been possible to pass this multiyear highway bill for the first time in a decade if it weren't for the bipartisan cooperation we saw and, particularly on the Democratic side, the leadership of Senator BOXER.

Now, with this legislation, States like mine, Texas—growing States can plan and build projects that strengthen our Nation's infrastructure and make our transportation system safer. They can avoid some of that churning, uncertainty, and inefficiency that comes from temporary patches. President Obama signed that legislation last week, and now it is the law of the land.

Like the education bill I mentioned a moment ago, the transportation funding bill, which was called the Fixing America's Surface Transportation, or FAST, Act, passed this Chamber with more than 80 votes—80 votes. With 54 Republicans and 46 affiliated with the Democrats, the minority, the Transportation bill got 80 votes. Obviously this was a strong bipartisan vote and a testament to the bipartisan spirit this year in a Senate that has allowed us to make some progress on long neglected and long overdue goals like transportation funding.

Then I think about other topics we have worked together on, such as trade. When the President said he wanted us to pass the Trade Promotion Authority legislation, only 13 Democrats voted for it. So it was up to the majority—the Republicans, the other party—to provide the votes to pass Trade Promotion Authority.

Not everybody thought it was a good idea, sure. But in my State, one reason our economy continues to do better than most of the rest of the country is that we are the No. 1 exporting State in the Nation. We believe it is good for our economy and for job creation to be able to sell things that we make, agricultural goods we grow, and livestock we raise to markets around the world. That is what Trade Promotion Authority will allow. It will help Texas farmers, ranchers, and manufacturers get the best deal possible out of pending trade agreements such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which is focused on 40 percent of the world's gross domestic product in Asia. It is very important that we stay engaged in Asia because the default is for China to fill that void and set the rules.

The Trade Promotion Authority, which was an important priority for the President, happened to be something that Republicans by and large agreed with and his own party disagreed with. As I said, only 13 Democrats voted for it.

The trade promotion authority legislation is really the first step to opening up the doors of opportunity to our country's businesses worldwide, but particularly in Asia. Like the other bills I mentioned, trade promotion authority was the result of the tireless effort of a bipartisan partnership. In this case, the senior Senator from Utah, Mr. HATCH, chairman of the Finance Committee, and the ranking member of the Finance Committee, RON WYDEN, the Senator from Oregon, spent countless hours negotiating and renegotiating the legislation to bring it to the floor and ultimately to be signed into law by the President.

Another example happened to be the way we pay physicians under the Medicare program that our seniors rely upon. Year after year, we would come up with short-term patches to the so-called doc fix. But this year we passed a permanent fix in a negotiation between Speaker Boehner and the Democratic leader in the House, Congresswoman PELOSI, that actually preserves seniors' access to care under the Medicare program—a noteworthy accomplishment.

Another subject I am particularly proud of is that we passed the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act, a bill this Chamber passed with 99 votes. This law will help victims of modern-day slavery recover and rebuild their lives and will make sure these survivors—some of whom are children—are not treated like criminals but given the help they need to heal and to get on with their lives.

We have also passed critical bills to protect our country from cyber attacks—something we saw happen at the IRS, where 100,000 records of taxpayers was hacked in a cyber attack and stolen and compromised. We also saw millions of people's records compromised at the Office of Management and Budget.

Congress has passed legislation, which is now being reconciled with a different House bill to be able to get that to the President, to provide that security that we all need when we are online. And as I said, we passed the first budget that has been passed in 6 years. The point I am trying to convey is that not everything up here is fighting like cats and dogs. It is not the shirts versus the skins. It is not like the Democrats and Republicans can never find anything that we agree on. Sure, there is there is a lot that we disagree on, and that is fine. It is fine to have policy differences. This is the forum where those policy differences are debated and where, if possible, if common ground can be found, we can find that common ground.

I have told this story, and I am going to conclude here since I see our colleague from Georgia waiting to speak. When I came to the Senate, Ted Kennedy, from Massachusetts, the ''liberal lion of the Senate,'' who had been here for so long, was working with one of the most conservative Members of the Senate, the Senator from Wyoming, on the HELP Committee—the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. I asked Mr. ENZI, the Senator from Wyoming: How is it that you and Senator Kennedy, who are polar opposites, can find common ground and actually work productively on the HELP Committee? I have never forgotten it. Senator ENZI told me: It is simple; it is the 80–20 rule. We look for the 80 percent, if possible, that we can find common ground and agree on, and the 20 percent we can't agree on, we leave for another fight another day.

That always stuck with me as a very constructive way to work in a highly polarized environment where many of us share completely different views about public policy. But we owe it to our constituents, to this institution, and to the American people to try to find common ground where we can and offer them constructive solutions, as we have done time and again this Congress.

While there are some who want to distract or misconstrue or deny the fact, the fact is there has been bipartisan accomplishment this year. But it takes leadership, and it appeared to take a new majority and a new majority leader after this last election to get the Senate back on track.

Even many of our Democratic friends who served in the majority previously couldn't even get votes on amendments, on legislation they wanted to offer, because the Senate was basically shut down. But now we are back to work, and the Senate is functioning the way it should.

I wanted to say a few words to note these accomplishments but also to say thank you to those who have worked together to make it possible, who put the American people ahead of party to deliver real results in the Senate this year.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

JOINT SURVEILLANCE TARGET ATTACK RADAR SYSTEM

Mr. PERDUE. Mr. President, I have spoken at length about how our debt crisis and our global crisis are interconnected. Before I speak today, though, I want to thank the Senator from Texas for his leadership this year, as we did get the Senate back to regular order. I know we have much to do, but I appreciate his leadership as whip and as a fellow colleague. Thank you.

Today I rise to speak about how this overlap between our debt crisis and our global security crisis impacts the future of a vital Air Force asset: the Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System, or JSTARS, as they call it. I visited with Team JSTARS to hear about their critical role. We made a visit. We talked about how their role affects our national security and our national defense and countering the global security crisis we face. I have also seen in Iraq and Afghanistan firsthand how this platform is absolutely vital to protect our forces on the ground in harm's way.

The global security crisis facing our Nation continues to grow. First, we face our traditional rivals—China and Russia—as they become ever more aggressive. The persistent threat of nuclear proliferation is now exaggerated and increasing every day with Iran's efforts and, of course, we see what is going on in North Korea as well. Finally, we face threats from radical jihadist terror groups, not just in the Middle East but here at home, unfortunately—and not just from ISIS. AQAP, Boko Haram, and al-Shabaab, to mention a few, are all thinking about how to do harm here in our homeland.

As a result, we know that the need for American leadership in the world isn't going to go away any time soon. Team JSTARS plays a critical role in our response to these threats. JSTARS is an Air Force platform that provides critical intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, or ISR, and ground targeting capabilities in service to all branches of our military. Over the past 25 years, they have flown over 125,000 combat hours in 5 different combatant commands. As a matter of fact, they have flown every day since 9/11.

The ''J'' in JSTARS stands for ''joint.'' Team JSTARS is a blended unit. The Air Force, Army, and National Guardsmen who work on the team, eat, sleep, and deploy together. These men and women leave for days, weeks, and sometimes they deploy for months to protect our men in uniform around the world. Not only are they a joint mission with the Army, but JSTARS also does several mission sets. JSTARS does command and control as well as providing intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. From stakeout to shoot-out, JSTARS is capable of supporting all missions in all phases, with full spectrum capability from low to high intensity conflict.

In the words of General Kelly, SOUTHCOM's commander, JSTARS is quite unique, ''a true force-multiplier, working seamlessly with both the DOD and interagency assets, generating impressive results in our asset-austere environment.'' What makes JSTARS unique from other intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance platforms is that on each JSTARS plane, we have unique manpower at the tactical edge to talk to our servicemembers on the ground with 22 radios, 7 data links, 3 Internets, and a secure telephone system. These are things we cannot take for granted. Our men and women on the ground talk about this incessantly.

As I saw it in Iraq and Afghanistan, we could not fulfill our mission without this type of capability in the air, overseeing our men and women every day. As we see threats around us from an increasingly aggressive Russia and China, the threat of electronic warfare is also a growing concern. If satellite communication radios are targeted—if these systems are degraded by the enemy in any way—JSTARS can in turn provide the same critical capability in theater. This is a redundant capability we cannot do without. This platform has proven itself to be invaluable and indispensable to our Armed Forces—not just in the Air Force and Army but in every service—the Marines, the Navy, the Coast Guard, and even in some counter-drug missions.

In the Pacific, JSTARS has been a key part of the Asia rebalance, helping to maintain stability and assure allies by providing vital insight to maritime forces as they push back against an expansive China. In fact, as China continues to challenge freedom of navigation and asserts itself in the Asia-Pacific region, PACOM is asking for more and more JSTARS presence at a very time when their capability is declining.

Also in Asia, U.S. Forces Korea commander General Scaparrotti calls JSTARS ''very important to us'' as he deters an unpredictable North Korea. Here in this atmosphere, JSTARS has flown in support of homeland defense, doing drug interdiction missions.

General John Kelly, the SOUTHCOM commander, said: ''JSTARS is especially important, providing a detailed maritime surveillance capability that is unsurpassed.''

To give you a comparison, a single JSTARS sortie—a single plane—can cover the same search area as 10 maritime patrol aircraft sorties. But the future of this platform is in jeopardy. As threats against our Nation have evolved, JSTARS has too. But there are only 16 of these planes covering our needs worldwide over the last 25 years. We have relied on JSTARS for 25 years to protect our men and women whom we put in harm's way—to protect them while other people are trying to do them harm.

Unfortunately, in the last 25 years, these planes are beginning to wear out. They are reaching the end of their service life. These planes have been in service since the early 90s. But even then, these planes weren't new when the Air Force acquired them. Each plane on average had over 50,000 hours when we bought them. The average age of the fleet is 47 years.

If you look at just one example in the JSTARS fleet, there is one aircraft that had 16 different owners or lessors over that time before it became a JSTARS, including Pakistani International Airlines and Afghan Airlines. I think it is very ironic that today that very plane flies oversight missions over those two countries.

As these planes near the end of their service life, they are spending more and more time in depot maintenance. More maintains is more costly. Dramatically increased maintenance time is threatening aircraft availability and mission readiness. This in turn impacts the number of JSTARS that can be put into mission at any one time and be out in the combatant commands while doing their job, while day by day the demand from combatant commanders for JSTARS grows.

What is more concerning is that as JSTARS near the end of their service life, as you can see on this chart, there is a gap. If we do nothing, we will have a gap of 10 years. The best we could do starting today is to shorten that gap to 4 years. This is a gap we cannot allow to happen.

This chart shows the declining availability of the current fleet down to zero by 2023. It also shows that under the current plan—pending DOD approval and funding—the replacement fleet does not even come online until 2023, meaning we will have a 10-year gap. They don't get back to full strength until around 2027—again, the 10-year gap. Due to the increased maintenance requirements of this aging fleet, JSTARS is already at a point where we only have about half the fleet available to fly at any point in time. Even if we extend the service life of JSTARS and accelerate the replacement, we can only narrow the gap to 4 years. This is unacceptable.

I have talked about the planes. Let me talk about the men and women who man those planes, who service those planes, who keep those planes in the air. These are talented professionals. I have met with them. They are dedicated professionals, protecting our soldiers on the ground. They are committed to this mission, but they have to have our help. The men and women on the ground in Iraq, Afghanistan, and around the world deserve our help. But when it happens to have a gap like this, our irresponsibility as a Congress and as military leadership shows up.

We cannot allow this to happen. Recapitalization for the JSTARS fleet needs to happen, and it needs to happen right now. As these aircraft age, depot maintenance is not only more costly but also keeps these aircraft, which are in high demand for every combatant commander, from fulfilling their mission fully and putting our soldiers on the ground in mortal danger. This is precisely where we see the debt crisis and global security crisis intersect.

In the last 6 years, I have spoken about this before, but we borrowed 40 percent of what we have spent as a Federal Government. This puts our ability to support a strong foreign policy backed up by a strong military in jeopardy. As Admiral Mullen, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, once said, the greatest threat to our national security is our own national debt.

The JSTARS Program is an example of how our debt crisis is impacting our ability to fulfill our mission requirements. JSTARS recapitalization, which would replace these planes over time, is the No. 4 priority within the Air Force. The other three priorities ahead of it are very valid, but very expensive platforms.

Just last month, the Air Force acquisition chief, Assistant Secretary LaPlante, said that the JSTARS recap might get scrapped thanks to sequester and tight budget constraints. Again, this is a result of our fiscal intransigence and poor planning by military leaders. This prohibits us from meeting the very basic needs of our men and women on the ground who depend on this critical platform to protect them and provide overarching eyes and ears in the battle space. This should not have happened. The intransigence of Congress over the last decade and the intransigence of our military leadership and procurement planning are all at fault. We can fix this.

This week I am joining Senator ISAKSON and at least 11 other Senators in writing to Secretary of Defense Carter about the importance of funding for the next fleet of JSTARS in next year's budget request.

I wish to thank the defense appropriators as well as the Armed Services Committee for their support for this critical platform and mission. I look forward to continuing to work with them to support JSTARS. Not only do we need to ensure the new JSTARS fleet is funded, but this needs to be done fast. As I said, if we do nothing today, we have at best a 4-year gap, not to mention the problem with the planes. What do we do with these professional military men and women who are irreplaceable—pilots, navigators, engineers, technicians, mechanics, schedulers, and computer experts. This is a capability we cannot do without.

Not only do we need to ensure that the new JSTARS fleet is funded, but again this has to happen immediately if we are going to manage this gap. This gap in capability that we see on this chart will become a reality if the pace of recap doesn't change. We need a faster solution. This chart shows why this recap needs to be a rapid acquisition program and we need to get on that immediately.

We need to ensure that this critical platform stays in theater. Our combative commanders demand it, our troops on the ground depend on it, and they certainly deserve it. We cannot allow Washington's dysfunction to put our men and women in combat theaters in further danger. This needs to get fixed, and it needs to get fixed right now.

I yield my time.

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

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

TRIBUTE TO FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

U.S. COMPUTER EMERGENCY READINESS TEAM

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I mentioned to the Presiding Officer in our brief conversation before I came to the podium that one of the things I try to do every month or so is come to the floor, usually when things are slower and there is not a lot going on, to talk about some of the folks who work for us and serve our country in the Department of Homeland Security.

Earlier this week, as my colleagues may recall, an outfit called the Partnership for Public Service released an annual report in which they rank the best places in which to work in the Federal Government. The report is based on surveys that are conducted literally by hundreds of thousands of Federal employees. This year it showed an increase in overall employee morale for the first time, I think, in 4 or 5 years. That is good news.

Despite the progress that appears to have been made in a number of Federal agencies, not all but many components of the Department of Homeland Security continue to struggle to make their employees feel good about their work and what they do for the rest of us.

I know the Secretary of the Department, Jeh Johnson, and his team have taken a number of significant steps to make the Department a better place to

work for current and future employees. They do outreach and get input from their employees as to what needs to be done to enable them to feel better about the work for greater job satisfaction, to make them want to come to work. I would also say today that the Congress—those of us who serve in the Senate and the House—also has a responsibility to help improve morale, not just at the Department of Homeland Security but in the Federal Government at large.

Considering the fact that we began 2015 with a fight in this body right here over whether we should even fund the Department, I don't believe those of us in the Senate or in the House are doing all we can do, that we are doing our part well. As I said earlier, that is why I come to the Senate floor on a number of occasions throughout the year to highlight some of the extraordinary work done every day by the dedicated men and women at the Department of Homeland Security.

Today I rise to recognize no one individual. Usually I pick one or two people who have done extraordinary things with their lives, but today I am going to focus on a whole team of people who do important work every day to defend our Nation from the growing and evolving threat our country faces in cyber space.

It seems as though we don't go a week without hearing about another major breach at a business or a government agency. We are under unrelenting attack from all over the world—in some cases from sovereign nations, in other cases from criminal organizations, and in other cases just from pranksters. Over these past few years, we have seen major attacks on the Office of Personnel Management, on a great many banks and other businesses, and even the email of the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. These attacks make clear that the threats we face online are complex, and unfortunately we will be struggling with how to deal with them for the foreseeable future.

Fortunately, in Congress we have been making some progress combating these cyber threats through legislation. Last year we passed cyber security legislation—four bills in fact—out of the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. These four bills were aimed at strengthening the ability of the Department of Homeland Security to perform their cyber security mission.

Among those bills was one to update how our government protects its own networks. This bill includes language clarifying the role the Department plays in overseeing and enhancing security and other agencies. Two other bills gave the Department some of the tools it needs to strengthen its cyber security workforce, and just last month the Department of Homeland Security announced that it now seeks to hire up to 1,000 new cyber security employees over the next 6 months using the new authorities we have given them.

We also passed legislation that codified the cyber operations center at the Department. It is called the National Cybersecurity and Communications Integration Center, affectionately known as the NCCIC. Our legislation—which former Senator Dr. Tom Coburn and I coauthored, supported by many in our committee and outside of our committee—gave the NCCIC the strong legal foundation it needs, that it lacked, in order to do their job and engage with the private sector in a joint effort to better secure critical cyber networks.

I think we have made real progress on cyber security legislation this year as well. I think we are maybe poised to do even more. I would like to use a football analogy. The team flips a coin and somebody receives and somebody kicks the ball. Receiving takes the ball maybe deep in their own territory, and then they march down the field across the 50-yard line into the other team's territory, then they get to the 20-yard line, and then moving closer to the other team's goal line, they would say they are in the red zone. In terms of our march on cyber security legislation here and in the House, thanks to the good work of the Intel Committee here and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs as well, we are not just in the red zone, we are inside the 10-yard line and it is first down and goal to go.

Unfortunately, the clock is running out and we don't have forever to get the job done, but if we are smart and don't give up, we can have a real success for the American people in strengthening our cyber defenses in a real way.

The legislation we passed this fall was called the Cybersecurity Information Sharing Act, and it represents a collaboration on a number of cyber security issues. In the bill the Department of Homeland Security plays a central role as they interface between industry and the government. The bill also includes provisions to enhance the cyber security program at the Department of Homeland Security known as EINSTEIN, which uses classified threat intelligence to protect all of our civilian agencies.

I am mentioning all of this legislation to show the critical role or underline the critical role the Department of Homeland Security plays in security for our Nation. At the center of the Department's cyber security operation is the U.S. Computer Emergency Readiness Team, which is also known as US–CERT.

To my left is a picture of our President, and the handsome fellow he is speaking to is a fellow named Jeh Johnson, who is the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, a role he has filled for I believe most of 2 years now. I think he is doing a splendid job, with the great support of the Deputy Secretary there, Alejandro Mayorkas, and a couple of thousand people who are committed to defending our homeland.

This is a picture of the President addressing, along with Secretary Johnson, the employees at US–CERT. I think it was taken earlier this year. Again, US–CERT—the U.S. Computer Emergency Readiness Team—is the main operational team within the NCCIC. It is the operational team within the NCCIC itself.

What do they do? They pool information and they share that information throughout the Federal Government. The US–CERT also shares information with our partners in the private sector across the country and with our allies around the world. It is an important job. It is not a job that is done for 5 days a week, 8 hours a day. It is a 24-hour-a-day, 7-day-a-week operation, and these men and women work to stay ahead of the bad actors who are trying to steal our personal information and trying to really harm our economy. In some cases they are plotting to damage our critical infrastructure such as our electric grid, our financial systems, and our communications systems.

US–CERT was established 12 years ago as the Department of Homeland Security was first being stood up. The mission of US–CERT is simple, I think: to make the Internet a safer place for everyone by helping to improve cyber security across the country. I will say that again. The mission of US–CERT is very simple—not easy but simple. It is to make the Internet a safer place for everyone by helping to improve cyber security across our country. To do this, US–CERT operates a wide variety of programs. These programs include several information sharing collaboration programs, incident response teams that provide onsite assistance to attack victims, programs such as the EINSTEIN intrusion detection and prevention system to protect Federal agencies, education and awareness programs, and deeply technical forensic analysis. The US–CERT partners with a wide variety of organizations. Among them, they partner with powerplants and utilities, they partner with financial institutions, they partner with software companies, with researchers, and they partner with certain teams in other countries and other cyber operation centers such as those over at NSA, the National Security Agency, and the FBI as well.

When a major attack occurs in the Federal Government or the private sector, the men and women at US–CERT mobilize to travel to the victim's location. They help mitigate the attack. They help to strengthen the victim's cyber systems, and then they communicate with their partners so everyone can secure their systems against similar attacks. We learned from that bad experience, and hopefully we can help reduce the likelihood that someone else will suffer a similar fate.

Earlier this year, when the Office of Personnel Management discovered a

data breach of personal data belonging to millions of Federal employees, they called the NCCIC and asked for its team of experts. US–CERT was deployed to play a central role in, first of all, investigating the attack but also in responding to that attack. For the next 4 months, the team worked literally around the clock at OPM to assess and to monitor Federal networks and to develop new protections against this type of intrusion that OPM had experienced.

Now, once US–CERT realized that other Federal agencies were also vulnerable to this kind of a breach, they immediately shared the indicators of the attack with network analysts across the Federal Government. This allowed other Federal agencies to scan their systems and to make sure they had not been compromised by the same hacker and to be on alert for that hacker's attack.

Because of the scale and impact of the OPM breach, which I think actually ended up affecting more than 20 million people, the US–CERT team worked long hours to make sure they could provide guidance to Federal agencies as quickly as possible so they could protect their networks from similar attacks and prevent the attacker from using the information they obtained against us. Their work not only strengthened the Office of Personnel Management's cyber security posture, it also bolstered cyber security across the entire Federal Government.

US–CERT and all the cyber warriors at the NCCIC work tirelessly every day to out-think and out-innovate our cyber enemies. The legislation we enacted last year and the bill we are working hard to send to the President this year with great bipartisan support here in the Senate and the House as well puts the Department of Homeland Security in the spotlight and entrusts them with ever-greater responsibility for years to come. We in Congress recognize the critical role US–CERT plays in strengthening our Nation's cyber security, and we must continue to support these hard-working men and women in their mission.

Mr. President, I will close by telling a story. I have told this story before, but it is a good one, and it is certainly germane to what we talked about here today.

A couple of years ago, I was listening to a radio station on my way to the train station in Delaware, and I caught NPR news right at 7 a.m. as I made my way to the train station in Wilmington. On the news that morning, they gave a report about an international survey that was taken where they asked thousands of people in different countries and here: What is it about your work that you like? What is it about your work that makes you like your job or not like your job?

Some of the people who were asked said: Well, the thing I like about my job is I like getting paid—not that they are in it for the money, but they like getting paid. Others said they like vacations. Some people said they had health care. Others said they like the folks they work with. Other people said they like the environment—a beautiful place like this in which they work. But what most people said they liked were really two things: No. 1, they knew the work they were doing was important, and No. 2, they felt as though they were making progress. Think about that. They knew the work they were doing was important and they felt as though they were making progress.

Well, there is probably nobody in our country—at least working within the Federal Government—who does work more important than the folks at the Department of Homeland Security. The House and the Senate have worked in recent years to strengthen the ability of the Department of Homeland Security, including the US–CERT team, to be able to do their job even better.

My hope is that in years to come, as we hear these annual reports on best places to work within the Federal Government, that we are going to find that the people at the Department of Homeland Security, including NCCIC and US–CERT, will be saying more and more: I like working here because I know the work I do is important, and I feel as though we are making progress.

This Senator would just say to everyone at US–CERT, thank you for all the good you do for us. Thank you for your service to this country. And to each of you, we wish you happy holidays and Merry Christmas. We would also say, here is hoping that we will all have a more peaceful new year. I think the American people are ready for that. I know the Presiding Officer is, and so am I.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. FISCHER). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

(The remarks of Mr. SANDERS pertaining to the introduction of S. 2391, S. 2398, and S. 2399 are printed in today's RECORD under ''Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.'')

Mr. SANDERS. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF SANDY HOOK TRAGEDY

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, next week we will mark the 3-year anniversary, for lack of a better word, of the massacre at Sandy Hook, CT. Senator BLUMENTHAL will be joining me on the floor momentarily. I wanted to come to the floor to speak to our colleagues for a few moments about what this week will mean to us in Connecticut and the challenge it presents to all of us.

I want to open by speaking about one of the young men who perished that day—a little first grader by the name of Daniel Barden. Daniel was a really, really special kid. I talk about him a lot when I am speaking on Sandy Hook because I have gotten to know his parents pretty well over the years, so I feel like I know Daniel pretty well. Now that I have a little 7-year-old first grader at home, too, I, frankly, feel closer than ever before to the families such as the Bardens who are still grieving.

Daniel had this sense of uncanny empathy that, now as a father of a 7-year-old, I know is, frankly, not normally visited upon children that age. Daniel just loved helping people in big and small ways; he was so preternaturally outward in his sympathy for others.

There is a story his dad likes to tell about the challenge of going to the supermarket with Daniel because when they would leave, Daniel always liked to hold the door open for his family. But then he wouldn't stop holding the door open because he wanted to hold it open for all of the rest of the people who were leaving the grocery store. So the family would get all the way to the car, and they would look back and they wouldn't have Daniel because he was still holding the door open. It was small things like that that made him such a special kid.

His father, Mark, wrote one day: ''I'm always one minute farther away from my life with Daniel, and that gulf keeps getting bigger.'' His mother, Jackie, in the months and years following Daniel's death, developed a habit of what grief counselors call defensive mechanisms. She would sometimes pretend that Daniel was at a friend's house for a couple hours, simply in order to give herself the strength to do simple household chores like cooking dinner or returning emails. The only way she could do it is if she pretended for a small slice of time that Daniel was actually still alive.

It is hard to describe for my colleagues here today the grief that still, frankly, drowns Sandy Hook parents and the community at large. It is total, it is permanent, and it is all-consuming. But for many of those parents and many of those community members, the grief now is mixed with a combination of anger and utter bewilderment, all of it directed at us, in the Senate and in the House of Representatives.

On December 14, Adam Lanza walked into Sandy Hook Elementary School armed with a weapon that was designed for the military—designed to kill as many people as quickly as possible. He had 30-round magazines, not designed for hunting or for sport shooting but to destroy as much life as quickly as possible. Importantly, he left at home his lower round magazines. And the design of his weapons worked—to a tee. In approximately 4 minutes, he discharged

154 rounds, and he killed with ruthless efficiency: 27 people shot, 26 dead, including 20 first graders.

Here are their names: Rachel D'Avino, 29; Dawn Hochsprung, 47; Anne Marie Murphy, 52; Lauren Rousseau, 30; Mary Sherlach, 56; Victoria Leigh Soto, 27.

And the students: Charlotte Bacon, Daniel Barden, Olivia Engel, Josephine Gay, Dylan Hockley, Madeleine Hsu, Catherine Hubbard, Chase Kowalski, Jesse Lewis, Ana Marquez-Greene, James Mattioli, Grace McDonnell, Emilie Parker, Jack Pinto.

It keeps going: Noah Pozner, Caroline Previdi, Jessica Rekos, Avielle Richman, Benjamin Wheeler, and Allison Wyatt.

There are a handful of kids who aren't on that list, because there were children in Victoria Soto's classroom who were able to escape, likely—as investigators believe—when Adam Lanza had to reload his weapon to put another 30 bullets in it.

So 3 years later, as we grieve those 26, we are still having these awful, searing questions to ponder: What would have happened if Lanza didn't have an assault rifle? Would he even have had the perverse courage to walk into that school if not aided by the security of having a high powered killing machine? Would less kids have died? What if his cartridges had six or 10 bullets instead of 30? Would more kids be alive if someone had been able to stop him while he fumbled with another reload?

The facts of Sandy Hook are hard to hear over and over, but they are important because they should have educated us on ways that we could come together to make another mass shooting less likely. But we ignored Sandy Hook, and it happened again and again. This year, there have been more mass shootings than there have been days in the year: 9 in Charleston, 5 in Chattanooga, 9 again in Roseburg, 14 in San Bernardino.

As I sat at that firehouse with Senator BLUMENTHAL that afternoon in Sandy Hook, as the news rolled into those parents that the children they loved wouldn't be coming home, if someone had told me that day that we would do nothing—that our response as a Congress and as a country would be utter silence—I wouldn't have believed it—no way. But if somebody then told me that it would happen again and again and again and we still wouldn't do anything, I would have collapsed in disbelief.

I am going to tell my colleagues, that is how the families feel. Whatever we think is the best way to stop this carnage—changing our gun laws, giving more resources to law enforcement, changing our mental health system to get more help to those who are becoming unhinged and thinking about settling their real or imagined grievances with violence—do something to honor those children and adults. Do something to show there is an ounce of compassion as we sit here 3 years after the bloody massacre at Sandy Hook.

Our mental health system is broken. We have closed down 4,000 inpatient beds since the recession began. It is harder than ever for families to get the help they need. If you read the report on Adam Lanza, you will see a very troubled young man who was utterly failed by the behavioral health system that stood around him.

Stronger gun laws do work. They absolutely would have prevented some of those kids from dying. And the data is irrefutable. This mythology that you are safer with more guns has zero basis in fact. The data tells us that in States that have tougher gun laws, they have less gun deaths. In States that have higher rates of gun ownership, they have more gun deaths. Stronger gun laws work.

To be honest, the burden is not just on us; it is also on the administration. I have called, along with many of my colleagues, on the administration to take some steps, if Congress won't, to make sure that those who are truly gun dealers, though they might not have a brick-and-mortar store—those who are selling guns with frequency at places such as gun shows or on the Internet—have to do background checks, a recognition that they are dealers just like people who have stores in your downtown.

So my plea, 3 years after this tragedy that utterly transformed that community, is for us to recognize that there is no other country in the world that would live with this level of slaughter. There is no other nation in the world that would accept 80 people dying every day from preventible gun violence and mass shooting after mass shooting and not even try to fix it. That is what is so offensive to me, and 3 years later that is what is so hard to understand for the families whom we represent in Sandy Hook, CT.

If you don't want to believe me, I am going to close the exact same way I closed 2 years ago on the 1-year anniversary. I am kind of ashamed that I have to read this letter again because every single word of it still applies 2 years later, when the epidemic of mass shootings in this country hasn't abated but simply grown. It is from a mom whose child survived, and I will close with it.

In addition to the tragic loss of her playmates, friends, and teachers, my first grader suffers from PTSD. She was in the first room by the entrance to the school. Her teacher was able to gather the children into a tiny bathroom inside the classroom. There she stood, with 14 of her classmates and her teacher, all of them crying. You see, she heard what was happening on the other side of the wall. She heard everything. She was sure she was going to die that day and did not want to die for Christmas. Imagine what this must have been like. She struggles nightly with nightmares, difficulty falling asleep, and being afraid to go anywhere in her own home. At school she becomes withdrawn, crying daily, covering her ears when it gets too loud and waiting for this to happen again. She is 6.

And we are furious.

Furious that 26 families must suffer with grief so deep and so wide that it is unimaginable.

Furious that the innocence and safety of my children's lives has been taken.

Furious that someone had access to the type of weapon used in this massacre.

Furious that gun makers make ammunition with such high rounds and our government does nothing to stop them.

Furious that the ban on assault weapons was carelessly left to expire.

Furious that lawmakers let the gun lobbyists have so much control.

Furious that somehow, someone's right to own a gun is more important than my children's rights to life.

Furious that lawmakers are too scared to take a stand.

She writes:

I ask you to think about your choices. Look at the pictures of the 26 innocent lives taken so needlessly and wastefully, using a weapon that never should have been in the hands of civilians. Really think. Changing the laws may ''inconvenience'' some gun owners, but it may also save a life, perhaps a life that is dear to me or you. Are you really willing to risk it? You—

Speaking to us—

have a responsibility and obligation to act now and change the laws.

I hope and I pray that you do not fail.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Thank you, Madam President.

I am honored to follow my colleague and friend Senator MURPHY in an effort that has involved both of us, our minds and our hearts, from the day we stood together on December 14, 2012, in Newtown, Sandy Hook. We have stood together and worked together with the families and community that so inspired us with their strength and courage.

If I have one overriding image and message in my mind and heart, it is those families most directly affected by the deaths of 20 beautiful children and sixth grade educators, the families in the reverberating circle of people so deeply touched, hurt, and harmed by the evil on that day, and the people who exemplified the good of that day, the first responders, the firefighters and police, who saw things no human being should ever have to witness and emerged also deeply hurt and harmed. The courage and strength of Newtown, that community, and the families will always inspire me.

I have worked on gun violence prevention for many years, a couple of decades before December 14, 2012. I was the attorney general of the State of Connecticut and a State legislator advocating for the assault weapon ban and other gun violence prevention measures. Then, as attorney general, I defended the assault weapon ban when it was challenged in court, tried the case, and we successfully argued it in the State supreme court. So I knew intellectually and abstractly why we need in this Nation and in Connecticut stronger measures to stop gun violence. The experience of that day left a

searing mark on my heart and on my conscience, so it became for me the passion and priority it is today, and I will not rest as a Member of this body and as a human being until this Nation does better to make America safer and to prevent the kind of tragedy we saw on that day.

I will never forget being at that firehouse on that afternoon, but I will also never forget that evening at St. Rose of Lima Church when the community came together to light a candle rather than curse the darkness.

I had a conversation with one of the parents who lost a child. It was either that night or in the grief-filled days thereafter, when I said to her at some point: When you are ready, I would like to talk to you about what we can do about this. She said to me: I am ready now.

That is the courage we have seen in the last 3 years from those families. It is the courage we saw this morning at an event in the Capitol. It is the courage we have seen again and again from Newtown, from all over the country, loved ones and victims of all of the places—they become kind of landmarks that we recite. There are 30,000 deaths every year from places whose names we could never recite here because it would be too long and because they are the mundane places that all of us go.

As my colleague Senator MURPHY said this morning, all of us are just one second away from becoming victims. The fact is we are all touched by gun violence and we are all harmed and hurt by it.

I will never forget that evening. I will never forget also the day on the floor of this House when the Senate failed to approve a commonsense package of gun violence prevention measures, universal background checks, banning illegal trafficking, a ban on assault weapons, the mental health initiative, and from the Gallery someone shouted down: Shame. They may have said: Shame on you. There is no record of it because we record only what happens on the floor, but on that day the most profound and eloquent comment was those three words: ''Shame on you.''

Shame on us in the U.S. Senate. We are complicit by our inaction. Congress is complicit by its silence. Moments of silence have their place, but silence by inaction here is complicity. It is not only the failure to act, it is also the obstruction that has been placed in the way of knowledge and research. The so-called rider—nobody outside the U.S. Capitol would talk about riders, an amendment that stops the government from doing research—literally research, fact gathering, investigation on gun violence. The cause of 30,000 deaths every year in this country cannot be researched by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In fact, we face a public health crisis in this country. If it were Ebola or influenza or polio, facing these kinds of epidemics or feared epidemics in this country, we would react with drastic and effective measures, including quarantine, that would mobilize this Nation. The response of the Congress to the epidemic of gun violence is to bar research by the CDC and other public health authorities. The very same public health community that could help us understand and take action is gagged and straitjacketed by the U.S. Congress. Even the initial author of that amendment restricting research, former Congressman Jay Dickey, a Republican from Arkansas, said he has regrets. ''I wish we had started the proper research and kept it going all the time,'' he said.

The Congress owes the American people more, but this promise I can make. We are not going away. We are not abandoning this effort. We will not be silenced. We will not be inactive. We are not giving up.

Twelve years it took to pass the Brady bill, after the President of the United States was almost assassinated just a few miles from here and his Press Secretary, Jim Brady, was paralyzed. It took 12 years to pass, with the support of President Reagan, and we need to be prepared for that kind of marathon.

President Reagan famously said: ''Facts are stubborn things.'' We cannot deny the facts that drive this debate because laws do work. We come here every day with the presumption that what we do makes a difference, that the laws we pass make a difference. Gun violence prevention laws do work.

When the shooter at Sandy Hook had to change magazines, children succeeded in escaping. If he had been barred from having the assault weapon, had it been banned, unable to bring it to the site of that horrific tragedy, it might have made a difference.

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

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent for just 1 minute.

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

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. If the shooter in Charleston had been barred, as he should have been because he was ineligible, rather than having the opportunity to purchase weapons as a result of the 72-hour rule loophole, it might have made a difference there. We can't say for certain.

We know there is no panacea, no magic solution, but the loved ones of the families of Sandy Hook, San Bernardino, Colorado Springs, Roseburg, Roanoke, Charleston, and Lafayette have to make a difference here. Honor them with action is what we should do; inaction is complicity. We owe the American people better. We need to keep faith with its values and keep faith with America.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

TRIBUTE TO GOVERNOR TERRY BRANSTAD

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I wish to honor Iowa Governor Terry Branstad on a very historic milestone. On December 14 of this year, Governor Branstad will become the longest serving Governor in the Nation's history. He breaks a record set by Governor Clinton of New York in the early days of our country, even before the Constitution of our country was established, between the Articles of Confederation into the early years of New York as a State in the United States of America. That is a very large feather in the cap of a farm kid from the town of Leland, population 289, in Winnebago County in northern Iowa.

In many ways, a smalltown farm background prepared Terry Branstad for his success as a State house member, Lieutenant Governor, and then Governor on two separate occasions. If he finishes this term—and he will—it will add up to 24 years as Governor.

The farm crisis of the 1980s hit every farm State hard, and Iowa, at the heart of the Nation's breadbasket, suffered deeply. All of us who lived in Iowa at that time saw friends and neighbors lose their family farms and struggle with what to do next for a living. The State needed men and women with vision and ambition to pull the economy out of the doldrums. It needed people who could see the potential for farmers to add value to their operations and for Iowa to diversify its economy, which it has now done.

Of all the people out there, Terry Branstad stood out as Governor. He was at the forefront of creating a new environment to do business. He welcomed and actively encouraged innovation that would capitalize on Iowa's bedrock work ethic and our strong schools. As a result, agriculture was and continues to be a mainstream of Iowa's economy. But agriculture more than ever is an engine for many other employment sectors: renewable energy, manufacturing, crop research, insurance and financial services, and, of course, as we Iowans know, much more.

As Governor from 1983 to 1999, Terry Branstad took the helm during some of the State's worst economic turmoil in decades and steered the ship toward impressive economic growth. The unemployment rate went from 8.5 percent to a record low of 2.5 percent. The Governor could have rested on those laurels and continued to work outside of State government after he retired after those first 16 years, but he again answered the call when the State needed him again in 2010. He put the State of Iowa's interests ahead of his own and went to work for Iowans this second time, bringing his valuable leadership to the Governor's office for another round. That, in a nutshell, tells you everything you need to know about Terry Branstad.

The State of Iowa comes first for him. Iowans are well acquainted with

Terry Branstad's accomplishments and work ethic. It is gratifying to see those attributes get attention on a national scale and in the history books. He has earned his place in history.

Of course, First Lady Christine Branstad ought to be complimented too. We thank her for her public service and, most importantly, for sharing her family with all Iowans.

We are lucky to have had Governor Terry Branstad for these years as chief executive in Iowa, and, of course, I am lucky to call him a friend.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HOEVEN). The Senator from Maryland.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, it is my understanding that some of my colleagues want to talk about our visit to Paris, but I understand Senator HATCH will be on the floor at 2:45 p.m. and we are recessing at 3 o'clock.

Mr President, I ask unanimous consent that the following Members be recognized for up to 5 minutes between now and 2:45 p.m., but it may not be in this order: Senator CARDIN, Senator SCHATZ, Senator UDALL, Senator SHAHEEN, Senator MERKLEY, Senator MARKEY, and Senator COONS.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

PARIS CLIMATE CHANGE TALKS

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I had the opportunity of heading a delegation this past weekend of 10 Senators who went to Paris for the COP21 talks, the climate change talks taking place in Paris. I was very proud of our delegation consisting of Senator WHITEHOUSE, Senator FRANKEN, Senator MARKEY, Senator MERKLEY, Senator UDALL, Senator SHAHEEN, Senator COONS, Senator BOOKER, and Senator SCHATZ. All of us participated in the meetings that took place in Paris. We were impressed that 150 leaders of the world were in Paris at one time to show their support for a successful outcome on climate change and to express their urgency for dealing with this issue. I think it was a strong followup to the challenge Pope Francis gave all of us as to the moral challenge of our time to protect our planet for future generations.

At the meeting in Paris, we recognized that our global health is at stake. Whether we are talking about our individual States—and I could talk about the people on Smith Island, as their island is disappearing, or the health of the Chesapeake Bay, and my colleagues in the western part of this country could talk about the wildfires and what is happening there. In Asia, we see climate migrants as a result of climate change. In Greenland, we see the glaciers disappearing. Every nation is at risk as a result of global climate change, and that is why 150 leaders went to Paris.

The objective is clear. We had a chance to talk to the Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon. He made it clear that our goal at a minimum should be to reduce the increase in warming by 2 degrees Celsius. That is doable. The scientists tell us we can do it. And if we do, we will have a healthier planet, we will create more jobs, and not only America but the world will be more secure.

It was clear that U.S. leadership was critically important to that moment in Paris. President Obama, in getting China and other countries to submit action plans, encouraged over 180 countries that are participating in the Paris talks to submit their own action plans to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. That represents over 97 percent of the world's emitters.

As I mentioned, we met with the Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon. We all met with former Vice President Al Gore. I think we all were inspired by his lifelong dedication to this issue. We had a chance to meet with U.S. lead negotiator Todd Stern, who updated us on what was happening.

We were particularly impressed with Secretary Moniz, our Secretary of Energy. He had earlier announced, with other world energy leaders, an innovation initiative showing how we can use U.S. technology to make it easier for the world to meet their goals in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and at the same time create more jobs in America. It was an impressive display.

We had a chance to meet with local leaders. Mayor Bloomberg convened a summit of mayors. I was proud that my mayor from Baltimore City, Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, was there.

My colleagues participated in bilateral meetings of other countries to encourage them to be aggressive in submitting their obligations and how we could follow up and make sure we achieve our goals.

It was clear that Paris is heading toward a successful agreement, and it will have U.S. support. We mentioned our commitment to carry not just our individual commitment but to be part of the global agreements in Paris.

We pointed out that in 1992, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was ratified by the U.S. Senate. This is the legal basis for moving forward. We also pointed out that our obligations to comply with our own commitments are controlled by the Clean Air Act, which is the law of our country. We pointed out the actions taken by the Obama administration. We also pointed out that 69 percent of Americans agree that we should have a multilateral commitment to reduce our carbon emissions.

It was clear to us that by working together, we can have a healthier planet for our children and our grandchildren.

Mr. President, I yield the floor to Senator UDALL, one of the great leaders on the environment and a very active member of our delegation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, I wish to first say to Senator CARDIN, who led our delegation—Senator CARDIN is the ranking member on the Foreign Relations Committee. Foreign relations has a lot to do with this issue. He showed great leadership, and I believe he is passionate about this issue and finding solutions.

So we were somewhat disappointed, the 10 of us who went—all Democrats—that Republicans didn't join us. This is an issue that needs bipartisanship. We need to join—Republicans and Democrats—on an issue that threatens our national security, threatens our economy, and threatens our environment. It is an issue that is looming out there and needs attention. So we look forward to working with our friends on the other side of the aisle to move forward on this issue.

As I looked over there and saw what was happening, I remembered many of the briefings we have had. Everyone who has looked at this challenge of global warming and climate change says that we need to do two things. First, we need to drive capital to new energy sources, to clean energy sources. We need to innovate is what they are talking about. If you get the capital there and you get the private sector working, you can come up with the solutions. Secondly, we need to put a signal in the marketplace to invest in clean energy and renewable energy.

I was so proud of what happened over there in terms of the world joining together. More than 184 countries came together, and we are going to see the conclusion of their action this week. They have stepped forward and said: We are going to have targets, we are going to have goals, and we are going to be transparent. We are going to let people know we are moving in the direction of solutions and doing something about this immense problem.

So it was a major step forward to see those 184 countries step up and decide to do something.

In addition, Bill Gates led a group of entrepreneurs over to Paris to announce and to challenge the world about energy research and development. As everyone knows, Bill Gates is one of our great entrepreneurs. He and his wife are also philanthropists. He stepped up with 27 other billionaires to say: We are going to put billions into research and development, and we are going to put it into innovation. They called this project Mission Innovation, and they challenged other countries around the world to do the same thing—double their energy research and budget.

So seeing 184 countries step up to the plate and say ''We are going to do this''—and I think we will see those announcements in the next couple of days—and seeing these entrepreneurs step forward I think was a signal—and a bold signal—to the marketplace that we are changing and moving in a new

direction and that we are going to get this done.

I am very proud of my State of New Mexico because we have all sorts of energy—uranium, coal, oil, gas—and we have many renewable sources—wind, biomass, solar, geothermal, but we have taken a strong step in New Mexico to push for renewable resources. In our State statutes, we pushed for a renewable electricity standard of 10 percent by 2010. We met that early, so we put another standard in place of 20 percent by 2020.

We are really in the bull's-eye in terms of climate change in New Mexico because of what we see and what we know happens in the Southwest. The temperatures are twice as high. We have seen those temperatures increase over the last 50 years. So we know there is a crisis, we know there is an issue, we know we need to do something about this, and we are very willing to step forward.

Mr. President, according to a study at Los Alamos National Laboratory, by 2050—not far away—we may not have any forests left in my State. It will be as if New Mexico were dragged 300 miles to the south. Our climate will resemble land that is now in the middle of the Chihuahuan desert.

Now, I am not a scientist. Neither are my colleagues. But the experts at LANL—and scientists all over the world—are clear. If we do nothing, global warming will only get worse.

The nations of the world know this. That is why over 190 nations are in Paris: To meet the challenge of climate change, and to do it together.

The Paris agreement will not solve the problem of global warming by itself, but it is a major step forward. It is what we need to ensure every country does its part, and does its fair share on climate change.

The largest emitters in the developing world—China and India—are making serious commitments. They understand, they have to reduce their reliance on fossil fuels.

This is about their economy, and it is about a commitment to future generations.

Opponents of U.S. climate action have argued that other nations—especially China—would never act to limit their emissions. Well, now they are. This is encouraging—and something we need to encourage further. That is what the world's scientists tell us. That is what our own Department of Defense tells us. We can make progress now—or face ever greater instability later.

More than 180 nations are on board with individual commitments. They will take concrete steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This is historic. This will slow global warming—and it must be done now, not later. The world cannot afford to wait.

These nations see the threat. They see the mounting danger. A representative from Bangladesh told me that in his country every day, they face the threat of rising sea levels.

These countries came to Paris with a commitment to succeed.

And the work began before Paris—such as when the U.S. and China announced major mitigation commitments last year.

Our task now is to keep up the momentum, to keep moving forward—both at home and abroad. I believe there are two things we can do right now:

No. 1, work to drive capital to new energy efficient technologies. We need to renew the Production Tax Credit for renewables. Tax incentives have been in place for decades for oil and gas.

Wind, solar and biofuels need that investment as well.

No. 2, send a positive signal to the markets. That means keeping our own climate goals on track, and stopping efforts that would turn back progress. That means encouraging capital investment in sustainable energy—not just in the U.S, but, throughout the world.

We are seeing a growing investment in new technologies with public and private resources. Last week, 28 of the world's billionaires committed to investing in energy research and innovation.

And we are seeing a major market signal that there is demand for those technologies—here in the U.S. through the Clean Power Plan and other measures, and across the globe, especially in developing countries, that have demonstrated a commitment to grow their economies in a cleaner, more sustainable way.

Now is the time for action. America must lead, because we cannot ignore the danger—to our planet, to our economy, and to our security. The science is clear, the threat is growing, and time is running out.

This is not news to people in my State. In New Mexico, temperatures are rising 50 percent faster than the global average—not just this year or last year, but for decades.

We have seen historic droughts. When it does rain we have seen terrible flooding. And we have seen the worst wildfires in New Mexico's history. What we have not seen—what we have waited for—is for Congress to act.

It has not been for lack of trying. There have been many attempts—including bipartisan ones. But each and every time Congress failed to make it to the finish line, failed to pass comprehensive legislation—in both Houses—to curb our greenhouse gas emissions.

Just this week, the Senate Commerce Subcommittee on Science held a hearing focused on whether climate change is real. This is settled science. The world has moved on. The United States Congress should, too.

So the President and the EPA have used their authority under the Clean Air Act to lead. They have done what needs to be done, with the support of many of us here in Congress—and of the American people.

The Clean Power Plan is reasonable, and it will make a difference to restrict emissions from new and existing power plants.

Mr. President, I hope that going forward Congress will work on solutions—rather than wasting time on Resolutions of Disapproval, rather than wasting time on questioning science.

The American people do not want a science debate. They want action. The world has come together in Paris. Nations are moving forward. The very real question now is—how do we keep that going?

As a member of the Appropriations Committee, I will continue to fight against dangerous environmental riders.

I am encouraged by the conference in Paris, and I am confident that the United States will continue to lead—even if our Republican colleagues continue to block.

With increased U.S. leadership over the last 5 years we have made great international progress. The Paris conference is evidence of that.

Another sign of progress—the world's largest oil and gas companies are supporting a climate agreement.

BP, Shell—and the massive state oil companies of Saudi Arabia and Mexico—are among the ten major oil companies making commitments.

The United States can help lead this effort—not only at the negotiating table in Paris, but on the front lines in New Mexico and every other State.

Because in this great challenge, there is also great opportunity. Our country can lead the world in a clean energy economy. We have the technology, we have the resources. We need the commitment.

That means finding solutions, developing technology, and not denying scientific reality; not wasting time on empty resolutions that come from nowhere and go nowhere.

There are now more solar jobs in the United States than coal jobs.

My state has every kind of energy resource: Coal, oil, gas, uranium, solar, wind, algae biofuel and more. We are doing all we can to diversify—and reduce carbon emissions. A clean energy economy protects our communities and creates jobs.

A renewable electricity standard—which I have long fought for—would create 300,000 jobs. Most of these jobs are high-paying, they are local, and they cannot be shipped overseas.

Support for renewable energy is strong. Nearly half of the U.S. Senate supported my amendment in January for a Renewable Electricity Standard that would mandate that 30 percent of our energy come from renewable resources by 2030. Over half the States already have renewable energy portfolios. Many of them are being met and exceeded.

In New Mexico, we are blessed with great natural resources and with great human resources as well. Researchers at Sandia and Los Alamos national

labs are studying climate change—not with an agenda, but with a commitment—to tackling the problem, with real science and with real innovation.

Together, we can meet this challenge. We can find a path forward that works. We can work with the global community. We can protect our planet. But, America must lead and help drive progress across the world.

Mr. President, 48 national security and foreign policy leaders—Democrats and Republicans alike—have sounded the alarm. From Chuck Hagel to William Cohen, from Madeleine Albright to George Schultz, in a joint statement they urge us to fight climate change. They urge us to ''think past tomorrow.''

The Paris agreement is a starting point and a historic opening for a global effort to address climate change. It is an opportunity, it is an obligation, and it is something that history will show was the right thing to do.

Mr. President, I see my colleagues have joined me on the floor. Senator SCHATZ, Senator SHAHEEN, and Senator CORY BOOKER are down here, and they have done excellent work. I yield at this time to Senator SCHATZ. I would just say by the way of introduction that I am so impressed with his State and the leadership in his State. Hawaii is going to be a 100-percent renewable State in 2040. A lot of that is due to his leadership and his legislature and Governor stepping up to the plate.

With that, Senator SCHATZ.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, I thank the senior Senator from New Mexico for his longtime leadership on climate and conservation issues.

I have been working on this for a long time, as many of us on the floor have been working on this for a long time, and I have not been so hopeful in a very long time. I am reminded of the essential elements of success when it comes to an international agreement, and that is American leadership. We still remain the indispensable Nation, and we finally reasserted ourselves and reclaimed the moral high ground and the political high ground that put us in a position to stitch together an international agreement.

One observation I will offer from the Paris climate talks is how positive the response was. I think we anticipated that we were going to have to do perhaps more troubleshooting, more allaying of concerns about America's commitment to climate action than we ended up having to do. That is because people understand that the President is committed, and people understand that the Clean Power Plan is going forward, and we are making progress and there is no turning back.

I will offer seven very quick observations about the Paris climate talks. The first is this: It is already a success. If you had told any knowledgeable observer that they were going to get 185 countries—representing 97 percent of countries and 98 percent of emissions—and 150 heads of State in the same place at the same time—the most in history—if you had said that 2 years ago, that would have sounded wildly optimistic. We really are making progress.

No. 2, this is not going to require Senate approval. There have been more than 18,000 such agreements that our President and Presidents in the past have entered into over time not requiring Senate approval.

No. 3—and this is important and can't be overstated—it is not enough. If we want to hit the 2-degree Celsius target, this only gets us about 40 percent there. But 40 percent there is 40 percent there. We were at zero 3 weeks ago. So I think getting 40 percent there is very important.

I think the other thing we have learned from other states and other countries and even in the private sector is that once you unleash the power of clean energy on the private sector, there is no turning back. So we anticipate being able to ratchet up these agreements every 3 to 5 years on an international basis.

No. 4, it is way more than expected and way more than ever before.

No. 5, I think we need to know that there are some pretty good accountability and transparency mechanisms in there. This was a key element of the negotiations that Secretary Kerry and the President himself have insisted upon. We need to know—the United States has a robust reporting mechanism. At the public utilities commission level, at the regional level, we know exactly what our energy portfolio is. That is a little bit more of a challenge in the developing world, so we had to develop a matrix so we know that countries aren't cheating or they are not getting their own data wrong. I feel satisfied that it is likely to hit those marks.

No. 6, it is wildly popular in the United States. Two-thirds of Americans support an international climate agreement. A bare majority of Republicans, a decisive majority of young Republicans, and decisive majorities of Democrats and Independents support international climate action.

No. 7 is this: People are going to try to undo this. They are going to do it through the Congressional Review Act. They are going to try to do it through the appropriations process. They are going to try to do it through the electoral process. That is the democratic process, and that is OK. But there is no turning back either legislatively, politically, or in terms of the momentum we have in the private sector.

I would like to introduce someone who has come at climate from a different perspective, as he always does, who has become a leader on these issues, and who was an incredible asset during the weekend we were in Paris, and that is the junior Senator from New Jersey, Mr. CORY BOOKER.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, just a brief moment. First and foremost, I want to thank the group of Senators who went over to Paris on the codel. It was very important that the United States of America was well represented there and that this body was well represented there.

I especially thank Senator CARDIN for leading that codel. His leadership was critical. As the ranking member of Foreign Relations, to have him lead and understand that this is a critical issue not just in regard to the climate in general but also to our national defense, to our strength as a Nation, and to our economy—it was good to have him leading and understanding the breadth of these issues.

When I was over there, I was moved to see virtually all of the globe represented by leaders, heads of state, members of Parliament, NGOs, corporations—major, global, dominant corporations. Everyone was there. There was an array of the planet coming together, focused on this issue of the impacts of climate change. Conversations ranged from focusing on us being innovative and how we are dealing with renewable technology so that technology can be a great pathway toward sustainability in the future, all the way to resiliency and making sure we were doing the things to protect populations from the effect of climate change, especially when it comes to poor populations who are disproportionately affected.

I had the chance, the honor while I was there of leading a bilateral conversation with Bangladesh, talking to peer leaders—the United States sitting down at a table with and across the table from Ministry and Parliamentary members from Bangladesh.

By many estimates, Bangladesh is the most vulnerable country on the globe to climate change—the most vulnerable large country to climate change. It is about the size of Iowa. It faces serious challenges with melting off the Himalayas as well as rising sea levels.

Due to climate change, right now Bangladesh is losing 1 percent of its arable land each year, and it is projected over the next decade or so—leading into 2030—to lose a large percentage of its land, displacing millions of Bangladeshis, literally creating climate refugees. The sea level rising is predicted to inundate about 15 percent of the land area and create refugees, making it a reality for them that is so urgent that they went there with a large degree of mission to join with other global actors.

I was proud to be able to sit with them and talk to them about New Jersey—not only a State that has 75,000 people who are Bangladeshis but also a State that knows that our economy and our strength as a State will be affected by climate change as well. We are already seeing what is happening with the warming of our oceans, the acidification of our oceans, how it is affecting the many jobs related to our

fishing industry. We are already seeing the challenges with our climate in terms of increased weather activity and severe storms.

This is an issue that affects America that we cannot solve without joining with the rest of the globe. We know that the injustices that are happening to our Nation in terms of increased fires, in terms of despoliation of our seas, the challenges being faced with weather activity internally in our country—we know these issues cannot be solved locally unless we deal with them globally. That is why I am grateful for all of those who understand that American leadership is incredibly needed.

I am proud to stand here with colleagues of mine and continue to send a strong message to the rest of the globe that we are here in the United States strongly supporting the ambitious commitments of President Obama, the ones that he is making, and that we will defend those communities that are facing this crisis in the immediate and long term. We will be leaders.

One of my colleagues and someone whom I have come to respect quite a bit was an incredibly strong voice in Paris, someone who is committed to these issues not only in her home State but, as an American, across our country. I wish to now engage and acknowledge Senator JEANNE SHAHEEN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I am pleased to be here on the floor with my colleagues—those of us who went to Paris, led by Senator CARDIN, for this climate summit.

At the conference in Paris, more than 180 countries accounting for over 90 percent of global emissions were there. They all submitted their plans for how they are going to reduce emissions, with the goal of keeping global warming below 2 degrees Centigrade by the end of this century.

One of the things I was impressed with in Paris was that the countries that were there represented everybody from China to the Marshall Islands, and all of them understood that climate change is real, that it is a threat to our planet, and that we have to do something about it. They understand that because they have seen it. They have seen it in their home countries. They have seen rising sea levels, extreme weather events, environmental changes—all linked to global warming.

Here in the United States, we see it too. According to a recent Pew poll, two-thirds of all Americans recognize that climate change is real and that action must be taken to address it. We see it in my home State of New Hampshire, where we are seeing a change in our wildlife population, a change in our snowpacks that affects our ski season, our foliage season is affected, and it has an economic impact on our State. But the exciting thing is—and we saw this very clearly in Paris—that at the local level, mayors, Governors, local leaders around the world understand that we have to take action to address it, and they were there in Paris urging the negotiators to come to some sort of an agreement.

In New Hampshire, we have taken action. With nine other Northeastern States, we have been part of a regional cap-and-trade program called the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative. As a result of that and other actions that we have taken, we are going to meet the goals of the Clean Power Plan 10 years early.

The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative has generated $1.6 billion in net economic value. It has created more than 16,000 jobs across the region. That is one of the benefits of the action we can take to address climate change. As we all know here, it doesn't matter what we do in New Hampshire. It doesn't matter what we do in this country. Unless we get a global agreement in Paris so we are all going to move forward together to address the harmful impacts of climate change, we are going to see the continued sea level rise, the continued extreme weather events, all of the continued negative impacts of that global warming.

Finally, I want to say that for me one of the most exciting things about meeting with people when we were in Paris was hearing that they were cautiously optimistic that we will get an agreement, that we will take action, and we will be able to make a difference for our planet and for future generations.

I was pleased to have Senator CHRIS COONS from Delaware with us on this trip. I know he is going to talk about what he observed when we were in Paris.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I wish to express my gratitude to Senator CARDIN for leading this great delegation of 10 Senators to the Paris Conference of Parties—the COP21, the global climate change conference in Paris—and to Senator SHAHEEN of New Hampshire for her tireless leadership on energy efficiency. The least expensive, most powerful way we can reduce our energy consumption is by investing in new technologies and new approaches that help create jobs and manufacturing in the United States and reduce our total energy consumption and footprint.

I think the Paris conference has already been a success from the outset. As we heard directly from the head of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon, 150 heads of state gathered at the very outset of that conference, and 184 countries made voluntary national commitments to reducing their greenhouse gas emissions, to reducing their carbon footprint, and to working together to find sustainable solutions to this very real challenge.

The other thing I found most encouraging about the many conversations we had with governmental leaders, with advocates, with nonprofit leaders was a commitment to bring together developed countries such as the United States and European and Asian allies of ours and the developing world—the very large countries such as India and China which have become major emitters of greenhouse gases—to bring them all together in one common agreement.

One other comment I wish to make that comes out of what we saw going through an Innovation Fair that was hosted by Secretary Ernie Moniz of our Department of Energy was that governments alone can't solve climate change. Global conferences, such as the one we attended, are important—they are critical—but making real and sustained impact on fighting climate change is also going to require new and innovative approaches, and that requires investment by the private sector and by the Federal Government in clean energy and energy efficiency research and development.

Commitments made in Paris, such as the announced new mission innovation and the breakthrough energy coalition, which are public-private partnerships to ramp up and accelerate our investment in research and development are more important than ever.

We also had a chance to attend a meeting of some national leaders, of mayors and county executives, of Governors, and folks who lead regions and provinces around the world where remarkable progress has been made. At the same time that we are moving forward through this global conference as a group of nations, it is also important to recognize what subnational groups have done.

Senator SHAHEEN referenced the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, which New Hampshire and my home State of Delaware participate in. It has been a remarkable and effective way for a whole group of Mid-Atlantic and Northeastern States to work together. The nine participating States have reduced our emissions by nearly 20 percent while also seeing stronger economic growth than the rest of the country, I think, suggesting it is possible for us to both reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and continue to grow a strong economy.

In fact, my home State of Delaware has reduced its GHG emissions more than any other State in the last 6 years. That is partly due to the great leadership of my Governor, Jack Markell, and partly due to the deployment of a lot of new solar systems and a lot of investment in energy efficiency.

If I might, let me mention one important piece of bipartisan legislation that I think is part of solving this challenge of how do we achieve an ''all of the above'' energy future that has sustained long-term investments in clean energy and energy efficiency research and deployment; that is, the Master Limited Partnerships Parity Act. This is a very bipartisan bill that has long

had the support of Republican Senators MURKOWSKI, MORAN, COLLINS, and GARDNER. Even Congressman TED POE, of Houston, TX, who represents a great deal of oil and gas in his district, is an advocate for this bill. I have been leading it, along with Senator STABENOW, Senator BENNET, Senator KING, and others in this Chamber. It is an important way that we can allow master limited partnerships, long available to the oil and gas industry, to be opened up to all forms of energy to make it a level playing field and to provide opportunities going forward to finance renewable energy products and energy efficiency projects. This small tweak to our Tax Code could make a cumulative big difference going forward.

In conclusion, let me renew my point that government alone can't solve climate change, but it has a central role to play in bringing together the people who can. Let's pass the MLP Parity Act, and let's make long-term, sustained investments in Federal R&D. Let's bring together public, private, and nonprofit leaders because there is no limit to what we can accomplish when our brightest scientific minds, business leaders, and our diplomats working for us in Paris come together to lay out a positive, sustained goal.

I wish to yield the floor to my colleague, the junior Senator from the State of Rhode Island, who has been a tremendous and tireless champion for conservation and in particular for our oceans, which are such a vital part of our climate future.

I yield the floor to Mr. WHITEHOUSE of Rhode Island.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, one of the features of our trip to Paris was the presence of America's corporate leaders there urging us on. We not only met with significant corporate leaders like people from Citigroup, PG&E, VF Industries, and others, but they were cheering us on publicly in advertisements like this one taken out by the food and beverage industry, calling on a strong Paris climate agreement. The companies who signed this include Mars—if you like M&Ms, you like Mars—General Mills, Coca-Cola and PepsiCo, Hershey and Nestle, Kellogg, Unilever, and others.

The food and beverage industry was joined by an advertisement from some of America's apparel leaders: VF Corporation, based in North Carolina, which produces North Face, Timberland, and a whole variety of other very well-known and popular brands—Adidas, the shoe manufacturer; Levis, if you know jeans you know Levis; Gap, which has stores all over the country; and others from the apparel industry. Perhaps the biggest advertisement that the American business community took out was this one: Companies like not only Johnson & Johnson, the bandaid people, but Johnson Controls, Colgate-Palmolive, Owens Corning, Procter & Gamble, Dupont, and utilities like National Grid and PG&E. So corporate America made a very strong statement in support of a strong Paris climate deal.

The last one I will show is this one, which was taken out by America's financial leaders—Bank of America, Citi, Goldman Sachs, JPMorgan Chase, Morgan Stanley, and Wells Fargo. There was a strong, powerful message from America's corporate leadership that I very much hope our colleagues on the other side will begin to listen to; that Paris is a good thing, a strong agreement is a good thing, and we need to make progress together.

With that, I will turn over the floor to my terrific colleague Senator MERKLEY from Oregon.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, a huge thanks to my colleagues who have been presenting so many important dimensions of this battle against a major threat to the health of our planet. Indeed, Henry David Thoreau asked, ''What's the use of a fine house if you haven't got a tolerable planet to put it on?'' That was an excellent question decades ago but an even more important one today, when we have a significant threat that endangers our forests, our farming, our fishing, and human civilization on this planet. This is the challenge of our generation, to bring human civilization together to address carbon pollution and its impacts.

While in Paris something very exciting was going on—150 world leaders came together to kick off the final negotiations. That is unprecedented in human history. Why were so many leaders there? They were there because they are seeing the impacts in their own individual nations that are coming from the rising temperatures. They came together not just with their voice but with their pledges. In fact, more than 180 countries put forward pledges about how they were going to reduce the trajectory of their carbon pollution footprints. They know what is at stake.

We certainly know in Oregon what is at stake. We see the pine beetle devastating forests, creating a red zone of dying trees. We see the longer forest fire season having a big impact, with more intense blazes and more of them over more months. We see the impact of the loss of snowpack in the Cascades impacting our streams and impacting the water supply for agriculture. The Klamath Basin, along with California, is locked into a deep drought with devastating consequences. We see it over on our coast, where the more acidic Pacific Ocean is creating problems for our shellfish industry because the baby oysters have trouble making their shells. How is this connected? Because the carbon pollution in the air is absorbed into the ocean via waves and creates carbonic acid, and that more acidic water is eroding the ability of our shellfish to operate as they have for a millennium in making shells.

We know this is not just something in Oregon, not just something in Maryland, and not just something in this State or that State but worldwide, where 2014 was the warmest year on record. In fact, 14 of the 15 warmest years on record have happened in this century. Now we see 2015 on the trajectory, and it is going to be warmer than 2014.

There is nothing disputable about the facts: rising carbon dioxide and methane pollution, rising consequences for our States across America, rising consequences for the world. Scientists tell us it will get worse. We have only had a 0.9-degree centigrade increase. If we get to 2 degrees, it is catastrophic. It is pretty bad now. We must come together as an international community and address that.

In Paris we know we need to have a more ambitious agenda than the one we have laid out, even with these wonderful pledges, and we need to come back every 5 years and keep driving the process forward. We know we have to lower the costs for renewable energy so we can come back together and increase the pace at which we pivot from a fossil fuel energy economy to a renewable energy economy.

We know we need to invest in solar deployment, and there is the International Solar Initiative that India is going to host a secretariat for and work to deploy a trillion dollars in solar panels. We know innovation matters, and mission innovation with the United States and other nations doubling their investment over the next 5 years will do a lot more to lower costs and increase the efficiency of technologies in clean power and clean power storage.

Well, it is a big challenge, and I am so delighted to be able to be part of a community of legislators. One of those legislators who has led on this in the House for decades, brought his expertise to the Senate, is my colleague from Massachusetts Senator MARKEY.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Oregon for his leadership, bringing the message of the harm being done to our natural world, I thank Senator CARDIN for taking this delegation of 10 Members to Paris, and I thank the Senator for having this session on the floor.

We are at an inflection point. We are at a point where the danger to the planet is clear.

Mr. President, 2014 was the warmest year ever recorded. This past November was the warmest November ever recorded. October was the warmest October ever recorded. There is now a warming of our planet that is intensifying dangerously, and we have to act in order to avoid the most catastrophic consequences, and that is what is happening in Paris right now. The United States is leading the way. The rest of the world is coming together, and we have a chance to have a very good agreement.

We are going to have the President's back because the 1992 treaty, under

which he is negotiating, was ratified by this body. The Clean Air Act that he is operating under was passed by this body. The clean power rules and increase in fuel economy standards——

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

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent for an additional 1 minute to speak.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, this afternoon—and I think it will continue over the next week—the Republicans and the American petroleum industry are going to try to lift the ban on the exportation of American oil, which could lead to more drilling for millions of barrels of oil on our soil, while at the same time not giving a simultaneous, equal extension of wind and solar tax breaks so that we can continue this revolution that we are bragging about in Paris right now to the rest of the world. These two things do not go together.

You cannot simultaneously drill for more oil that is not drilled for today and then have an ending of the wind and solar tax breaks as they are kicking in. You cannot preach temperance from a barstool. You cannot preach temperance as you are putting up new oil rigs and simultaneously say that the wind and solar tax breaks are going to end and end soon. We have to have both if there is going to be a deal, and right now that is in question in this Chamber. It is important for the American people to know that answer because in Paris they are waiting for this answer. There are 190 nations that want to know that we are actually going to do what we are saying we are going to do in this agreement that we are trying to reach—the most important agreement for this century in terms of the well-being of the planet.

I thank the Presiding Officer for allowing me that courtesy, and I thank the Senator from Utah for his forbearance.

I yield back the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

LEGISLATIVE BRANCH APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2016

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 116, H.R. 2250.

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

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2250) making appropriations for the Legislative Branch for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Appropriations, with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

That the following sums are appropriated, out of any money in the Treasury and otherwise appropriated, for the Legislative Branch for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes, namely:

TITLE I

LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

SENATE

EXPENSE ALLOWANCES

For expense allowances of the Vice President, $18,760; the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, $37,520; Majority Leader of the Senate, $39,920; Minority Leader of the Senate, $39,920; Majority Whip of the Senate, $9,980; Minority Whip of the Senate, $9,980; Chairmen of the Majority and Minority Conference Committees, $4,690 for each Chairman; and Chairmen of the Majority and Minority Policy Committees, $4,690 for each Chairman; in all, $174,840.

REPRESENTATION ALLOWANCES FOR THE MAJORITY AND MINORITY LEADERS

For representation allowances of the Majority and Minority Leaders of the Senate, $14,070 for each such Leader; in all, $28,140.

SALARIES, OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES

For compensation of officers, employees, and others as authorized by law, including agency contributions, $179,185,311, which shall be paid from this appropriation without regard to the following limitations:

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

For the Office of the Vice President, $2,417,248.

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

For the Office of the President Pro Tempore, $723,466.

OFFICES OF THE MAJORITY AND MINORITY LEADERS

For Offices of the Majority and Minority Leaders, $5,255,576.

OFFICES OF THE MAJORITY AND MINORITY WHIPS

For Offices of the Majority and Minority Whips, $3,359,424.

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

For salaries of the Committee on Appropriations, $15,142,000.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEES

For the Conference of the Majority and the Conference of the Minority, at rates of compensation to be fixed by the Chairman of each such committee, $1,658,000 for each such committee; in all, $3,316,000.

OFFICES OF THE SECRETARIES OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE MAJORITY AND THE CONFERENCE OF THE MINORITY

For Offices of the Secretaries of the Conference of the Majority and the Conference of the Minority, $817,402.

POLICY COMMITTEES

For salaries of the Majority Policy Committee and the Minority Policy Committee, $1,692,905 for each such committee; in all, $3,385,810.

OFFICE OF THE CHAPLAIN

For Office of the Chaplain, $436,886.

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

For Office of the Secretary, $24,772,000.

OFFICE OF THE SERGEANT AT ARMS AND DOORKEEPER

For Office of the Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper, $69,000,000.

OFFICES OF THE SECRETARIES FOR THE MAJORITY AND MINORITY

For Offices of the Secretary for the Majority and the Secretary for the Minority, $1,762,000.

AGENCY CONTRIBUTIONS AND RELATED EXPENSES

For agency contributions for employee benefits, as authorized by law, and related expenses, $48,797,499.

OFFICE OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL OF THE SENATE

For salaries and expenses of the Office of the Legislative Counsel of the Senate, $5,408,500.

OFFICE OF SENATE LEGAL COUNSEL

For salaries and expenses of the Office of Senate Legal Counsel, $1,120,000.

EXPENSE ALLOWANCES OF THE SECRETARY OF THE SENATE, SERGEANT AT ARMS AND DOORKEEPER OF THE SENATE, AND SECRETARIES FOR THE MAJORITY AND MINORITY OF THE SENATE

For expense allowances of the Secretary of the Senate, $7,110; Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper of the Senate, $7,110; Secretary for the Majority of the Senate, $7,110; Secretary for the Minority of the Senate, $7,110; in all, $28,440.

CONTINGENT EXPENSES OF THE SENATE

INQUIRIES AND INVESTIGATIONS

For expenses of inquiries and investigations ordered by the Senate, or conducted under paragraph 1 of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, section 112 of the Supplemental Appropriations and Rescission Act, 1980 (Public Law 96–304), and Senate Resolution 281, 96th Congress, agreed to March 11, 1980, $133,265,000, of which $26,650,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2018.

EXPENSES OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE CAUCUS ON INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL

For expenses of the United States Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control, $508,000.

SECRETARY OF THE SENATE

For expenses of the Office of the Secretary of the Senate, $8,750,000 of which $4,350,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2020 and of which $2,500,000 shall remain available until expended.

SERGEANT AT ARMS AND DOORKEEPER OF THE SENATE

For expenses of the Office of the Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper of the Senate, $130,000,000, which shall remain available until September 30, 2020.

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

For miscellaneous items, $21,390,270 which shall remain available until September 30, 2018.

SENATORS' OFFICIAL PERSONNEL AND OFFICE EXPENSE ACCOUNT

For Senators' Official Personnel and Office Expense Account, $390,000,000 of which $19,121,212 shall remain available until September 30, 2018.

OFFICIAL MAIL COSTS

For expenses necessary for official mail costs of the Senate, $300,000.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS

REQUIRING AMOUNTS REMAINING IN SENATORS' OFFICIAL PERSONNEL AND OFFICE EXPENSE ACCOUNT TO BE USED FOR DEFICIT REDUCTION OR TO REDUCE THE FEDERAL DEBT

SEC. 1. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any amounts appropriated under this Act under the heading ''SENATE'' under the heading ''CONTINGENT EXPENSES OF THE SENATE'' under the heading ''SENATORS' OFFICIAL PERSONNEL AND OFFICE EXPENSE ACCOUNT'' shall be available for obligation only during the fiscal year or fiscal years for which such amounts are made available. Any unexpended balances under such allowances remaining after the end of the period of availability shall be returned to the Treasury in accordance with the undesignated paragraph under the center heading ''GENERAL PROVISION'' under chapter XI of the Third Supplemental Appropriation Act, 1957 (2 U.S.C. 4107) and used for deficit reduction (or, if there is no Federal budget deficit after all such payments have been made, for reducing the Federal debt, in such manner as the Secretary of the Treasury considers appropriate).

AUTHORITY FOR TRANSFER OF FUNDS

SEC. 2. Section 1 of the Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 1991 (2 U.S.C. 6153) is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsections (c) and (d) as subsections (d) and (e), respectively;

(2) by inserting after subsection (b) the following:

''(c)(1) The Chaplain of the Senate may, during any fiscal year, at the election of the Chaplain of the Senate, transfer funds from the appropriation account for salaries for the Office of the Chaplain of the Senate to the account, within the contingent fund of the Senate, from which expenses are payable for the Office of the Chaplain.

''(2) The Chaplain of the Senate may, during any fiscal year, at the election of the Chaplain of the Senate, transfer funds from the appropriation account for expenses, within the contingent fund of the Senate, for the Office of the Chaplain to the account from which salaries are payable for the Office of the Chaplain of the Senate.'';

(3) in subsection (d), as so redesignated—

(A) in paragraph (1), by inserting ''or the Office of the Chaplain of the Senate, as the case may be,'' after ''such committee'' each place it appears; and

(B) in paragraph (2), by inserting ''or the Chaplain of the Senate, as the case may be,'' after ''the Chairman''; and

(4) in subsection (e), as so redesignated, by inserting ''or the Chaplain of the Senate, as the case may be,'' after ''The Chairman of a committee''.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SALARIES AND EXPENSES

PAYMENT TO WIDOWS AND HEIRS OF DECEASED MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

For payment to Tori B. Nunnelee, widow of Alan Nunnelee, late a Representative from the State of Mississippi, $174,000.

For salaries and expenses of the House of Representatives, $1,180,736,000, as follows:

HOUSE LEADERSHIP OFFICES

For salaries and expenses, as authorized by law, $22,278,891, including: Office of the Speaker, $6,645,417, including $25,000 for official expenses of the Speaker; Office of the Majority Floor Leader, $2,180,048, including $10,000 for official expenses of the Majority Leader; Office of the Minority Floor Leader, $7,114,471, including $10,000 for official expenses of the Minority Leader; Office of the Majority Whip, including the Chief Deputy Majority Whip, $1,886,632, including $5,000 for official expenses of the Majority Whip; Office of the Minority Whip, including the Chief Deputy Minority Whip, $1,459,639, including $5,000 for official expenses of the Minority Whip; Republican Conference, $1,505,426; Democratic Caucus, $1,487,258: Provided, That such amount for salaries and expenses shall remain available from January 3, 2016 until January 2, 2017.

MEMBERS' REPRESENTATIONAL ALLOWANCES INCLUDING MEMBERS' CLERK HIRE, OFFICIAL EXPENSES OF MEMBERS, AND OFFICIAL MAIL

For Members' representational allowances, including Members' clerk hire, official expenses, and official mail, $554,317,732.

COMMITTEE EMPLOYEES

STANDING COMMITTEES, SPECIAL AND SELECT

For salaries and expenses of standing committees, special and select, authorized by House resolutions, $123,903,173: Provided, That such amount shall remain available for such salaries and expenses until December 31, 2016.

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

For salaries and expenses of the Committee on Appropriations, $23,271,004, including studies and examinations of executive agencies and temporary personal services for such committee, to be expended in accordance with section 202(b) of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 and to be available for reimbursement to agencies for services performed: Provided, That such amount shall remain available for such salaries and expenses until December 31, 2016.

SALARIES, OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES

For compensation and expenses of officers and employees, as authorized by law, $175,713,679, including: for salaries and expenses of the Office of the Clerk, including the positions of the Chaplain and the Historian, and including not more than $25,000, of which not more than $20,000 is for the Family Room and not more than $2,000 is for the Office of the Chaplain, for official representation and reception expenses, $24,980,898; for salaries and expenses of the Office of the Sergeant at Arms, including the position of Superintendent of Garages and the Office of Emergency Management, and including not more than $3,000 for official representation and reception expenses, $14,827,120 of which $4,784,229 shall remain available until expended; for salaries and expenses of the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer including not more than $3,000 for official representation and reception expenses, $115,010,000, of which $1,350,000 shall remain available until expended; for salaries and expenses of the Office of the Inspector General, $4,741,809; for salaries and expenses of the Office of General Counsel, $1,413,450; for salaries and expenses of the Office of the Parliamentarian, including the Parliamentarian, $2,000 for preparing the Digest of Rules, and not more than $1,000 for official representation and reception expenses, $1,974,606; for salaries and expenses of the Office of the Law Revision Counsel of the House, $3,119,766; for salaries and expenses of the Office of the Legislative Counsel of the House, $8,352,975; for salaries and expenses of the Office of Interparliamentary Affairs, $814,069; for other authorized employees, $478,986.

ALLOWANCES AND EXPENSES

For allowances and expenses as authorized by House resolution or law, $281,251,521, including: supplies, materials, administrative costs and Federal tort claims, $3,625,236; official mail for committees, leadership offices, and administrative offices of the House, $190,486; Government contributions for health, retirement, Social Security, and other applicable employee benefits, $254,447,514, to remain available until March 31, 2017; Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery, $16,217,008 of which $5,000,000 shall remain available until expended; transition activities for new members and staff, $2,084,000, to remain available until expended; Wounded Warrior Program $2,500,000, to remain available until expended; Office of Congressional Ethics, $1,467,030; and miscellaneous items including purchase, exchange, maintenance, repair and operation of House motor vehicles, interparliamentary receptions, and gratuities to heirs of deceased employees of the House, $720,247.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS

SEC. 101. (a) REQUIRING AMOUNTS REMAINING IN MEMBERS' REPRESENTATIONAL ALLOWANCES TO BE USED FOR DEFICIT REDUCTION OR TO REDUCE THE FEDERAL DEBT.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any amounts appropriated under this Act for ''HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES—SALARIES AND EXPENSES—MEMBERS' REPRESENTATIONAL ALLOWANCES'' shall be available only for fiscal year 2016. Any amount remaining after all payments are made under such allowances for fiscal year 2016 shall be deposited in the Treasury and used for deficit reduction (or, if there is no Federal budget deficit after all such payments have been made, for reducing the Federal debt, in such manner as the Secretary of the Treasury considers appropriate).

(b) REGULATIONS.—The Committee on House Administration of the House of Representatives shall have authority to prescribe regulations to carry out this section.

(c) DEFINITION.—As used in this section, the term ''Member of the House of Representatives'' means a Representative in, or a Delegate or Resident Commissioner to, the Congress.

DELIVERY OF BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

SEC. 102. None of the funds made available in this Act may be used to deliver a printed copy of a bill, joint resolution, or resolution to the office of a Member of the House of Representatives (including a Delegate or Resident Commissioner to the Congress) unless the Member requests a copy.

DELIVERY OF CONGRESSIONAL RECORD

SEC. 103. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to deliver a printed copy of any version of the Congressional Record to the office of a Member of the House of Representatives (including a Delegate or Resident Commissioner to the Congress).

LIMITATION ON AMOUNT AVAILABLE TO LEASE VEHICLES

SEC. 104. None of the funds made available in this Act may be used by the Chief Administrative Officer of the House of Representatives to make any payments from any Members' Representational Allowance for the leasing of a vehicle, excluding mobile district offices, in an aggregate amount that exceeds $1,000 for the vehicle in any month.

LIMITATION ON PRINTED COPIES OF U.S. CODE TO HOUSE

SEC. 105. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to provide an aggregate number of more than 50 printed copies of any edition of the United States Code to all offices of the House of Representatives.

DELIVERY OF REPORTS OF DISBURSEMENTS

SEC. 106. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to deliver a printed copy of the report of disbursements for the operations of the House of Representatives under section 106 of the House of Representatives Administrative Reform Technical Corrections Act (2 U.S.C. 5535) to the office of a Member of the House of Representatives (including a Delegate or Resident Commissioner to the Congress).

DELIVERY OF DAILY CALENDAR

SEC. 107. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to deliver to the office of a Member of the House of Representatives (including a Delegate or Resident Commissioner to the Congress) a printed copy of the Daily Calendar of the House of Representatives which is prepared by the Clerk of the House of Representatives.

JOINT ITEMS

For Joint Committees, as follows:

JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

For salaries and expenses of the Joint Economic Committee, $4,203,000, to be disbursed by the Secretary of the Senate.

JOINT CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE ON INAUGURAL CEREMONIES OF 2017

For salaries and expenses associated with conducting the inaugural ceremonies of the President and Vice President of the United States, January 20, 2017, in accordance with such program as may be adopted by the joint congressional committee authorized to conduct the inaugural ceremonies of 2017, $1,250,000 to be disbursed by the Secretary of the Senate and to remain available until September 30, 2017: Provided, That funds made available under this heading shall be available for payment, on a direct or reimbursable basis, whether incurred on, before, or after, October 1, 2016: Provided further, That the compensation of any employee of the Committee on Rules and Administration of the Senate who has been designated to perform service with respect to the inaugural ceremonies of 2017 shall continue to be paid by the Committee on Rules and Administration, but the account from which such staff member is paid may be reimbursed for the services of the staff member out of funds made available under this heading: Provided further, That there are authorized to be paid from the appropriations account for ''Expenses of Inquiries and Investigations'' of the Senate such sums as may be necessary, without fiscal year limitation, for agency contributions related to the compensation of employees of the joint congressional committee.

JOINT COMMITTEE ON TAXATION

For salaries and expenses of the Joint Committee on Taxation, $10,095,000, to be disbursed by the Chief Administrative Officer of the House of Representatives.

For other joint items, as follows:

OFFICE OF THE ATTENDING PHYSICIAN

For medical supplies, equipment, and contingent expenses of the emergency rooms, and for the Attending Physician and his assistants, including:

(1) an allowance of $2,175 per month to the Attending Physician;

(2) an allowance of $1,300 per month to the Senior Medical Officer;

(3) an allowance of $725 per month each to three medical officers while on duty in the Office of the Attending Physician;

(4) an allowance of $725 per month to 2 assistants and $580 per month each not to exceed 11 assistants on the basis heretofore provided for such assistants; and

(5) $2,486,000 for reimbursement to the Department of the Navy for expenses incurred for staff and equipment assigned to the Office of the Attending Physician, which shall be advanced and credited to the applicable appropriation or appropriations from which such salaries, allowances, and other expenses are payable and shall be available for all the purposes thereof, $3,371,000, to be disbursed by the Chief Administrative Officer of the House of Representatives.

OFFICE OF CONGRESSIONAL ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

SALARIES AND EXPENSES

For salaries and expenses of the Office of Congressional Accessibility Services, $1,387,000, to be disbursed by the Secretary of the Senate.

CAPITOL POLICE

SALARIES

For salaries of employees of the Capitol Police, including overtime, hazardous duty pay, and Government contributions for health, retirement, social security, professional liability insurance, and other applicable employee benefits, $300,000,000 of which overtime shall not exceed $30,928,000 unless the Committee on Appropriations of the House and Senate are notified, to be disbursed by the Chief of the Capitol Police or his designee.

GENERAL EXPENSES

For necessary expenses of the Capitol Police, including motor vehicles, communications and other equipment, security equipment and installation, uniforms, weapons, supplies, materials, training, medical services, forensic services, stenographic services, personal and professional services, the employee assistance program, the awards program, postage, communication services, travel advances, relocation of instructor and liaison personnel for the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, and not more than $5,000 to be expended on the certification of the Chief of the Capitol Police in connection with official representation and reception expenses, $66,465,499, to be disbursed by the Chief of the Capitol Police or his designee: Provided, That, notwithstanding any other provision of law, the cost of basic training for the Capitol Police at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center for fiscal year 2016 shall be paid by the Secretary of Homeland Security from funds available to the Department of Homeland Security.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISION

DEPOSIT OF REIMBURSEMENTS FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE

SEC. 1001. (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 2802(a)(1) of the Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2001 (2 U.S.C. 1905(a)(1)) is amended by striking ''District of Columbia)'' and inserting the following: ''District of Columbia), and from any other source in the case of assistance provided in connection with an activity that was not sponsored by Congress''.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 2802(a)(2) of such Act (2 U.S.C. 1905(a)(2)) is amended by striking ''law enforcement assistance to any Federal, State, or local government agency (including any agency of the District of Columbia)'' and inserting ''any law enforcement assistance for which reimbursement described in paragraph (1) is made''.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall only apply with respect to any reimbursement received before, on, or after the date of the enactment of the Act.

OFFICE OF COMPLIANCE

SALARIES AND EXPENSES

For salaries and expenses of the Office of Compliance, as authorized by section 305 of the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 (2 U.S.C. 1385), $3,959,000, of which $450,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2017: Provided, That not more than $500 may be expended on the certification of the Executive Director of the Office of Compliance in connection with official representation and reception expenses.

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE

SALARIES AND EXPENSES

For salaries and expenses necessary for operation of the Congressional Budget Office, including not more than $6,000 to be expended on the certification of the Director of the Congressional Budget Office in connection with official representation and reception expenses, $45,700,000.

ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL

CAPITOL CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATIONS

For salaries for the Architect of the Capitol, and other personal services, at rates of pay provided by law; for all necessary expenses for surveys and studies, construction, operation, and general and administrative support in connection with facilities and activities under the care of the Architect of the Capitol including the Botanic Garden; electrical substations of the Capitol, Senate and House office buildings, and other facilities under the jurisdiction of the Architect of the Capitol; including furnishings and office equipment; including not more than $5,000 for official reception and representation expenses, to be expended as the Architect of the Capitol may approve; for purchase or exchange, maintenance, and operation of a passenger motor vehicle, $91,589,000.

CAPITOL BUILDING

For all necessary expenses for the maintenance, care and operation of the Capitol, $45,546,000, of which $21,237,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2020.

CAPITOL GROUNDS

For all necessary expenses for care and improvement of grounds surrounding the Capitol, the Senate and House office buildings, and the Capitol Power Plant, $11,973,000, of which $2,000,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2020.

SENATE OFFICE BUILDINGS

For all necessary expenses for the maintenance, care and operation of Senate office buildings; and furniture and furnishings to be expended under the control and supervision of the Architect of the Capitol, $84,221,000, of which $26,283,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2020.

HOUSE OFFICE BUILDINGS

For all necessary expenses for the maintenance, care and operation of the House office buildings, $149,962,000, of which $23,886,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2020, and of which $62,000,000 shall remain available until expended for the restoration and renovation of the Cannon House Office Building.

In addition, for a payment to the House Historic Buildings Revitalization Trust Fund, $10,000,000, to remain available until expended.

CAPITOL POWER PLANT

For all necessary expenses for the maintenance, care and operation of the Capitol Power Plant; lighting, heating, power (including the purchase of electrical energy) and water and sewer services for the Capitol, Senate and House office buildings, Library of Congress buildings, and the grounds about the same, Botanic Garden, Senate garage, and air conditioning refrigeration not supplied from plants in any of such buildings; heating the Government Printing Office and Washington City Post Office, and heating and chilled water for air conditioning for the Supreme Court Building, the Union Station complex, the Thurgood Marshall Federal Judiciary Building and the Folger Shakespeare Library, expenses for which shall be advanced or reimbursed upon request of the Architect of the Capitol and amounts so received shall be deposited into the Treasury to the credit of this appropriation, $101,601,000, of which $19,635,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2020: Provided, That not more than $9,000,000 of the funds credited or to be reimbursed to this appropriation as herein provided shall be available for obligation during fiscal year 2016.

LIBRARY BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

For all necessary expenses for the mechanical and structural maintenance, care and operation of the Library buildings and grounds, $29,132,000, of which $3,994,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2020.

CAPITOL POLICE BUILDINGS, GROUNDS, AND SECURITY

For all necessary expenses for the maintenance, care and operation of buildings, grounds and security enhancements of the United States Capitol Police, wherever located, the Alternate Computer Facility, and AOC security operations, $22,535,000, of which $4,376,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2020.

BOTANIC GARDEN

For all necessary expenses for the maintenance, care and operation of the Botanic Garden and the nurseries, buildings, grounds, and collections; and purchase and exchange, maintenance, repair, and operation of a passenger motor vehicle; all under the direction of the Joint Committee on the Library, $11,980,000, of which $2,100,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2020: Provided, That, of the amount made available under this heading, the Architect of the Capitol may obligate and expend such sums as may be necessary for the maintenance, care and operation of the National Garden established under section 307E of the Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 1989 (2 U.S.C. 2146), upon vouchers approved by the Architect of the Capitol or a duly authorized designee.

CAPITOL VISITOR CENTER

For all necessary expenses for the operation of the Capitol Visitor Center, $20,844,000.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS

NO BONUSES FOR CONTRACTORS BEHIND SCHEDULE OR OVER BUDGET

SEC. 1101. None of the funds made available in this Act for the Architect of the Capitol may be used to make incentive or award payments to contractors for work on contracts or programs for which the contractor is behind schedule or over budget, unless the Architect of the Capitol, or agency-employed designee, determines that any such deviations are due to unforeseeable events, government-driven scope changes, or are not significant within the overall scope of the project and/or program.

SCRIMS

SEC. 1102. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used for scrims containing photographs of building facades during restoration or construction projects performed by the Architect of the Capitol.

ACQUISITION OF PARCEL AT FORT MEADE

SEC. 1103. (a) ACQUISITION.—The Architect of the Capitol is authorized to acquire from the Maryland State Highway Administration, at no cost to the United States, a parcel of real property (including improvements thereon) consisting of approximately 7.34 acres located within the portion of Fort George G. Meade in Anne Arundel County, Maryland, that was transferred to the Architect of the Capitol by the Secretary of the Army pursuant to section 122 of the Military Construction Appropriations Act, 1994 (2 U.S.C. 141 note).

(b) TERMS AND CONDITIONS.—The terms and conditions applicable under subsections (b) and (d) of section 122 of the Military Construction Appropriations Act, 1994 (2 U.S.C. 141 note) to the property acquired by the Architect of the Capitol pursuant to such section shall apply to the real property acquired by the Architect pursuant to the authority of this section.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

SALARIES AND EXPENSES

For necessary expenses of the Library of Congress not otherwise provided for, including development and maintenance of the Library's catalogs; custody and custodial care of the Library buildings; special clothing; cleaning, laundering and repair of uniforms; preservation of motion pictures in the custody of the Library; operation and maintenance of the American Folklife Center in the Library; preparation and distribution of catalog records and other publications of the Library; hire or purchase of one passenger motor vehicle; and expenses of the Library of Congress Trust Fund Board not properly chargeable to the income of any trust fund held by the Board, $421,607,000, of which not more than $6,000,000 shall be derived from collections credited to this appropriation during fiscal year 2016, and shall remain available until expended, under the Act of June 28, 1902 (chapter 1301; 32 Stat. 480; 2 U.S.C. 150) and not more than $350,000 shall be derived from collections during fiscal year 2016 and shall remain available until expended for the development and maintenance of an international legal information database and activities related thereto: Provided, That the Library of Congress may not obligate or expend any funds derived from collections under the Act of June 28, 1902, in excess of the amount authorized for obligation or expenditure in appropriations Acts: Provided further, That the total amount available for obligation shall be reduced by the amount by which collections are less than $6,350,000: Provided further, That, of the total amount appropriated, not more than $12,000 may be expended, on the certification of the Librarian of Congress, in connection with official representation and reception expenses for the Overseas Field Offices: Provided further, That of the total amount appropriated, $8,231,000 shall remain available until expended for the digital collections and educational curricula program: Provided further, That, of the total amount appropriated, $750,000 shall remain available until expended for upgrade of the Legislative Branch Financial Management System.

COPYRIGHT OFFICE

SALARIES AND EXPENSES

For all necessary expenses of the Copyright Office, $56,490,000, of which not more than $30,000,000, to remain available until expended, shall be derived from collections credited to this appropriation during fiscal year 2016 under section 708(d) of title 17, United States Code: Provided, That the Copyright Office may not obligate or expend any funds derived from collections under such section, in excess of the amount authorized for obligation or expenditure in appropriations Acts: Provided further, That not more than $5,777,000 shall be derived from collections during fiscal year 2016 under sections 111(d)(2), 119(b)(2), 803(e), 1005, and 1316 of such title: Provided further, That the total amount available for obligation shall be reduced by the amount by which collections are less than $35,777,000: Provided further, That not more than $100,000 of the amount appropriated is available for the maintenance of an ''International Copyright Institute'' in the Copyright Office of the Library of Congress for the purpose of training nationals of developing countries in intellectual property laws and policies: Provided further, That not more than $6,500 may be expended, on the certification of the Librarian of Congress, in connection with official representation and reception expenses for activities of the International Copyright Institute and for copyright delegations, visitors, and seminars: Provided further, That, notwithstanding any provision of chapter 8 of title 17, United States Code, any amounts made available under this heading which are attributable to royalty fees and payments received by the Copyright Office pursuant to sections 111, 119, and chapter 10 of such title may be used for the costs incurred in the administration of the Copyright Royalty Judges program, with the exception of the costs of salaries and benefits for the Copyright Royalty Judges and staff under section 802(e).

CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE

SALARIES AND EXPENSES

For necessary expenses to carry out the provisions of section 203 of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 (2 U.S.C. 166) and to revise and extend the Annotated Constitution of the United States of America, $106,945,000: Provided, That no part of such amount may be used to pay any salary or expense in connection with any publication, or preparation of material therefor (except the Digest of Public General Bills), to be issued by the Library of Congress unless such publication has obtained prior approval of either the Committee on House Administration of the House of Representatives or the Committee on Rules and Administration of the Senate.

BOOKS FOR THE BLIND AND PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED

SALARIES AND EXPENSES

For salaries and expenses to carry out the Act of March 3, 1931 (chapter 400; 46 Stat. 1487; 2 U.S.C. 135a), $50,248,000: Provided, That, of the total amount appropriated, $650,000 shall be available to contract to provide newspapers to blind and physically handicapped residents at no cost to the individual.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISION

REIMBURSABLE AND REVOLVING FUND ACTIVITIES

SEC. 1201. (a) IN GENERAL.—For fiscal year 2016, the obligational authority of the Library of Congress for the activities described in subsection (b) may not exceed $186,015,000.

(b) ACTIVITIES.—The activities referred to in subsection (a) are reimbursable and revolving fund activities that are funded from sources other than appropriations to the Library in appropriations Acts for the legislative branch.

GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

CONGRESSIONAL PUBLISHING

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

For authorized publishing of congressional information and the distribution of congressional information in any format; expenses necessary for preparing the semimonthly and session index to the Congressional Record, as authorized by law (section 902 of title 44, United States Code); publishing of Government publications authorized by law to be distributed to Members of Congress; and publishing and distribution of Government publications authorized by law to be distributed without charge to the recipient, $79,736,000: Provided, That this appropriation shall not be available for paper copies of the permanent edition of the Congressional Record for individual Representatives, Resident Commissioners or Delegates authorized under section 906 of title 44, United States Code: Provided further, That this appropriation shall be available for the payment of obligations incurred under the appropriations for similar purposes for preceding fiscal years: Provided further, That, notwithstanding the 2-year limitation under section 718 of title 44, United States Code, none of the funds appropriated or made available under this Act or any other Act for printing and binding and related services provided to Congress under chapter 7 of title 44, United States Code, may be expended to print a document, report, or publication after the 27-month period beginning on the date that such document, report, or publication is authorized by Congress to be printed, unless Congress reauthorizes such printing in accordance with section 718 of title 44, United States Code: Provided further, That any unobligated or unexpended balances in this account or accounts for similar purposes for preceding fiscal years may be transferred to the Government Publishing Office business operations revolving fund for carrying out the purposes of this heading, subject to the approval of the Committees on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and Senate: Provided further, That, notwithstanding sections 901, 902, and 906 of title 44, United States Code, this appropriation may be used to prepare indexes to the Congressional Record on only a monthly and session basis.

PUBLIC INFORMATION PROGRAMS OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF DOCUMENTS

SALARIES AND EXPENSES

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

For expenses of the public information programs of the Office of Superintendent of Documents necessary to provide for the cataloging and indexing of Government publications and their distribution to the public, Members of Congress, other Government agencies, and designated depository and international exchange libraries as authorized by law, $30,500,000: Provided, That amounts of not more than $2,000,000 from current year appropriations are authorized for producing and disseminating Congressional serial sets and other related publications for fiscal years 2014 and 2015 to depository and other designated libraries: Provided further, That any unobligated or unexpended balances in this account or accounts for similar purposes for preceding fiscal years may be transferred to the Government Publishing Office business operations revolving fund for carrying out the purposes of this heading, subject to the approval of the Committees on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and Senate.

GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE BUSINESS OPERATIONS REVOLVING FUND

For payment to the Government Publishing Office Business Operations Revolving Fund, $8,764,000, to remain available until expended, for information technology development and facilities repair: Provided, That the Government Publishing Office is hereby authorized to make such expenditures, within the limits of funds available and in accordance with law, and to make such contracts and commitments without regard to fiscal year limitations as provided by section 9104 of title 31, United States Code, as may be necessary in carrying out the programs and purposes set forth in the budget for the current fiscal year for the Government Publishing Office business operations revolving fund: Provided further, That not more than $7,500 may be expended on the certification of the Director of the Government Publishing Office in connection with official representation and reception expenses: Provided further, That the business operations revolving fund shall be available for the hire or purchase of not more than 12 passenger motor vehicles: Provided further, That expenditures in connection with travel expenses of the advisory councils to the Director of the Government Publishing Office shall be deemed necessary to carry out the provisions of title 44, United States Code: Provided further, That the business operations revolving fund shall be

available for temporary or intermittent services under section 3109(b) of title 5, United States Code, but at rates for individuals not more than the daily equivalent of the annual rate of basic pay for level V of the Executive Schedule under section 5316 of such title: Provided further, That activities financed through the business operations revolving fund may provide information in any format: Provided further, That the business operations revolving fund and the funds provided under the heading ''Public Information Programs of the Superintendent of Documents'' may not be used for contracted security services at GPO's passport facility in the District of Columbia.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

SALARIES AND EXPENSES

For necessary expenses of the Government Accountability Office, including not more than $12,500 to be expended on the certification of the Comptroller General of the United States in connection with official representation and reception expenses; temporary or intermittent services under section 3109(b) of title 5, United States Code, but at rates for individuals not more than the daily equivalent of the annual rate of basic pay for level IV of the Executive Schedule under section 5315 of such title; hire of one passenger motor vehicle; advance payments in foreign countries in accordance with section 3324 of title 31, United States Code; benefits comparable to those payable under sections 901(5), (6), and (8) of the Foreign Service Act of 1980 (22 U.S.C. 4081(5), (6), and (8)); and under regulations prescribed by the Comptroller General of the United States, rental of living quarters in foreign countries, $525,000,000: Provided, That, in addition, $25,450,000 of payments received under sections 782, 3521, and 9105 of title 31, United States Code, shall be available without fiscal year limitation: Provided further, That this appropriation and appropriations for administrative expenses of any other department or agency which is a member of the National Intergovernmental Audit Forum or a Regional Intergovernmental Audit Forum shall be available to finance an appropriate share of either Forum's costs as determined by the respective Forum, including necessary travel expenses of non-Federal participants: Provided further, That payments hereunder to the Forum may be credited as reimbursements to any appropriation from which costs involved are initially financed.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISION

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT DETAILS

SEC. 1301. Section 731 of title 31, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(k) FEDERAL GOVERNMENT DETAILS.—The activities of the Government Accountability Office may, in the reasonable discretion of the Comptroller General, be carried out by sending or receiving details of personnel to other branches or agencies of the Federal Government, on a reimbursable, partially-reimbursable, or nonreimbursable basis.''.

OPEN WORLD LEADERSHIP CENTER TRUST FUND

For a payment to the Open World Leadership Center Trust Fund for financing activities of the Open World Leadership Center under section 313 of the Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 2001 (2 U.S.C. 1151), $5,700,000: Provided, That funds made available to support Russian participants shall only be used for those engaging in free market development, humanitarian activities, and civic engagement, and shall not be used for officials of the central government of Russia.

JOHN C. STENNIS CENTER FOR PUBLIC SERVICE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

For payment to the John C. Stennis Center for Public Service Development Trust Fund established under section 116 of the John C. Stennis Center for Public Service Training and Development Act (2 U.S.C. 1105), $430,000.

TITLE II

GENERAL PROVISIONS

MAINTENANCE AND CARE OF PRIVATE VEHICLES

SEC. 201. No part of the funds appropriated in this Act shall be used for the maintenance or care of private vehicles, except for emergency assistance and cleaning as may be provided under regulations relating to parking facilities for the House of Representatives issued by the Committee on House Administration and for the Senate issued by the Committee on Rules and Administration.

FISCAL YEAR LIMITATION

SEC. 202. No part of the funds appropriated in this Act shall remain available for obligation beyond fiscal year 2016 unless expressly so provided in this Act.

RATES OF COMPENSATION AND DESIGNATION

SEC. 203. Whenever in this Act any office or position not specifically established by the Legislative Pay Act of 1929 (46 Stat. 32 et seq.) is appropriated for or the rate of compensation or designation of any office or position appropriated for is different from that specifically established by such Act, the rate of compensation and the designation in this Act shall be the permanent law with respect thereto: Provided, That the provisions in this Act for the various items of official expenses of Members, officers, and committees of the Senate and House of Representatives, and clerk hire for Senators and Members of the House of Representatives shall be the permanent law with respect thereto.

CONSULTING SERVICES

SEC. 204. The expenditure of any appropriation under this Act for any consulting service through procurement contract, under section 3109 of title 5, United States Code, shall be limited to those contracts where such expenditures are a matter of public record and available for public inspection, except where otherwise provided under existing law, or under existing Executive order issued under existing law.

COSTS OF LBFMC

SEC. 205. Amounts available for administrative expenses of any legislative branch entity which participates in the Legislative Branch Financial Managers Council (LBFMC) established by charter on March 26, 1996, shall be available to finance an appropriate share of LBFMC costs as determined by the LBFMC, except that the total LBFMC costs to be shared among all participating legislative branch entities (in such allocations among the entities as the entities may determine) may not exceed $2,000.

LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE

SEC. 206. For fiscal year 2016 and each fiscal year thereafter, the Architect of the Capitol, in consultation with the District of Columbia, is authorized to maintain and improve the landscape features, excluding streets, in Square 580 up to the beginning of I–395.

LIMITATION ON TRANSFERS

SEC. 207. None of the funds made available in this Act may be transferred to any department, agency, or instrumentality of the United States Government, except pursuant to a transfer made by, or transfer authority provided in, this Act or any other appropriation Act.

GUIDED TOURS OF THE CAPITOL

SEC. 208. (a) Except as provided in subsection (b), none of the funds made available to the Architect of the Capitol in this Act may be used to eliminate or restrict guided tours of the United States Capitol which are led by employees and interns of offices of Members of Congress and other offices of the House of Representatives and Senate.

(b) At the direction of the Capitol Police Board, or at the direction of the Architect of the Capitol with the approval of the Capitol Police Board, guided tours of the United States Capitol which are led by employees and interns described in subsection (a) may be suspended temporarily or otherwise subject to restriction for security or related reasons to the same extent as guided tours of the United States Capitol which are led by the Architect of the Capitol.

BATTERY RECHARGING STATIONS FOR PRIVATELY OWNED VEHICLES IN PARKING AREAS UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF THE LIBRARIAN OF CONGRESS AT NO NET COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

SEC. 209. (a) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term ''covered employee'' means—

(1) an employee of the Library of Congress; or

(2) any other individual who is authorized to park in any parking area under the jurisdiction of the Library of Congress on the Library of Congress buildings and grounds.

(b) AUTHORITY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (3), funds appropriated to the Architect of the Capitol under the heading ''Capitol Power Plant'' under the heading ''ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL'' in any fiscal year are available to construct, operate, and maintain on a reimbursable basis battery recharging stations in parking areas under the jurisdiction of the Library of Congress on Library of Congress buildings and grounds for use by privately owned vehicles used by covered employees.

(2) VENDORS AUTHORIZED.—In carrying out paragraph (1), the Architect of the Capitol may use one or more vendors on a commission basis.

(3) APPROVAL OF CONSTRUCTION.—The Architect of the Capitol may construct or direct the construction of battery recharging stations described under paragraph (1) after—

(A) submission of written notice detailing the numbers and locations of the battery recharging stations to the Joint Committee on the Library; and

(B) approval by that Committee.

(c) FEES AND CHARGES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (2), the Architect of the Capitol shall charge fees or charges for electricity provided to covered employees sufficient to cover the costs to the Architect of the Capitol to carry out this section, including costs to any vendors or other costs associated with maintaining the battery charging stations.

(2) APPROVAL OF FEES OR CHARGES.—The Architect of the Capitol may establish and adjust fees or charges under paragraph (1) after—

(A) submission of written notice detailing the amount of the fee or charge to be established or adjusted to the Joint Committee on the Library; and

(B) approval by that Committee.

(d) DEPOSIT AND AVAILABILITY OF FEES, CHARGES, AND COMMISSIONS.—Any fees, charges, or commissions collected by the Architect of the Capitol under this section shall be—

(1) deposited in the Treasury to the credit of the appropriations account described under subsection (b); and

(2) available for obligation without further appropriation during the fiscal year collected.

(e) REPORTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 30 days after the end of each fiscal year, the Architect of the Capitol shall submit a report on the financial administration and cost recovery of activities under this section with respect to that fiscal year to the Joint Committee on the Library and the Committees on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and Senate.

(2) AVOIDING SUBSIDY.—

(A) DETERMINATION.—Not later than 3 years after the date of enactment of this Act and every 3 years thereafter, the Architect of the Capitol shall submit a report to the Joint Committee on the Library determining whether covered employees using battery charging stations as authorized by this section are receiving a subsidy from the taxpayers.

(B) MODIFICATION OF RATES AND FEES.—If a determination is made under subparagraph (A) that a subsidy is being received, the Architect of

the Capitol shall submit a plan to the Joint Committee on the Library on how to update the program to ensure no subsidy is being received. If the Joint Committee does not act on the plan within 60 days, the Architect of the Capitol shall take appropriate steps to increase rates or fees to ensure reimbursement for the cost of the program consistent with an appropriate schedule for amortization, to be charged to those using the charging stations.

(f) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall apply with respect to fiscal year 2016 and each fiscal year thereafter.

COST OF LIVING ADJUSTMENT

SEC. 210. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no adjustment shall be made under section 601(a) of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 (2 U.S.C. 4501) (relating to cost of living adjustments for Members of Congress) during fiscal year 2016.

This Act may be cited as the ''Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 2016''.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported amendment be withdrawn; that the McConnell substitute amendment, which is the text of H.J. Res. 75, be agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be read a third time and the Senate vote on passage of the bill with no intervening action or debate.

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

The committee-reported amendment was withdrawn.

The amendment (No. 2922) in the nature of a substitute was agreed to, as follows:

(Purpose: Making further continuing appropriations for fiscal year 2016, and for other purposes)

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

That the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2016 (Public Law 114–53) is amended by striking the date specified in section 106(3) and inserting ''December 16, 2015''.

This Act may be cited as the ''Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2016''.

The amendment was ordered to be engrossed, and the bill to be read a third time.

The bill was read the third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

The bill (H.R. 2250), as amended, was passed.

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

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the title amendment at the desk be agreed to.

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

The amendment (No. 2923) was agreed to, as follows:

To amend the title to read:

''Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2016''.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to finish my remarks.

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

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, today I complete the series of floor speeches on religious freedom that I began in September. My purpose in this series is to present the full story of religious freedom in the hope that we may better understand and appreciate it and draw guidance for the future. Charting a path forward requires understanding where we have been and taking stock of where we are right now.

The story of religious freedom, as I have laid it out, shows that we must choose between two starkly different paths. The story begins with religious freedom itself and why it is uniquely important and requires special protection. I said in September:

> No decision is more fundamental to human existence than the decision we make regarding our relationship to the Divine. No act of government can be more intrusive or more invasive of individual autonomy and free will than the act of compelling a person to violate his or her sincerely chosen religious beliefs.

The story continues with the central place of religious freedom in America's identity. At no time in world history has religious freedom been such an integral part of a nation's origin and character. The seeds were planted centuries before the actual founding of this country with one religious community after another coming to these shores to freely practice their faith.

When Congress enacted the International Religious Freedom Act less than two decades ago, we declared that religious freedom ''undergirds the very origin and existence of the United States.''

The story of religious freedom in America includes understanding both its status and its substance. In October, I explained how the status of religious freedom can be summarized as both inalienable and preeminent. Religious freedom is inalienable because, as the Declaration of Independence asserts, it comes from God, not from government. And because it is endowed, that is part of our very humanity. Religious freedom is preeminent or, as James Madison put it, ''precedent, both in order of time and in degree of obligation to the claims of civil society.''

I also explained that the substance of religious freedom can be understood in terms of its depth, or what it includes, and its breadth, or to whom it applies. Religious freedom, for example, includes much more than religious belief or speech. In fact, protecting in law both religious belief and the exercise of that belief preceded the First Amendment by 150 years. Madison again gives us guidance to finding the exercise of religion as the freely chosen manner of discharging the duty an individual believes he or she owes to God. This includes both belief and behavior in public and in private, individually and collectively. The substance of religious freedom also includes its breadth of application to all human beings.

The First Amendment protects not certain exercises of religion or the exercise of religion by certain persons, but the free exercise of religion itself.

As I mentioned, Congress unanimously enacted the International Religious Freedom Act. The vote in this body was 98 to 0, and 21 Senators serving today—12 Republicans and 9 Democrats—voted for this legislation, as did Vice President BIDEN and Secretary of State John Kerry, who were serving here at that time. That law declares our religious freedom to be a universal human right, a pillar of our Nation, and a fundamental freedom. This is the path of religious freedom on which we have traveled for three centuries, before a very different path emerged.

In November, I outlined how the courts have begun to distort the First Amendment's protection for religious freedom. America's Founders included a narrow prohibition on government establishment of religion as a support for the broad individual freedom to exercise religion. Since the mid-20th century, however, courts have instead expanded the establishment clause into a virtual ban on religion in public life and narrowed the free exercise clause so that government may more easily restrict the practice of religion itself.

I also examined how the courts, the Obama administration, and State legislatures are contributing to attacks on religious freedom right here in America. The common theme in these attacks is that far from being special, religious freedom must yield to other values or political objectives. Even worse, some are arguing that religious freedom is actually something negative that should be limited or even suppressed. These attacks not only target particular exercises of religion but undermine religious freedom itself.

Rather than inalienable, these attacks would turn religious freedom into something granted or restricted by the government at its whim. Instead of preeminent, these attacks would reduce religious freedom to something optional and subservient. Rather than something deep and broad, these attacks would turn religious freedom into something shallow and narrow.

State courts, for example, have imposed heavy fines on business owners who decline, based on their religious beliefs, to provide services such as photography, flowers or catering for same-sex marriages. The decision by these business owners did not prevent anyone from getting married or from having the wedding they chose. Other photographers, florists, and bakers gladly stepped up to do business. The only real effect of these fines was to punish these individuals for exercising their religious beliefs. By punishing the exercise of religion itself, these courts are saying that religious freedom must necessarily yield to other political priorities.

ObamaCare made the same two-part attack on religious freedom but on a much larger scale. First, far from trying to accommodate religious freedom in developing ObamaCare or its implementing regulations, neither Congress

nor the Obama administration gave religious freedom any consideration whatsoever. This is appalling in several different ways. Not only does it reflect a callous attitude toward this fundamental right, but it ignores the Religious Freedom Restoration Act's command that Federal law properly accommodate religious freedom. The only way to avoid that requirement is for Congress explicitly to exempt a statute from RFRA's standards. Congress did not do so.

But consider this. On January 15, 2010, President Obama issued his first Religious Freedom Day proclamation. He reaffirmed ''our nation's enduring commitment to the universal human right of religious freedom.'' Just 2 months later, he signed into law the statute that so blatantly ignored and would be used to undermine that very universal human right.

The second way that ObamaCare undermines religious freedom is by imposing significant burdens on the actual exercise of religion. The Department of Health and Human Services, for example, tried to force business owners to provide insurance coverage for methods of birth control that violate their religious beliefs. Thankfully, last year the Supreme Court said the Obama administration should have more properly accommodated religious freedom.

Another case is now before the Supreme Court in which the Obama administration is demanding that a religious organization be forced to participate in providing insurance coverage for practices that violate their religious beliefs. The Obama administration, with its army of smart lawyers and deep well of taxpayer dollars, is fighting tooth and nail to make sure its political objectives quash religious freedom.

Last week, I outlined the benefits that religion and religious freedom provide. It is essential to forming and securing our basic rights. Religion was the engine driving great social movements, such as abolition and civil rights. It motivates significantly greater contributions by individuals to charities of all kinds and inspires many of the largest charitable organizations in the country. But religion is not simply beneficial to society; it is an indispensable feature of any free government. Without religion and the moral instruction it provides, freedom falters and democracy all too easily dissolves into tyranny.

In the 18th Century, the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780 declared that ''the happiness of a people and the good order and preservation of civil government essentially depend upon piety, religion, and morality.''

In the 21st Century, Harvard professor Mary Ann Glendon argues persuasively that religious freedom reduces societal violence and correlates with democratic longevity.

The story of religious freedom that I have offered over the last few months presents a choice that we must make as we consider the way forward. On one path, religious freedom is an inalienable and preeminent right of all people; on the other path, it is an uncertain and optional possibility for some people. On one path the government must accommodate religious freedom; on the other path religious freedom must accommodate the government. One path is consistent with our history, founding, character, commitments, and an example to the rest of the world. The other path rejects that history, turns its back on our commitments, and abandons human rights in favor of shifting political agendas.

Here is how I put it in one of my speeches last month:

> Subjugating religious freedom beliefs to government decrees is not the price of citizenship. To the contrary, respecting and honoring the fundamental rights of all Americans is the price our government pays to enjoy the continued consent of the American people.

We must decide whether we still believe what our Nation, our people, and our leaders have said and done. James Madison wrote that religious freedom is an inalienable right that takes precedence over the claims of civil society.

Thomas Jefferson said that religious freedom is ''the most inalienable and sacred of all human rights.''

Franklin Roosevelt said that religious freedom is a fundamental and essential human freedom.

The United States voted for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, signed the Helsinki Accords in 1975, and ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1992.

Each of these identifies religious freedom as a fundamental human right that includes both belief and behavior in public and in private, individually and collectively.

Congress enacted the Religious Freedom Restoration Act almost unanimously in 1994. I should know; I was the principal advocate for it. It sets a tough standard for allowing government interference with religious freedom and offers this protection for all exercises of religion by all people. Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives, adherents of different faiths—everyone joined hands on these basic principles. And I might add that HATCH and Kennedy joined hands as well.

In the 2013 Religious Freedom Day proclamation, President Obama said that religious freedom is an essential part of human dignity. This is the path on which America began, the path America's Founders embraced, the path that all three branches of government have recognized, and the path we have reaffirmed countless times.

The burden is on those who believe that we should now leave this path. Those who no longer believe that religious freedom is an inalienable right and an essential human freedom should say so. Those who no longer believe that, as our statutes and treaties assert, religious freedom is a fundamental right and a pillar of our Nation should be honest and up front about it. Those who believe that the shifting political priorities of the day trump religious freedom should candidly make their case.

In the last week, since the terrorist attack in San Bernardino, we have glimpsed some of the ugliness that is down the path where politics trumps religious freedom. Many of our leaders expressed support and offered thoughts and prayers for the victims and their families. Those expressions were met by some with disdain, ridicule, and scoffing.

Reporters, bloggers, activists, and even Members of Congress sent the message that thoughts and prayers are really not much of anything and in any event are legitimate only if they come from those who want more gun control.

Finally, I want to highlight for my colleagues another source of guidance in choosing the future path for religious freedom. In June 1988, the most diverse group of leaders in American history presented the Williamsburg Charter to the Nation. Its purpose was to reaffirm religious freedom for all citizens, to set out the place of religious freedom in American public life, and to offer guiding principles for the future. Former Presidents Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford and the chairmen of the two political parties signed it. The president of the AFL–CIO and the chairman of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce signed it. Presidents of universities and bar associations signed it. Leaders of faith communities, including the National Council of Churches and National Association of Evangelicals, Seventh-day Adventists, the Synagogue Council of America, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints signed it.

What could possibly unite such a disparate group? It would have to be something too general to be useful—perhaps something like sunshine or friendship—or something so profound that we simply must sit up and pay attention. The first principles of religious freedom affirmed by the Williamsburg Charter are these:

First, religious freedom is an inalienable right that is ''premised upon the inviolable dignity of the human person. It is the foundation of, and is integrally related to, all other rights and freedoms secured by the Constitution.''

Second, the ''chief menace to religious liberty today is the expanding power of government control over personal behavior and the institutions of society, when the government acts not so much in deliberate hostility to, but in reckless disregard of, communal belief and personal conscience.''

Third, limiting religious liberty ''is allowable only where the State has borne a heavy burden of proof that the limitation is justified—not by any ordinary public interest, but by a supreme

public necessity—and that no less restrictive alternative to limitation exists.''

These are the principles that should guide our way forward.

Religious freedom is inalienable. Religious freedom is threatened when government either directly burdens or fails to accommodate it. Government burdens on religious freedom must be the least restrictive means of achieving a compelling government purpose or supreme public necessity.

These principles inform proper resolution of the challenges that religious freedom will certainly face ahead.

Some are calling for government to revoke or deny such things as tax-exempt status, certifications, or licenses for religious organizations with certain beliefs. I already mentioned how some courts are using anti-discrimination statutes to trump religious freedom.

Applying the principles I have discussed would require the government to make the case that such impositions are the least restrictive way to further a supreme public necessity.

Another challenge will be in the development, rather than the implementation, of anti-discrimination laws. Applying the appropriate principles requires that such legislation properly accommodate religious freedom.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, for example, includes a religious exemption. I supported the Employment Non-Discrimination Act in the 113th Congress because, in addition to incorporating that exemption, it also prohibited retaliation against those who qualify for the exemption. My State of Utah this year enacted an anti-discrimination statute that similarly included a robust exemption for religious organizations.

Earlier this year, however, Senators introduced the Equality Act, which would prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity across several areas such as employment, housing, and education. It not only fails to incorporate the existing title VII religious exemption, it contains no accommodation for religious freedom at all.

This is an example of the path that rejects religious freedom as even worthy of consideration. Such legislation should not become law unless it properly accommodates religious freedom.

This is a time for choosing. The story of religious freedom is both an inspiring narrative and a cautionary tale. It brings to mind the inscription on a statue fronting the National Archives that ''eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.''

The heritage of religious freedom that took centuries to build could be dismantled in a fraction of that time. The right path means balance of accommodation; the wrong path means exclusion and suppression. The way forward requires us to choose the right path to make sure our actions speak louder than our words.

Mr. President, I apologize for going over by 5 minutes.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 4:30 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 3:06 p.m., recessed until 4:30 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. TILLIS).

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASSIDY). The Senator from North Carolina.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that morning business be extended until 6 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

CAMP LIBERTY REFUGEES

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, the President of the United States has fully refused to acknowledge the depth and prevalence of the savagery of Islamic terrorism, and he has refused to offer and implement a strategy to permanently defeat it.

We are all too familiar with the consequences of Islamic terrorism: Fort Hood, Boston, Oklahoma, Chattanooga, Ankara, Mali, Beirut, Paris, and more recently, San Bernardino.

While the President was in Paris recently, he lectured the American people not on the moral necessity to destroy ISIS but instead on our supposed lack of compassion and understanding regarding his latest plan to resettle 10,000 Middle Eastern refugees in America.

I represent the great State of North Carolina. It is a State that has provided refuge to those who have fought and died on America's side—the South Vietnamese, Laotians, Montagnards, and Cambodians. But the President's remarks were disingenuous, because what he didn't tell the American people is that his own FBI Director has warned of America's inability to properly vet the refugees—an inability that only requires a 1 in 10,000 chance to produce a catastrophic and tragic result.

Instead of acknowledging these well-founded concerns, the President hectored the critics of his plan—Republicans, Democrats, and everyone else in between—even after French authorities told him several members of the terrorist cell got into France masquerading as Syrian refugees. Syrian refugees with fake passports were caught trying to reach America through Honduras, and Syrians have been arrested trying to cross into Texas.

Let me tell you why this administration's rebuke is indicative of a foreign policy that is completely detached from reality. On October 29, 23 refugees died in a rocket attack at Camp Liberty in Iraq. Camp Liberty is a former U.S. military base outside of Baghdad that is home to more than 2,000 Iranian refugees who are members of the main opposition group to the ayatollahs in Tehran. The refugees at Camp Liberty have been fully vetted by American intelligence services. Eighty Iranian-built rockets struck the camp that has been home to the People's Mojahedin, an organization that has tried to fight the mullahs in Tehran. The ayatollahs want the leaders and the families of these inhabitants at Camp Liberty eliminated, and their friends in Baghdad are doing their bidding.

The men, women, and children at Camp Liberty have suffered numerous attacks resulting in hundreds of casualties. Nor has Camp Liberty, which was supposed to be a temporary home before the refugees were settled outside of Iraq, met the most basic humanitarian needs. They lack clean water, decent food, medical supplies, and decent living facilities; and every single day they go to bed at night worried if it is their last day on Earth.

The Obama administration pledged to protect these refugees who put their lives and their children's lives on the line for freedom. Yet it has done absolutely nothing to keep America's word. Why take in unvetted Syrian refugees and not a handful of refugees from Iran that are fully vetted? To curry favor with the same regime that killed American soldiers during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn? I hope not.

President Obama has willfully ignored 40 years of hostility from Tehran. If the President does not recognize that we are at war, the ayatollahs certainly do. They are the chief sponsors of global terror. They have imprisoned American journalists. They have tested long-range missiles. They just completed another test in violation of international treaties over the last couple of weeks. They have never stepped back from their desire to obliterate Israel and to destroy the United States.

This is the Obama doctrine. The President sees American foreign policy as the problem. He views Israel as an obstacle to peace, and Iran is treated as another oppressed constituency with legitimate grievances against the West, so much so that when millions of Iranians took to the streets against the mullahs, President Obama did nothing and said nothing. The old American alliances are collapsing in confusion and fear, and the only answer from the administration seems to be to clear Iran's path to a nuclear weapon.

Section 1227 of this year's National Defense Reauthorization Act memorializes Congress's desire to see that our friends at Camp Liberty are protected and relocated outside of Iraq in accordance with international conventions.

The children of Camp Liberty are dying and the bad guys are watching.

They are watching to see if the President of the United States tosses aside another American friend, clearing the way for a new Persian empire—a tyrannical empire armed with nuclear weapons.

I will end with the thoughts of Natan Sharansky, a survivor of the Soviet Gulag. He said:

> Today an American President has once again sought to achieve stability by removing sanctions against a brutal dictatorship without demanding anything in return. . . . We are at a historic crossroads, the United States can either appease a criminal regime—one that supports global terror, relentlessly threatens to eliminate Israel and executes more political prisoners than any other—or stand firm in demanding change in its behavior.

I don't think a lot of people know about Camp Liberty, but I want you all to know that there are 2,000 people over there who were fighting for freedom in Iran. The American people committed to protecting them and to getting them to a place where they can be safe. These are refugees who are fully vetted. They have gone through all the processes that we are wondering and worrying whether the Syrian refugees can. Let's show good faith by fulfilling our promise to the people at Camp Liberty and making sure that the American people know and the people at Camp Liberty know that we care about them and we wish them the very best that they can achieve—and that is not in a camp somewhere in Iraq.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TRIBUTE TO GOVERNOR TERRY BRANSTAD

Mrs. ERNST. Mr. President, I rise today to honor my good friend and the Governor of Iowa, Terry Branstad. Monday marks his historic milestone as the Nation's longest serving Governor with 7,642 days in office working for our great State of Iowa. Our Governor has devoted his life to public service and has worked tirelessly through his 99-county tour to ensure that Iowans' voices are heard.

I have also had the great honor of serving under the Governor during my time in the Iowa Army National Guard. Through the years, Governor Branstad and I have had countless conversations about the military and our veterans. We both know these men and women are well trained and have selflessly sacrificed in defense of our freedoms and our way of life. That is why we must ensure that our veterans are properly prepared to transition back to civilian life.

As a veteran himself, Governor Branstad recognizes just that. It was Governor Branstad who led significant efforts to help veterans find work across Iowa, following their launch of the Home Base Iowa public-private initiative in November of 2013. Since then, Home Base Iowa has succeeded in helping over 1,500 veterans in Iowa find work, getting 900 businesses to join the Home Base Iowa initiative. There are also 24 Home Base Iowa communities around the State, and we have 16 educational institutions that are working with the initiative and have been deemed Certified Higher Academic Military Partners. All that great participation and success is thanks to the Governor's leadership.

Through the years, our State has been incredibly fortunate to have a Governor who truly cares about the people and our veterans. The fact that he continues to wear his uniform for various veterans' events in Iowa further illustrates his support, his leadership, and his commitment to our men and women in uniform. Our Governor is someone who truly cares about serving others, and we are incredibly fortunate to have a leader such as he.

In light of his major and well-deserved milestone, we honor Governor Branstad's steadfast commitment and leadership to the people of Iowa.

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

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

IRS REPORTING REGULATION ON CHARITABLE DONATIONS

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I rise to alert the Senate and all of my colleagues to yet another—yes, yet another—egregious action by the Internal Revenue Service, one that will affect every charity, every church, every nonprofit, and the communities they work so hard to serve. I emphasize ''another'' because it seems that the IRS continues a march toward regulations and practices that target and burden hard-working Americans.

Let me just recap. First, we learned that the IRS had released confidential tax return information on companies the IRS believed opposed the administration. Then we uncovered that the IRS had illegally targeted groups whose views differed from the White House, followed by an extensive effort to hide information on these actions—i.e., Lois Lerner, her so-called ''lost e-mails,'' which weren't ever really lost. It was true injustice to law-abiding organizations and American citizens, which is why I should not have been surprised—but I was—to learn of the IRS's latest scheme.

Hot off the press is a new IRS proposed regulation that needlessly targets charitable contributions. Right now, when you make a contribution of $250 or more, charities will send you a ''written acknowledgement'' confirming the details of the donation, including the amount of the donation. The taxpayer uses this acknowledgement to document his or her tax deductions should there be any question.

Most charities take the time to send out a written confirmation of the donation as part of their thank-you to the donor. It is simple, it is inexpensive, and it builds good will. In short, it works for the taxpayer and also for the charity. That is it—a straightforward, commonsense method to confirm a donation was made, and no one, not even the IRS, argues that it is not working well.

But now the IRS has proposed a new method to substantiate donations—a method that could do great harm to the charitable sector and give the IRS more tools to go after taxpayers they may not like, as we know they have done before. The IRS wants to set up a new, more formal system where the charity would have to gather information about its donors, keep that information, and—here is the rub—report the information to the IRS.

What type of information are we talking about? The return would include the charity's name and address, the donor's name and address and—here is the scary piece—the donor's Social Security number. Again, all of this new information would have to be sent to the donor and the IRS and kept on file by the charity at considerable cost. Even more disturbing, the IRS would store, maintain, and use this information in case the donor is audited.

Although this is described as an option, given the IRS's recent track record, do we really trust the agency to store this information and not use it for other purposes? I, for one, do not. I don't think we can trust them with a new source of data on donors. We must do all we can to prevent the IRS from gaining access to this sensitive data.

I am also alarmed at the thought of whether the IRS can properly safeguard this information because the agency has demonstrated zero capacity to keep similar data out of the hands of people who commit fraud, and thieves. Charities and churches that routinely receive thousands of dollars from their supporters now become greater targets for people to commit fraud.

Earlier this year, the IRS admitted that it had been hacked and private taxpayer information had been compromised. If they can do it to the IRS, you had better believe they can do it to your local nonprofit. And while the IRS today says this rule as proposed would simply be voluntary, suffer no illusion: The IRS will eventually move to make this a mandatory requirement.

Charitable organizations are also speaking out against the IRS proposal. They understand the chilling—chilling—effect this would have on

their donors, but, more importantly, on the communities they serve.

Tim Delaney, president and CEO of the National Council of Nonprofits, recently wrote:

> The IRS proposal would open the door for scam artists. . . . Nonprofits have neither the financial resources nor sufficient staffing to combat hackers who will see an easy source for Social Security information. This also creates a liability nightmare for innocent nonprofits. . . . To be asked to share their address, their credit card number and their Social Security number all in the same place would be enough to scare even the most committed donor to decline to give.

Tim Delaney has aptly summarized this pending and serious problem. He poses very legitimate concerns, especially regarding how scam artists might operate, explaining:

> Imposters' phone scripts will go something like this: ''Hi . . . I'm working for several nonprofits here in Kansas to make sure that generous donors like you get full credit for your wonderful contributions. . . . The nonprofits asked me to thank you for your generosity and confirm your name and address. . . . Also, the IRS has a new regulation that nonprofits need your Social Security number so we can send you a form confirming your contribution in case you get audited. What's your Social Security number so we can send you the form?''

Sadly, many people who want to be sure to support their charity will give the scam artists exactly what they want.

To protect the mission of our nonprofit community and the taxpayers who share their hard-earned dollars with those in need, I have introduced legislation to block this regulation and to maintain current law. The Protecting Charitable Contributions Act would maintain current IRS rules governing the substantiation of charitable contributions, and prohibit the IRS from issuing, revising, or completing any new regulation that would alter the existing rules. This just makes sense. And I would think the IRS would agree when in their own description of the proposal they state that the present system works effectively.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation and to join me in stopping this dangerous and unneeded proposal from moving forward.

I urge all those who play a role in supporting nonprofits to go to the IRS Web site before December 16 to provide written comments to the IRS about this proposal. Yep, the IRS would like to have your comments.

Let me repeat that. I would urge all those who play a role in supporting nonprofits to go to the IRS Web site before December 16 to provide written comments to the IRS about this proposal. The message should be simple: No.

This is one Christmas greeting you had better send.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

PERKINS LOANS, HARDEST HIT FUND, AND ENFORCE ACT

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about a couple of areas where I think we can make progress on legislation before the end of the year. This has been a legislative session in which we passed a number of important bills, and I think there is more we can do. Specifically, I am going to talk about some legislative initiatives that will give a leg up to American workers—Ohio workers—and also to help our families and help our students.

I will start with students. There is an opportunity over the next couple of weeks for us to ensure that we reauthorize the Perkins Loan Program. Perkins is an incredibly important program, particularly for low-income students. In my view, of all the student loan programs out there, Perkins is by far the most flexible. This is an urgent matter because if we don't pass an extension, new loans will not be rewarded, even in January as students start this next semester. Let's not allow college tuition to become even less affordable for low-income students. Let's ensure that they can get a college degree to pursue their dreams and that we do move forward with this Perkins reauthorization.

I spoke about this on the floor a month or so ago. I talked about it as a program that was incredibly important for students in my State. I talked about the fact that there are 60 schools in the Buckeye State, in Ohio, that have received loans from this program. Over the last school year, more than 25,000 Ohio students received financial aid through Perkins—including about 3,000 students at Kent State University and about 1,700 students at the Ohio State University.

I was in Columbus last weekend and had a chance to meet with some Ohio State students who care a lot about this. They want to ensure that this Perkins is going to be there for them so they can stay in school. Some of them already have help from other programs, but they know that if they don't have the Perkins Loan Program, they can't afford to make ends meet and to stay in school. It is very important.

I have also heard from our college Presidents from around the State—particularly from Dr. Beverly Warren from Kent, who was here a couple of weeks ago to talk to me about this, and Dr. Michael Drake, whom I saw last week at Ohio State. They want to ensure that their students have this possibility.

One of the students I talked to is Keri Richmond. Keri is a junior at Kent State, and she interned at my office this past summer. Keri was an incredible intern. She is a student who is working hard. She is at Kent State, likely to graduate a little bit early. She spent her teenage years going from foster home to foster home. She fought the odds, and she is now excelling in college. She is bright. She is ambitious. Even with her Pell Grant, she has to have that Perkins loan in order to be able to stay in school, in order to make ends meet.

This is an important program, but it is not about a program. It is not about numbers. It is about people. It is about Keri Richmond and others like her. The impact goes well beyond Ohio. Over 1,7000 colleges and universities across the country participate in this program. Low-income students everywhere rely on it. If it expires, it is only more difficult to pay for school. Instead, what we should be doing in the Senate is making it easier, not harder, to afford to go to school. Some of these tuitions have gone up and up. We have to be sure every kid has a chance to be able to get ahead by going to college or university.

If we don't move, students who previously received a Perkins loan will lose their eligibility if they change institutions or academic programs. It is a big deal for them. If we don't act soon, students who are seeking loans for the winter and spring semesters will be ineligible. In total, it is possible that 150,000 freshmen will lose their eligibility this fall. We can't let that happen. Let's not allow college tuition to become this roadblock for low-income students who are looking for a college degree. Let's give them this chance. Let's give them this opportunity. By the way, let's extend it but at the same time work on ways to improve the program. I know there are some Members on my side of the aisle—and I think on the other side as well but certainly on my side of the aisle—who said they have concerns about some of these student loan programs and would like to reform them to make them work better. That is great. Let's take the time to do that.

In the meantime, let's not eliminate this program and have these kids fall between the cracks. I am there on the reforms. I would like to help on that. I think we can do better for all of our student loan programs and help all of our kids be able to have a better chance to succeed. Let's not create this terrible uncertainty for these students in the meantime. Let's extend this program and then work on those reforms.

I thank Senator CASEY, Senator BALDWIN, Senator COLLINS, and others for their strong leadership on this. I want to ask my colleagues in the Senate to do simply what the House has done and do an extension of this program. The House has already passed this legislation. There is no reason it shouldn't be in the omnibus legislation, and there is no reason we shouldn't move forward with ensuring that these kids have the certainty they need to be able to stay in school.

Mr. President, the second issue I want to talk about is that while students get the education they need, we also have to ensure that the communities they are going back to are safe and make sure those communities can thrive and grow.

One of the issues we have in Ohio and unfortunately in too many neighborhoods all around this country is that you have a lot of blight, a lot of homes that have been abandoned. Two things happen: One, when homes are abandoned, they become a magnet for crime, for drugs, and for other criminal activity to the point that they are dangerous for the community, but, second, they drive down the cost of the other houses—sometimes by as much as 80 percent. If you are in a community or you have a beautiful home you are taking care of but your neighbor's house becomes abandoned and becomes a magnet for crime and an eyesore, it drives down all of the property values.

In Congress we have spent a lot of money, taxpayer money, on helping people deal with their mortgages when they are underwater—particularly after the financial crisis. In my view we ought to focus more on taking down these abandoned homes and creating safer neighborhoods but also, through market forces, allowing the property values of all of these homes to increase.

I think this is an honorable effort, and it is one that a lot of people are focused on now around the country. I don't think we are quite caught up to where our neighborhoods are here in Washington, DC, because when I go home to Ohio I hear about this all the time. We have about 80,000 of these dangerous abandoned homes in Ohio.

Again, to address public safety concerns and tumbling home values in these struggling neighborhoods, one of the best alternatives is to demolish these abandoned structures. Sometimes another structure can be rebuilt there. That is what we want. We want more economic development in these communities. In some cases, I have seen where there was an abandoned home, it was torn down and made into a community garden and the community can all participate. The point is to get these homes down so we can have the redevelopment we all want.

I have walked the streets with local officials in Cleveland, Warren, Lima, and Toledo, OH, and I have seen these problems firsthand. As I do that, I talk to the residents. I ask them what they think. You can imagine the response I get. First, for them, it is an eyesore. It is a danger for their kids, grandkids. Second, they are worried about their property values.

I had one occasion to speak to someone in Toledo, OH, that was particularly concerning to me. This was a woman who had three kids. Her home was right next to an abandoned home, literally feet away—6 or 7 feet away, sort of like a row house. She said: ROB, every night I go to bed worrying that the home next to me, which is abandoned, is going to be torched by arsonists. At that point in time—this was in Toledo, OH—there was about one arson a night, where these abandoned homes were not just targets for crime but they were also being used by arsonists as practice for burning down a home. She was worried about her kids. She was worried she couldn't go to sleep at night because if that home caught fire next to her, her home could be next.

This is something we ought to focus on and we can focus on. Land banks in some of our hardest hit areas of Ohio, Michigan, and other States have gotten to work on attacking this problem. They have done a great job. They don't have the resources they need to demolish as many properties as they would like to help some of these struggling neighborhoods. That is why these land banks have come to us and asked: Can you help us a little more?

After talking to them, after visiting these neighborhoods, we did take action. We authored legislation called the Neighborhood Safety Act of 2013, which was a bipartisan effort and a bicameral effort. In the House, you had Members like DAVE JOYCE, MARCY KAPTUR, and MARCIA FUDGE working on this. Our legislation called for what is called the Hardest Hit Fund to be used not just to help people pay down their mortgages but also to help people be able to knock down these abandoned homes. We pushed it aggressively, and this important change was made administratively. It has provided nearly $66 million in Ohio and around the country to deal with these thousands of abandoned homes in our State. Michigan also got funds, as did other States.

Now, in many of these States, these Hardest Hit Funds have run out. In other words, there are more abandoned homes than there is money to be able to deal with the problem. Given the success rate we have and the fact that these land banks are doing a great job, we think it is time to provide some more funding. That is what we proposed to do in the Omnibus appropriations bill.

I am working with Senator STABENOW, Senator BROWN, and others to transfer funds from what is called the Home Affordable Modification Program, which is a program that would be eliminated under our proposal, and shift some of those funds into the Hardest Hit Fund for demolition purposes. I have repeatedly discussed this issue with our leadership, Senator MCCONNELL and others, our leadership here on the committees in the Senate and in the House, and I am very hopeful this can be done before year-end. It is the right thing to do. It is an opportunity for us to be able to shift some of these funds from a program that is not working as well into a program we know works and to make progress in some of our struggling neighborhoods in Ohio and around the country.

I give special thanks to these land banks in Ohio that have taken the lead on this issue back home. Particularly, I want to thank the tireless efforts of Jim Rokakis, director of the Thriving Communities Initiative at the Western Reserve Land Conservancy. He has done excellent work in helping to lead this effort and highlight this issue. I hope we can get this done, even in the next week here, to be able to help our communities in Ohio and around the country.

Mr. President, finally, when we talk about keeping our communities safe and the need to help our students, we also have to be sure that we are helping our workers. We need to ensure we are protecting jobs in our States that are threatened by unfairly traded imports.

I am pleased that we will soon be voting to pass the conference report for the Customs bill. It is my understanding that this may come up as early as Monday or Tuesday next week. I hope we can pass that here in the Senate and send it to the President for his signature.

There are a number of aspects of the Customs bill I support, but one aspect of it that I think is really important is legislation that is called the ENFORCE Act, to ensure that we are enforcing our laws properly. This is on the heels of legislation we already passed as part of the trade promotion authority earlier this year. That legislation is called Level the Playing Field Act. Senator SHERROD BROWN, my colleague from Ohio, and I offered this legislation, and it is now part of our law and ammunition we can use against unfairly traded imports. It is already working because it has already been signed into law, and it is helping to deal with dumping when people are selling below costs or when they unfairly subsidize imports. It is helping workers in Ohio. It is helping our tire workers, paper workers, and steel workers, and we are proud of that.

The problem is that although the legislation that we have already passed, the Level the Playing Field Act, helps with regard to taking on countries that are sending their products here unfairly, sometimes those countries then decide to try to evade the provisions we put in place, the higher tariffs for their dumped products or their higher tariffs for their subsidized products. That is what the ENFORCE Act is about. It is about ensuring that although we have this legislation in place, countries and their companies don't go around those regulations and still try to get products here into the United States by illegally sending it through another country or relabeling the product so that it doesn't fall under the tariffs that might be levied against them.

I am really hopeful that we will able to pass this additional legislation. It is incredibly important, as I said, not only for Ohio, but it is also important for the country. Time after time we

have seen that once we put these protective orders in place against these unfairly traded imports, these countries continue to illegally enter our country through illegal transshipments to other countries or through relabeling these products.

I think we have an opportunity to move forward on something that is really important to help protect workers to ensure that we can closely examine these schemes and stop them.

This effort, by the way, is backed by the National Association of Manufacturers, the American Iron and Steel Institute, and the United Steelworkers. They have a common cause because they understand that it is so critical that we ensure that our workers get a fair shake.

I got an email last week from workers at Pennex Aluminum in Leetonia, OH, in the Mahoning Valley. They have 78 workers at their facility, and they won an important case against aluminum extrusions from China. The email said that this relief really helped us.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent for 1 additional minute.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. PORTMAN. These workers said: Senator PORTMAN, ''this relief enabled our company to compete once again on a fair and level playing field.'' That is the relief we helped to provide by enforcing our laws against this product coming in.

They then said:

> As a result, we recently completed an investment of $38 million to expand our facility in Leetonia and create significant new jobs. Our great concern is that this trade relief is now at risk due to the efforts by Chinese producers to avoid paying duties by, among other schemes, manipulating the alloy content of their extruded aluminum products and shipping their products under a different name.

In other words, they were getting around the protections that are in place by simply relabeling the product. Again, this also happens by going around to other countries. That is why the ENFORCE Act is so important. Those 78 workers at Pennex Aluminum know it is important, and they know this legislation will help them to be able to get a fair shake.

Finally, I wish to thank the members of the conference committee on the customs bill for putting our BDS language into this legislation. It will help to avoid boycotts and divestment in sanctions of Israel. This is a way that some countries around the world are trying to delegitimize Israel. It is something that is important for us to take a stand on as a Congress, and we do that in this Customs legislation.

So again, I think there is some good legislation we can pass here in the next week or so in the Senate. I hope we will do it.

I thank the Presiding Officer for giving me the time tonight. We need to continue to stand up for our families, our students, and our workers and ensure that, indeed, we do give the people we represent a fair shake.

I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

HONORING INDIANA SERVICEMEMBERS AND ALL AMERICANS WHO SERVED IN VIETNAM

Mr. DONNELLY. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the service and sacrifice of Indiana servicemembers and their families and of all Americans who served during the Vietnam war, as this year marks the 40th anniversary of the end of that war.

Here is picture from the Indiana Historical Society of some of the amazing Americans who served during that time. Tens of thousands of Hoosiers bravely answered the call when they volunteered or were drafted to serve in Vietnam in almost every single capacity you could think of.

Bravely, and sadly, 1,243 Hoosier soldiers gave their lives in service to our country in Vietnam. In Vietnam, our vets endured 100-plus degree heat, monsoon rains, snake-infested rice paddy fields, staggering conditions, and incredibly dangerous situations.

Our servicemembers would rather have been at home in Terre Haute, Richmond, Indy, Evansville or Fort Wayne, but they served because they loved our country and they answered when our Nation called them, and their answer was: Count on me.

At the end of the war, many of our Vietnam vets didn't receive the welcome home or the recognition they deserved. Not all received huge hugs when they hit the tarmac back in America, but our Vietnam vets are heroes just like those who stormed the beaches in Normandy, trudged through frozen rivers in Korea, and went through the deserts of Iraq and the mountains of Afghanistan. Our Vietnam vets deserve to be held—and are held—in the same high regard as those who fought in World War I, World War II, Korea, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Our Vietnam vets are part of the seamless fabric that has saved our country and made it such a blessed place.

Today, our Vietnam vets get amazing receptions everywhere they go. In my home State of Indiana, a town in northern Indiana, LaPorte, IN, in LaPorte County, has their big parade every year on July 4. The streets are filled—5, 6, 7, 8 people deep for 2½ miles long—and every year the parade is led off by the Vietnam veterans of LaPorte County, and it happens all over our State. When the parade starts off, everyone gets out of their chairs and stands up—even those who have challenges and have difficulties—to applaud our men and women who were in Vietnam, and for 2½ miles they get an amazing standing applause the entire way. These vets are our parents, our brothers and sisters, our aunts and uncles, our grandparents, friends, neighbors, and the folks who are sitting next to us in church on Sunday.

Our Vietnam veterans support and lead our communities as public servants, teachers, lawyers, nurses, business owners, factory workers, and bankers. Just about anything you can imagine—that is what our Vietnam vets are doing to make our country a greater place. They are a generation of veterans who have taught us about love of country and service, and they deserve to be honored for their selflessness and sacrifice.

Today, Indiana is home to nearly 150,000 Vietnam war veterans. We have a responsibility to provide them with the benefits and support they have earned and to show them the same commitment they demonstrated while they fought to protect us and our freedoms more than 4 decades ago.

We must ensure our veterans have access to timely and quality care at local VAs across our State and country, and that this care is delivered in a way that meets their needs. Expanding access to health care for our Hoosier vets has been and will continue to be a constant top priority of mine.

We recently broke ground in St. Joseph County, IN, on the new St. Joseph County Health Care Center. It will mean that many of our local vets in northern Indiana will be just a short ride away from the health services they have worked so hard to earn and receive.

We must continue to expand options for care, for example, through the Veterans Choice Program, which is bipartisan legislation that is now law. Provisions from our bipartisan servicemember and veteran mental health care package were signed into law recently as part of the national defense bill.

We are working every day to try to make sure our veterans have the chance to receive good physical health care and good mental health care and that we stand next to them and with them every step of the way. Our bipartisan Community Provider Readiness Recognition Act was included, and it helps connect Hoosier servicemembers and vets with local providers who can deal with the unique challenges that folks who were in our military face.

The demand for care among our vets has never been greater and our obligation to them has never been greater. In recognition of their service and sacrifice, we must deliver on our promise to care for all veterans long after their last day in uniform.

I have another picture here from the Indiana Historical Society. This is another group of our young soldiers. When they went off, as I said earlier, they didn't complain and didn't make excuses, and when our Nation called, as I said before, they said: Count on me.

We must keep the promises we made to our vets. We must keep those promises for their entire lives. Our Vietnam vets and their families made incredible sacrifices. We can do a better job of

giving them the recognition and support they deserve. We must do so through words and action. In our everyday daily lives let us remember those who have sacrificed so much to defend our Nation and our freedom. Let us preserve their legacy and follow their example of service to others.

When you see someone wearing a ball cap that says Vietnam vet, World War II vet, Korean vet, Iraq or Afghanistan vet, say thanks. My guess is they will say: Thank you; I was just doing my job. But they were doing so much more than just their job. They were protecting our Nation and making sure that our children and our children's children had a chance to grow up in this most blessed of all places.

God bless every American and Hoosier veteran who served in Vietnam. God bless their families. God bless Indiana, and God bless America.

I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Indiana for his great remarks. I thank him for making them today.

PUERTO RICO

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I come to the floor tonight to discuss Puerto Rico, a territory of the United States since 1898. Millions of residents have been citizens since 1917, nearly 100 years. This community of 3.5 million people is facing economic, fiscal, and liquidity problems. What are we doing about it here in Congress? We are not doing anything. That needs to change, and it needs to change now.

We spent 10 years watching Puerto Rico suffer through a recession. We spent months here in Congress discussing what to do. There have been a lot of ideas—some popular, some controversial. I can say that, as the ranking member on the Energy Committee, I have heard many ideas, but now is the time to act.

We need to allow Puerto Rico to restructure. That is, we need to give them the same opportunities that we gave to average American citizens and municipalities to restructure their debt—the same that we gave to Wall Street when they were in a financial crisis, the same brink that we were almost on when we had our own economic problems. Yet there are some here in the halls of Congress who would rather listen to hedge funds and make sure they are prioritized in a debt restructuring than actually putting in place debt restructuring.

I propose a two-part, no-cost approach that will be most effective and least controversial to help us out of this situation.

The Energy and Natural Resources Committee, which has jurisdiction over territories, has heard from experts from the Department of Treasury and other government officials about how dire this situation is now. Just yesterday, a group of six CEOs sent a letter to congressional leaders urging swift legislative action on the Puerto Rico situation.

I can tell my colleagues the whole issue of what to do about Puerto Rico in the long term has many divergent views, but all those divergent views in Puerto Rico are singing the same tune right now: Restructure before January 1 or they will face serious issues of default. Why do we care? We care because the U.S. Government will have an impact of between $1 billion and $2 billion of more service demands if we do not allow them to restructure.

This year, the government and electric utilities failed to make their payments. Government workers are being cut to three days a week. Patients are now waiting months for medical care. Hospitals are going bankrupt. And the health care industry is threatened by a complete collapse. Forty-five percent of the population is living in poverty—including 58 percent of them who are children—and the unemployment rate is stuck at 12.2 percent, more than double the highest State's unemployment rate.

So what does it cost us to act here in the United States? It costs the U.S. taxpayers zero. It costs us zero because if we think about it, this is about debt restructuring. This about setting up a process which they are denied just because Puerto Rico is a territory; they cannot get the relief of restructuring. They tried. They tried to pass their own bankruptcy law. They tried, and then basically were told that it didn't meet a Federal standard.

They are not like a municipality that has this authority. They are a territory. They are our territory. If we want them to restructure successfully and keep more debt from coming to the shores of the United States because of—I would say that we have had a huge increase in population. So the cost of inaction is this acceleration of the Puerto Rico population coming to the United States. In 2014, we see that the number jumped to almost 70,000 people in one year. The net migration has been more than 500 percent in the last 10 years.

If we do nothing in the next week and don't act on this problem, more migration of Puerto Ricans is going to come to the United States. When they come, what will happen? They will be demanding more services, such as Head Start, SNAP, unemployment insurance, and Pell Grants. So default equals more Federal spending.

The notion that my colleagues think that somehow this inaction is the way out of this equation—they are just adding more responsibility to the U.S. taxpayer. Why? Is it because they want to protect hedge funds in a bankruptcy process? Do they want to decide in the Halls of the U.S. Congress who gets in line first and who gets paid?

I will remind my colleagues, particularly since the Presiding Officer knows the Deepwater Horizon issue very well, we did not make decisions here in the U.S. Congress—in the Senate and in the House of Representatives—as to who would get paid in the Deepwater accident implosion. We appointed a receiver. They made the tough decisions. When it came to Detroit's bankruptcy, we did not make the decision.

I guarantee my colleagues that of 100 Members of the U.S. Senate, there are probably 100 opinions in both of those cases as to how we thought each of those payments or restructurings should be done. But we are not the experts, and just because we have an opinion about what we would like to see Puerto Rico do doesn't mean we should be writing that into legislation and prejudging what should be an official, legal process of restructuring debt that we need to give Puerto Rico the authority to have.

This is what newspapers across the United States are saying, including the Los Angeles Times, the Miami Herald, the Boston Globe, the New York Times, and others: Give Puerto Rico the ability to restructure their debt.

So why are people here failing to take up this mantle? People have been arguing for months about different ideas. Some of our colleagues want to increase the Medicaid reimbursement rate. Some of our colleagues want to have an EITC increase. Some of our colleagues want Puerto Rico to do away with their pensions before they go into a bankruptcy structure. Those are all political opinions by individuals that one could say are worth debate.

Now we are at the point of default. Just as we need to make decisions before January 1, our colleagues are now trying to say that we can continue to discuss this issue. We don't have time to continue to discuss this issue. We have next week, and, as a member of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee that oversees territories, I feel it is our responsibility to propose a policy and get it in place so that we can find some resolution of this issue.

I think this two-part fix about making sure there is the ability to restructure and a council to oversee it in coordination with Treasury is the best we can do at this point in time to save the U.S. Government from further costs and to give relief to Puerto Rico.

The notion that people here in the U.S. House of Representatives or the U.S. Senate are trying to protect hedge funds so that they can maximize their return is despicable. It is despicable. The notion that somebody is trying to protect these fundamental questions that need to be decided in a formal process of bankruptcy or reform, as we are calling it within the territory, is the fair and even process that should take place without prejudice.

We are going to, as a body, have a very robust discussion, I guarantee my colleagues, for years and years and years to come about what the United States is going to do about the territory of Puerto Rico. Let's at least give

ourselves the luxury of having that discussion when the territory is not in default. Let's come together and pass some legislation for them to restructure their debt. Let a professional organization take the politics out of this and make the best financial decisions that can be made now to save the U.S. taxpayer from further expense.

I thank the Chair, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

BEING HONEST WITH THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Mr. SASSE. Mr. President, earlier today it was reported that the President's Deputy National Security Adviser was asked about my call that the President and the administration speak clearly about the nature of the enemy we face—about my call that we be honest with the American people and with ourselves about the fact that we are at war with militant Islam, we are at war with jihadi Islam, and we are at war with violent Islam.

In response, the White House was quoted in the World-Herald this morning as saying this:

> Our strong belief is to not treat these ISIL terrorists as leaders of some religious movement. Even if you have a derogatory adjective attached to it—radical Islam or Islamic extremism—essentially you are saying they are the leaders of a religious movement. And that is what they want. They want to be seen not as terrorists and killers and thugs, as the president said, but as leaders who speak on behalf of religion. And that is why we have not identified them as the enemy in this effort.

This is lunacy. First, while the White House is insisting that no one use the word ''Islamic'' or note any connection between the war that we are facing and some subset of Islam—even as the White House insists that no one use the word, their own preferred adjective, ''ISIL'' or ''ISIS,'' begins with an ''I.'' Every fourth grader in America can deduce without any assistance from Vanna White what the rest of the word that begins with an ''I'' is. Yet the White House insists that no one should use the word.

They are dealing with a world they wish were so, as opposed to the world with which we are called to struggle. The world in which we live is a world where we are going to be facing a decades-long battle with militant Islam, with jihadi Islam, with violent Islam. We are obviously not at war with all Muslims, but we are at war with those who believe they would kill in the name of religion, and the White House insists that we muzzle ourselves and not tell the truth.

Second, the White House's logic for why we shouldn't tell the truth to the American people or to ourselves is because the leaders of ISIL supposedly want to be identified with a religious movement. The leaders of the ISIL movement and the broader jihadi movement that is trying to kill Americans and all those who believe in freedom and in open society—the leaders of this movement also want to be martyred. Isn't the President's position that we should not kill them because they desire to be martyred? This is lunacy.

We have to speak the truth not because it alone will somehow diminish ISIS or ISIL, but because speaking the truth is actually the only way we can begin to develop policies that will not lead to more failed States in the Middle East, which are producing the terror training camps of next year.

Despite the fact that we are actually and obviously at war with militant Islam, there is a terrible leadership vacuum in this country. The American people know this, and, frankly, those of us who are getting our classified briefings and having to engage the leadership of our national security and intelligence communities know this leadership vacuum exists. Those who are trying to keep Americans safe—there are many wonderful, freedom-loving civil servants fighting to protect our kids, and they know and experience this vacuum of leadership every day.

This vacuum is felt outside the beltway and everywhere in America, as is obvious in many of our towns. But even more dishearteningly and more dangerously, it is increasingly obvious to the professionals working in our intelligence community and in our national security structure that this vacuum is harming our national security and our intelligence community as they try to fight for our freedom.

Here is why this matters. This vacuum prevents them from doing their jobs. They have no strategy to deploy, they have no rational policy to implement, and they have been asked to defeat an enemy that their Commander in Chief refuses to name. This is lunacy, it is absurd, and it is unacceptable.

Mr. President: Please lead.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I appreciate the words of the Senator from Nebraska, Mr. SASSE, with whom I enjoy serving on the banking committee, and I appreciate his good work. I take a bit of issue with his comments. I know there are more than two options. But I hear the greatest criticisms of the President from those same people, urging—not necessarily Senator SASSE in this case, but many of the leaders in this body on the Republican side who were some of the strongest advocates for the war in Iraq. Some of those same people are saying, back into the Middle East, sending combat troops.

Going back to war is something that the American people—we all come to the floor claiming to speak for the American people, perhaps, but we know that is not good policy and that is not what most people in this country want to do. But I appreciate the comments of the Senator.

Mr. SASSE. Mr. President, will the Senator yield for a question? Do you believe there is any connection between our enemy and Islam?

Mr. BROWN. Excuse me?

Mr. SASSE. Do you believe there is any connection between our enemy and Islam?

Mr. BROWN. I am not here to debate this. I don't know exactly what that means: a connection between the enemy and Islam. I know that semantics matter, and I know the criticism of the President in this body is sort of front and center no matter what he does.

When he gave what I thought was a coherent speech, often with restraint, where we have taken the—I think we have taken the fight to ISIL in this country. I think we have done it domestically. I think the President wants to do it internationally, and this body doesn't seem to have the courage to debate whether or not we actually look at an authorization resolution—an authorization for use of force. The President is still forced to rely on a resolution that President Bush pushed through that led to disastrous policies in Iraq. I don't think that was right.

But I apologize. I want to speak on something else, Mr. President, and that is why I came to the floor.

SUPPORING OUR VETERANS

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, 2 weeks ago most of us went home to our families to celebrate and give thanks for the many blessings we have in this country. We all look forward to spending more time with family during this holiday season, but for far too many Americans the holidays are just another time when they struggle to put food on the table or even to have a roof over their heads. This is sadly particularly true of our Nation's veterans.

Again, to go back 15 years, we take people into war in this country—sometimes for very good reason. Our sending troops to Afghanistan was exactly the right policy back in 2002 and 2003. Going into the war in Iraq was something very different.

If we in this body are going to send people into war, it is time we think about the costs of war, not come to the Senate floor and make speeches about how tough we are as Senators, when most Senators don't have children—some do, but most don't have children who go off to war. We are willing to send people into combat, and then we too often turn our backs on those soldiers once they come home and become our Nation's veterans.

The suicide rate is too high among veterans, many of them suffering from PTSD or traumatic brain injury or a host of other illnesses or afflictions. The suicide rate is too high, the unemployment rate for veterans is too high, and the drug addiction rate is too high. Yet, how often our colleagues come and talk about, let's send combat troops, let's go to war. How rarely they talk

about what we do with these men and women when they come home, whose lives have been changed dramatically. These are the costs of war, and they don't get nearly the attention on the Senate floor, in the media, or among policymakers as do the actually going to war and sending our troops.

It is shameful that veterans have these rates of unemployment, addiction, suicide, and homelessness. We have made progress on homelessness through a combination of increased Federal investments and improved services. Over the past 5 years, homelessness among veterans has declined 36 percent, but too many remain on the streets.

Veterans comprise 12 percent of the Nation's adult homeless population. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, some 48,000 veterans were homeless—including 1,200 in my State of Ohio—on a given night in January when a census, if you will, was taken about homelessness. That is 48,000 too many. It is a disgrace that they serve our country with honor, and thousands are left without a roof over their head. Think about that. We send them off to war. They are sometimes damaged by their time in combat or their time in the military, and we don't care enough to find them places to live and find them drug treatment and find them jobs and give the kind of help to them that they gave to our country.

I met the veterans the organizations serve—organizations such as the VFW, American Legion, these groups and counties called veteran service organizations. My State is blessed to have one in each of our 88 counties. I hear about their stories of perseverance. They are inspiring.

I visited the Joseph House in Cincinnati, where Nathan Pelletier and his team of dedicated staff and volunteers provided addiction treatment and transitional housing to veterans. We heard from Britton Carter, who was formerly homeless. He completed the treatment program at Joseph House. He now works as a case manager helping other struggling veterans. He spoke about the trials he has overcome. He said:

As a small youth I fell in love with playing army men. My mom would buy me little army men, and I dreamed of one day being a soldier.

God had given me the gift of being a pretty good basketball player and as such I became the first freshman to play and start on any varsity team. With success came fans and countless people, many of whom had an agenda that didn't necessarily have my best interest at stake.

From the early years of high school I found myself star struck, and I would end up in the company of those who used drugs—first pot and wine, later I was introduced to heroin and cocaine.

With the grace of God, I was given the opportunity to attend college at New Mexico Military Institution in Roswell, NM. There were other offers from schools, but I was attracted to the opportunity of being able to play army man once again.

I was caught with drugs and kicked out of school, and as a result I lost the chance to become an officer in the United States military. I went to another college—only to have my drug addiction lead me to poor choices that brought my career closer and closer to an end, where the only thing I felt I had to hold onto would be a career in the Army.

I enlisted, and discovered that being away from home . . . left me face-to-face with those old demons, and once again I was being discharged. . . . It wasn't long after my return . . . that I found myself in and out of trouble. Having no insurance to pay for the treatment I truly needed to address my addiction, and nearly a life sentence on the installment plan and years of struggle. . . .

He goes on.

[The Joseph House] was the one place that believed in never leaving any soldier behind—the Joseph House.

It was while at the Joseph House that I had the opportunity to get the treatment I so badly needed. . . . Today, thanks to God and his mercy. . . .

He goes on to talk about some of the things he has done. He has written a play. He has produced a play. He has done wonderful things, especially for his fellow veterans. His story should serve as a reminder to all of us that we should not leave the men and women who serve this country.

There are so many stories like his. In October I was in Dayton, where I met with Robert White at the Homefull organization—Homefull as opposed to the homeless. He served 4 years in the Army Reserves and 1 year on Active Duty. He was honorably discharged in 1980 and spent years working, facing challenges that he said left him ''lower than low.'' He said, ''As soon as I left for basic training, I was homeless.'' He talked about his work, his time in shelters. He said the result was always the same. He said, ''I entered homeless, and no matter how good I did, I still left homeless.''

Then, on the July Fourth weekend 7 years ago, he entered Homefull's VA per diem transitional supportive housing program. He became a model guest at Homefull. He got a job in Trotwood, a community near Dayton. He still has the same job. Homefull connected Mr. White with its partner organization, which helped him achieve home ownership. Today he has gone from homeless veteran to owner of his own home. That is because of his community in Dayton, because of this organization Homefull, and it is because of the partnership with the Veterans' Administration, whose funding is always under jeopardy because of many Members of the Senate and House who simply don't put the same effort into helping veterans as they do into funding the military.

Last month I was in Cleveland. I visited the Supportive Housing Home for Veterans. I visited the Trumbull Metropolitan Housing Authority in Youngstown. These organizations are providing work that is so important. We owe them our support.

Even one veteran on the street means Congress isn't doing enough to tackle this problem. That is why I joined my colleagues in introducing the Veteran Housing Stability Act of 2015, which would make meaningful improvements to services for homeless veterans and give more veterans access to housing opportunities.

President Kennedy, in his 1963 Thanksgiving proclamation—I believe the week before he died—said, ''As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.''

Sure, we come to this floor. We send people off to battle. Surely we need to do that sometimes. Sure, we come to the floor and talk about veterans, but so often we don't live up to the obligations to help these veterans deal with their homelessness, to help veterans deal with suicide, with the threat of suicide, the likelihood of suicide for some of them, help our veterans deal with drug addiction, help our veterans deal with mental health issues. Often these are costs of war that we simply don't discuss on the Senate floor. It is so important that we do. I hope my colleagues will join me in ensuring every veteran has an opportunity to succeed.

TRIBUTE TO MEGHAN DUBYAK

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, in closing, I want to recognize a long-term staff member, a young woman who has served in my office, Meghan Dubyak. She has been my communications director for most of my years in the Senate. She comes from Shaker Heights, OH. She has been a terrific public servant. Today is her last day. This is about her last hour on the job, although she is going with me tonight to do one other appearance. Meghan is planning to get married this summer. She is taking tomorrow off and is going on Monday to join the staff of the Vice President of the United States, JOE BIDEN. She has been an incredible employee. I wish her well. My wife Connie and I will love Meghan as long as we have the privilege of knowing her in the years ahead.

So thank you to Meghan.

I yield the floor.

REMEMBERING OFFICER DANIEL ELLIS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to pay tribute to a Kentucky police officer who was tragically lost in the line of duty. Officer Daniel Ellis of the Richmond Police Department was shot while searching an apartment for a robbery suspect on November 4, 2015, and died from his wounds 2 days later. He was 33 years old.

''Our lives will never be the same again, the lives of his fellow officers and of his family will never be the same,'' Richmond Police Chief Larry Brock said during Officer Ellis's funeral. ''He turned out to be a great police officer. He was one of those guys that just got it and got it early.''

Officer Ellis started at the department on August 11, 2008. He was known as a kindhearted man who treated others with dignity and respect. One day

while on duty, he saw a man in business clothes carrying a tent and walking down the street. When asked, the man told Officer Ellis that he had a job interview the next morning and had nowhere to spend the night. Officer Ellis paid to get him a room.

Daniel graduated from Eastern Kentucky University, where his funeral service was held. Most of the school coliseum's 7,000 seats were full for the service. Hundreds of fellow police officers from across Kentucky and other States poured into Richmond to pay their respects.

Members of Officer Ellis's family who are suffering from this loss include his wife, Katie; his son, Luke, who is only 4 years old; his parents, Kelly and Nancy West Ellis; two brothers; a sister; and his paternal grandmother.

I know my colleagues in the United States Senate join me in wishing the Ellis family our utmost condolences after their horrible loss. We are humbled and we are grateful for Officer Daniel Ellis's service and his enormous sacrifice in the line of duty. I hold the deepest admiration and respect for every brave police officer across the Bluegrass State, all of whom put their lives in danger to protect us. Kentucky is thankful these men and women have made a sacred pledge to protect and defend.

Local news Web site WLKY.com published a moving article about Officer Ellis and the outpouring of grief in the Richmond community after his death. I ask unanimous consent that the article be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From WLKY.com, Nov. 12, 2015]

THOUSANDS SAY GOODBYE TO SLAIN RICHMOND OFFICER DANIEL ELLIS—CHIEF SAYS ''GRIEF IS NEARLY INCONSOLABLE''

(By Carolyn Callahan and Emily Maher)

RICHMOND, KY.—He lost his life doing the job he loved.

Thousands of people were in Richmond on Wednesday to say goodbye to Officer Daniel Ellis.

The 33-year-old was shot a week ago during a robbery investigation.

He died two days later.

The funeral service was held at Alumni Coliseum at Eastern Kentucky University.

Both Daniel and his wife, Katie, graduated from the school.

For the first time since the deadly shooting, Richmond's police chief spoke publicly.

''We have lost our Daniel,'' Chief Larry Brock said. ''Our collective grief is nearly inconsolable.''

Ellis started with the Richmond Police Department in 2008.

While Brock hoped Ellis would finish his career with the department, he never imagined it would end the way it did.

''Today we say goodbye to Officer Daniel Ellis. Our Daniel. But we will never forget him, his service, or his sacrifice,'' Brock said.

Ellis leaves behind a wife and young son.

''Katie, I pledge to you and Luke that you will remain a part of our family. That we will always be there for you, and that you will never walk alone,'' Brock said.

The chief said it rained after Ellis died.

''It was as if the angels themselves were crying at the loss of this special young man,'' Brock said.

Then hours later, a rainbow appeared over the Richmond Police Department. The chief takes that as a sign that Ellis is still with them.

''Rest easy, Daniel. You have left us too early,'' he said.

Shortly before he was killed, Ellis found out he was being promoted to detective.

It's a job at which the chief said he would have excelled.

''From the kindergarten classrooms that he visited, to the courtrooms where his testimony could be counted on to be straightforward and truthful, he will be greatly missed,'' East End Church of Christ minister Phillip Shumake said.

Hundreds lined downtown Richmond streets as Ellis received a hero's escort to his final resting place.

Residents in Richmond said they wanted to show their thanks to the man who gave his life protecting theirs.

Black and blue pinwheels and white ribbons with Ellis's badge number line the Eastern Bypass.

Hundreds of officers drove down the street, escorting Ellis to his final resting place, while the community watched and supported an officer who was loved.

''Even though we wear a different badge, he is my brother,'' Shane Allen with Richmond Rescue said.

''You're grieving for someone that's not a family member, but he feels like a family member,'' community member Shelley Johnson said.

''We were actually on shift the day it happened and we were all trying to find out who it was. He is family,'' Allen said.

A kind of family that is brought closer together in times of loss.

''And I was trying to explain to the kids, 'Mommy, why do you cry?' And it's like something unexplainable and maybe they can understand that,'' Johnson said.

The community stood together to pay their final respects holding signs calling Ellis a hero.

''It's unbelievable. It's really touching to see the support—that even though it's something tragic that has brought this community together so tightly, to see the support for somebody they might not even know. And to see them come out on a day and support him as he goes by to lay at rest,'' Allen said.

Hundreds of officers from across the state escorted Ellis on a 100-mile journey to his final resting place.

''We just wanted to show what his service has meant to us,'' community member Sarah Roof said.

As he passed by, blue balloons were released into the air as a final tribute to a man the community said will never be forgotten.

''He loved his job. He helped the community and that was his job. And that's what he wanted to do,'' Allen said.

Ellis will be laid to rest in Adair County.

The family has asked for donations to be made to the Kentucky Law Enforcement Memorial Foundation or Supporting Heroes.

EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, I wish to speak about the Every Student Succeeds Act that the President signed into law today.

I want to first congratulate my colleagues Senator PATTY MURRAY and Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER, who have effectively been able to guide this bill through the Senate. It has been an honor to watch and participate in this process—a process that has served as a great example of the way the Senate is supposed to work.

When the original Senate version of the Every Child Achieves Act came to the floor for a vote on July 22, 2015, I could not support it because, while it made necessary changes to the No Child Left Behind law, I could not in good conscience support a bill that fell short of investing in the potential and promise of all of our children, especially New Jersey's most vulnerable students. I stood resolute in the belief that if Congress was truly going to invest in our children and grandchildren's future, it was vital that any legislation passed provide support, access, and opportunity to equip the next generation to succeed, regardless of their socioeconomic status.

These needs were particularly poignant given the historic context of the original Elementary and Secondary Education Act as a civil rights bill. Created the same year as the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and just 11 years after the landmark Brown v. Board of Education decision, President Lyndon B. Johnson's original piece of legislation intended to address the gaping gulf in the quality of education received by low-income students in an intensely segregated country. Indeed, this piece of legislation was a vital tool in President Johnson's arsenal on the War on Poverty. It is undeniable that education is a cornerstone of the American Dream to achieve success and financial security. We do our Nation and our children a disservice if we do not do everything in our power to ensure that President Johnson's arsenal is not only maintained, but honed and replenished with robust provisions to fight an evolving battle for educational equity in our schools.

Although I did not vote for the original Senate version of ESEA that passed the Senate in July, I am glad to see a conference report, the Every Student Succeeds Act, ESSA, that takes elements from both the House and Senate bill and ultimately is a better bill for all children, teachers, and parents in our country.

Chief among provisions that I believed were problematic was the lack of accountability measures to ensure America's most vulnerable students have access to a quality education. With regards to accountability, it was critical not to be overly prescriptive while still acknowledging an intense need to identify and ask schools and districts to figure out specific plans to turn things around in the lowest performing schools and high schools who fail to graduate one-third of their students. It is also critical to identify where there are groups of students who are consistently performing worse than their peers. I do not believe these changes should come from Washington. Local teachers, principals, and parents are best equipped to know how best to

turn around a failing school, and this bill gives them the arsenal to do so. I believe the new accountability provisions empower local leaders, with State and Federal guidance, to pursue the improvement strategies best suited to their local needs.

These accountability measures are vital if we are to guarantee that the ideals our students pledge allegiance to every day, justice and liberty for all, are manifest in the education we provide for our youngest Americans.

With this goal in mind, I am also pleased that ESSA includes my amendment to support homeless and foster youth, by ensuring educators and the public are aware of how foster and homeless children and youth are performing on critical elements compared to their peers by adding reporting for these groups on graduation rates to the State and school district report cards.

The role of teachers is also prioritized in ESSA, and I was especially proud to see the amendment I authored that helps support teachers by asking school districts to identify opportunities to make working conditions better and more sustainable.

With these improvements made and the spirit of the bill as an important piece of civil rights legislation maintained, I wholeheartedly support the reconciled version that has passed the House and Senate and that was signed by the President today.

TRIBUTE TO REAR ADMIRAL CHRISTOPHER J. PAUL

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the service of RADM Christopher J. Paul, Deputy Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet, who is retiring from the United States Navy after more than 38 years of faithful service to our Nation.

Having enlisted in the Navy in 1977, Rear Admiral Paul went on to attend the U.S. Naval Academy Preparatory School and U.S. Naval Academy, where he distinguished himself as a valued leader of the varsity cross country, indoor, and outdoor Track teams under famed coach Al Cantello and a 10-time letterman. After graduating from the Naval Academy in 1982 with a Bachelor of Science degree in physical science, RADM Paul served on USS *KIDD*, DDG 993, a destroyer homeported in Norfolk, VA, until 1987 and qualified as a surface warfare officer during deployments to the Atlantic and Indian Oceans; the Mediterranean, Black, North, Baltic, Red, and Caribbean Seas; and the Arabian Gulf.

Rear Admiral Paul's Pentagon staff assignments included service on the Joint Staff as an action officer in the Operations Directorate J–3 and U.S. Senate liaison officer and assistant surface warfare program officer in the Secretary of the Navy's Office of legislative affairs from 1987 to 1991. During that assignment, Rear Admiral Paul had the opportunity to work on behalf of Members of Congress on the Senate Armed Services Committee and was subsequently assigned to serve in my office to help write a $600 million package of veterans benefits for servicemembers and veterans of Operation Desert Storm. While working on that legislative matter, I had the privilege of promoting then Lieutenant Paul to the grade of lieutenant commander, when he transitioned to the Navy Reserve, which allowed him to continue to serve on my staff in Washington, DC, while also serving at the Pentagon's Navy Command Center as assistant operations department head.

Rear Admiral Paul went on to faithfully serve on my Senate legislative staff for a total of 16 years, followed by 6 years as a professional staff member on the U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services, while simultaneously serving in numerous Navy positions of increasing responsibility over the course of more than 22 years. Those assignments included serving on the Chief of Naval Operations staff as executive officer of Reserve Component Augment Units to the director of Surface Warfare OPNAV N86 and the director of Expeditionary Warfare OPNAV N85 between 1997 and 1999.

Rear Admiral Paul's Navy Reserve unit command assignments included CVNE–0109, from 1999 to 2001, supporting AIRLANT aircraft carriers, during which he was recognized with the Commander Naval Air Force Reserve Robert I. Barto Award; Naval Surface Warfare Center Indian Head, from 2001 to 2003; and, rapid response to full unit-mobilization in support of Operation Noble Eagle, which was recognized by the Secretary of the Navy with the Meritorious Unit Commendation. His command assignments also included Navy Region, Mid-Atlantic, from 2003 to 2005, where he was mobilized in support of Joint Task Force Katrina as chief of staff, Joint Force Maritime Component Commander; U.S. Forces, Japan from 2005 to 2007, where the unit received the Joint Meritorious Unit Award for its contingency and exercise support that greatly enhanced the U.S.-Japan Security Alliance; and deputy regional commander to Commandant, Naval District Washington, from 2007 to 2008, supporting the Navy Total Force in the national capital area.

During Rear Admiral Paul's flag officer assignments, he led several type commands responsible for manning, training, and equipping naval warships and expeditionary forces. In his first flag assignment, Rear Admiral Paul served as deputy commander, Navy Expeditionary Combat Command from 2008 to 2011, receiving the Navy Unit Commendation for its outstanding success in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom; deputy commander, Naval Surface Forces Atlantic from 2011 to 2012; and deputy commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet from 2012 to 2015, where he culminated his Navy career. During his flag officer positions, Rear Admiral Paul distinguished himself in the performance of his duties while demonstrating a uniquely comprehensive knowledge of manpower, personnel, training, enlisted personnel distribution, and surface warfare officer career management issues. His effective leadership and initiatives helped transform how surface forces are trained and prepared to fight in naval warships during a vital period of change in the surface warfare community.

As a loyal and dedicated member of my staff for over 22 years, Rear Admiral Paul worked tirelessly as a valued legislative aide to me in my U.S. Senate office and on the professional staff of the Senate Armed Services Committee. In that capacity, Rear Admiral Paul played an important role in policy matters affecting our Nation and the U.S. military, helping to advance countless legislative initiatives enacted into law that will have a lasting impact on U.S. policy, including the Detainee Treatment Act of 2005, which prohibits the inhumane treatment of prisoners of the United States; legislation that reauthorized the FAA in 1996, which is still recognized as the largest aviation reform law since the deregulation act of 1977; laws that help improve the lives of our servicemembers, veterans, and military families; and numerous provisions that have improved the ability of the military to procure needed combat capability, enhanced the readiness of ships, submarines, and aircraft, and maintained global superiority—all while ensuring that the Department of Defense acts as a responsible steward of diminishing defense dollars.

As a determined Reserve Component surface warfare leader and dedicated public servant, it is fitting that we honor Rear Admiral Paul's service during the centennial of the U.S. Navy Reserve. Rear Admiral Paul embodies the moral character and dedication of our Nation's citizen-sailors who bring unique skill sets through their military and civilian training and serve our country honorably by the core values of the United States of America. I heartily thank Rear Admiral Paul; his wife, Shannon; daughter, Catherine; and son, Christopher, for their honorable service to our Nation and the U.S. Navy; and wish Rear Admiral Paul fair winds and following seas as he concludes a career in the U.S. Navy exemplary in honor and distinction.

Thank you.

TRIBUTE TO JIM SMITH

● Mr. ROUNDS. Mr. President, today I wish to honor a great South Dakotan on his notable accomplishments and his career, starting as an elevator operator in the Senate. His career spanned seven decades, 10 Presidents, and 32 Congresses. To say Jim Smith is an institution in Washington, DC, would be an understatement.

Jim Smith was born in Aberdeen, SD, but spent the majority of his childhood

in my hometown of Pierre, SD. After graduating from Pierre High School in 1948, Jim attended the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, where he was the quarterback for the Miners when they won a championship in 1951.

After graduating from SDM&T in 1952, Jim decided law school was the best route for him, and this South Dakota boy moved to the big city to attend George Washington School of Law in Washington, DC. Like many hard-working South Dakotans, Jim worked his way through law school, starting his career operating the very same Senate elevators we take today in the U.S. Capitol.

Jim's work ethic caught the eye of many, and he eventually moved on to work for his home State Senator, Karl Mundt. Jim worked as a legislative assistant for Senator Mundt and went on to become minority counsel on the Senate Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Relations.

After his time working on Capitol Hill, Jim began a successful career in the banking sector until he was called back to government service, this time with the U.S. Treasury where he served as Deputy Undersecretary. In 1973, Jim became the first South Dakotan appointed as Comptroller of the Currency, an office created by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863.

Jim Smith served as Comptroller of the Currency under two Presidents and eventually left to rejoin the private sector in 1976. He went on to have a successful career partnering with another government relations professional to establish their own firm, which will continue to bear his name even after his retirement.

Jim Smith embodies the work ethic and attitude we are known for in our State. He has earned his place on the pages of South Dakota history books.

To Jim Smith and his wife of 37 years, Karen, I wish you the best on your retirement, and I thank you for your years of dedicated public service. Thank you for making South Dakota proud.●

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO DR. CARL ZULAUF

● Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I wish to honor today the distinguished career of Dr. Carl Zulauf on the occasion of his retirement from the faculty of the Ohio State University.

Raised on a farm himself, Carl's passion for agriculture began at an early age. His family's diversified farm raised livestock and crops. His connection to the land has remained a common thread throughout his life and career, and Carl hopes to use his retirement as an opportunity to refocus on his family's farm.

With the seeds of interest firmly planted, Carl pursued his education in what he knew best: agriculture. First, where he earned a degree in Agricultural Economics at the Ohio State University and later at Stanford University where he obtained his PhD. Dr. Zulauf credits his upbringing on a farm as the foundation for his interest in strengthening our Nation's domestic farming and the special appreciation he has for the issues facing American farmers and the agricultural sector.

Since 1980, Carl had been a pillar of OSU's College of food, agricultural, and environmental sciences. The depth and breadth of his research portfolio is impressive and includes dozens of peer-reviewed journal articles and over 1,000 articles developed for broader public consumption. Not just a researcher, Carl is a dedicated educator. Thousands of students have benefited from his teaching, leadership, and mentoring. Carl served as academic adviser to more than 200 students. For over a decade, he has been a faculty adviser for Ohio State's SPHINX Senior Honorary—which each year pays tribute to 24 students who ''embody the highest ideals of scholarship, leadership, camaraderie, citizenship, and service at The Ohio State University.'' Additionally, he has helped organize programs with students to travel to China and the Czech Republic to study agriculture. As a professor, his interest in his students can be seen by the large number of farmers across my State that talk about their time in Dr. Zulauf's classroom. The dozens of accolades that have been awarded to him throughout his tenure at OSU serve as witness to his impact as both a teacher and scholar. Carl's many contributions are a reminder that the values of the SPHINX—service, camaraderie, leadership, and scholarship—are not solely the domain of OSU's students.

Beyond his exemplary work as a researcher and educator, Carl has been an engaged member of both Ohio's and the broader agriculture community. He has been a leader in the Ohio agribusiness community, taking part in a number of strategic planning committees. He continues to be a regular contributor to FarmDoc, a project of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, which serves as an online resources for farmers across the country.

He inspired many students in his work at OSU, and one cannot fully understand Ohio's agricultural sector without knowing the name Carl Zulauf. However, his most noteworthy contribution to agriculture in the United States must be his work on farm policy. In 1985, Carl joined Senator John Glenn's office to help with agriculture policy, an experience he described as eye-opening. With his academic background and experience growing up on a farm, Carl brought an informed and diverse perspective. Though he went back to teaching following his time in Washington, Carl's time in Senator Glenn's office left an indelible mark and would guide his work on agriculture policy in the decades to come.

One pivotal example of Carl's work on agriculture policy was for the 2008 farm bill with the development of the Average Crop Revenue Election, ACRE, program, which represented a novel approach to risk management for our Nation's farmers. Carl worked with my office in 2008, as well as the office of Senator DURBIN, to draft legislation that would become the ACRE program. ACRE was based on years of research and conversations with farmers and some of the best minds in our agriculture industry. My staff worked on ACRE which later became the ARC, Average Risk Coverage, program—legislation that I worked on with Senator THUNE and which we were able to include the 2014 farm bill. Over 90 percent of our Nation's corn and soybean farmers choose to enroll in the ARC program which will serve as a crucial safety net for farmers at risk of low yields and was the first revenue-based rather than fixed-price program. The overwhelming participation in these programs serves as validation of Carl's work and cements his reputation as a key architect of our Nation's food and farm policy. Carl's fingerprints will be on agriculture policy for many future iterations of the farm bill.

From his tenure as a motivating and engaging professor at OSU to the role and voice he continues to play in Ohio and across the Nation as a leading thinker on the future of our farm and food policy, Carl has served as a resource guide and mentor for many. Thousands of students have benefited from his teaching, and thousands of farmers will benefit from his work that has informed our Nation's agricultural policies. I wish him the best in his retirement and applaud his contributions to his profession and thank him for his service to America's farmers, his university, and our Nation.●

RECOGNIZING THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN RIFLE CLUB

● Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, I would like to recognize the Rocky Mountain Rifle Club, RMRC, for their efforts to support the Teton County 4–H Shooting Sports Air Rifle and Air Pistol clubs. I appreciate RMRC's efforts to honor Montana's strong hunting legacy and protect our Second Amendment rights.

There are currently 20 Montana kids enrolled in the Teton program. Three students are among the top 10 Montana shooters for their age groups: Berit Bedord, age 14; Ashley Pearson, age 13; and Luke Ostberg, age 12. These three have been the longest lasting members of the Teton club and have steadily earned top scores in State competitions.

The aim of the Teton County 4–H program is to introduce young Montanans to shooting with a focus on safety and the proper and ethical use of firearms. The shooting sports program is one of the most popular 4–H programs in the country, according to Brian Bedord, the coordinator for the Teton 4–H shooting program.

The Rocky Mounty Rifle Club has been a strong supporter of the Teton

County 4–H Shooting Sports Air Rifle and Air Pistol clubs and is currently raising funds to purchase top-of-the-line air rifles and air pistols in addition to target equipment for the 4–H program.

It is my honor to thank the Rocky Mountain Rifle Club and all of its members and employees for continuing to work towards the responsible education of firearms for young Montanans. The right to keep and bear arms is an issue that is of upmost importance to me and the people of Montana. I am grateful for all of RMRC's hard work to educate Montanans and support our State's strong tradition of responsible firearm ownership.●

TRIBUTE TO JULIO N. INFIESTA

● Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I wish to speak today in recognition of Mr. Julio N. Infiesta of Lynbrook, NY, who served in the Social Security Administration for 42 years in the New York region. I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking Mr. Infiesta for his years of dedication and public service and to congratulate him on his retirement.

In 1973, Julio began his career with the Social Security Administration, serving in various local offices in the New York metropolitan region, including in the South Bronx, where he was an operations supervisor, and in Long Beach, where he was selected as branch manager. In 1976, he became a social insurance specialist in the New York regional office in field operations. Mr. Infiesta also served as assistant district manager and district manager in the Jamaica and Flushing offices until 2001, when he entered the agency's Advanced Leadership Program. Mr. Infiesta was promoted to the position of deputy assistant regional commissioner for management and operations support and also served as the acting assistant regional commissioner for management and operations support. As a member of the Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program, he served as an area director and as the director for disability in the office of the deputy commissioner for operations. In 2003, Mr. Infiesta was selected as the region's assistant regional commissioner for management and operations support and was elevated to deputy regional commissioner in 2014.

As Social Security's second senior ranking official in the New York metropolitan region, Mr. Infiesta oversaw Social Security operations in New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. These operations included an annual administrative budget of $400 million for more than 3,900 employees in 113 field offices, four teleservice centers, four Social Security Card Centers, the Northeastern Program Service Center, and the New York regional office. In the New York metropolitan region, Social Security pays $7.3 billion in monthly cash benefits to 6 million retirees, workers with disabilities and their families, and the families of workers who have died. Social Security pays an additional $461 million in monthly Supplemental Security Income cash benefits to 835,000 people aged 65 and older, as well as people who are blind or disabled, regardless of age.

Mr. Infiesta and his wife, Joanne, are longtime residents of Lynbrook, in Nassau County, Long Island.

Mr. President, I ask that we give tribute on December 10, 2015, to the 42 years of service that Mr. Julio N. Infiesta gave to the Social Security Administration and to the people of the United States.●

TRIBUTE TO DR. ROBERT O. KELLEY

● Ms. HEITKAMP. Mr. President, after 7 and a half years of leadership educating the best and brightest minds not only in North Dakota, but from around the world, University of North Dakota, UND, president, Dr. Robert O. Kelley, is retiring. I want to take the time to thank him for his service and send my best wishes to President Kelley, his wife, Marcia, and his family for their commitment to the students, faculty, and families served by the university.

President Kelley joined the University of North Dakota in 2008, serving as the school's 11th president and providing the university, its students, the city of Grand Forks, and the State of North Dakota the steadfast direction needed to strengthen the legacy and leadership of the institution.

As an alumna, the University of North Dakota will always hold a special place in my heart. The University of North Dakota is where I gained knowledge and skills that helped me in both the private and public sectors. So I am proud President Kelley similarly ensured that students continue to receive the skills they need to succeed. Under his steady guidance, the University of North Dakota has grown significantly.

Nearly $225 million in building projects are underway at the university, including the school of law building addition and renovation and the new school of medicine and health sciences building, which will open in the fall of 2016. Each and every time I return to the campus to visit with students and faculty, I see firsthand the exceptional college experience UND offers. I know these accomplishments are in large part attributed to Dr. Kelley's direction and will be an element of his legacy for years to come.

Since the university's founding in 1883, it has been an academic center for North Dakota, where young minds have had the opportunity to learn and grow to become the leaders of the State and the country. President Kelley's leadership has worked to navigate the university through sometimes controversial reforms including the process to change the school's nickname and logo. Under his guidance, the school worked to ensure a smooth transition.

As UND looks to the future, I recognize that President Kelley's work over these last 7 and a half years has strengthened the institution's foundation for excellence and will help those who follow in his stead to maintain the school's legacy. On behalf of the students, families, and citizens of North Dakota, I wish him and his family the best and thank them for their hard work and service to the University of North Dakota and our great State.●

RECOGNIZING CARSON TAHOE HEALTH'S REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

● Mr. HELLER. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the 10th anniversary of Carson Tahoe Health's, CTH, acclaimed regional medical center.

Over the past decade, this center has grown to be one of northern Nevada's leading health care facilities. Most recently, the Carson Tahoe Sierra Surgery department of the regional medical center received the HealthInsight Hospital Quality Award for its top-tier care and patient satisfaction. The center has been recognized through a variety of accolades for its cutting-edge medical expertise and incredible patient care. I am proud to see this facility in Nevada recognized on a national level for its high-quality medical treatment.

Since the Medical Center's opening, those working within the facility have gone above and beyond to provide northern Nevadans with the best health care. The staff has spent countless hours further expanding health care services for Nevadans. The medical center has developed a premier open heart and endovascular surgery program and a women and children's center with a five-star rating. The facility has also secured an affiliation with the University of Utah Health Care and Huntsman Cancer Institute, which significantly increases care options for Nevadans. The center is acknowledged for its complete cancer treatment, intervention, support, and aftercare and provides 153 beds for Silver State residents. The staff is comprised of 240 board-certified physicians that cover an array of 35 medical specialties. The northern Nevada community is fortunate to have this incredible Medical Center ready to help with its medical needs.

For the past decade, CTH's regional medical center has provided residents across northern Nevada with top-notch and innovative health care options. The hard work of those that have helped grow this facility is greatly appreciated. Today I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the regional medical center on its 10th anniversary and in thanking those that work within the facility helping to save lives.●

RECOGNIZING THE SOUTHERN NEVADA CHAPTER OF THE MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

• Mr. HELLER. Mr. President, today I wish to congratulate the southern Nevada chapter of the Military Officers Association of America on reaching a significant milestone of 50 years of service in our State. It gives me great pleasure to recognize this entity that does so much for Nevada's veterans, active military members, and their families.

For half a century, the southern Nevada chapter has provided southern Nevada's military community with an incredible support system to address a diverse range of veterans and active military members' issues. The organization offers our Nation's brave men and women advice and guidance on compensation and benefits, as well as raises money to benefit Wounded Warriors, ROTC scholarships, and other entities helping our heroes who have defended our freedoms. The southern Nevada chapter spearheaded the Veterans Court Program, which gives veterans a second chance and helps to expunge misdemeanors from their records, so long as they participate in a rehabilitation program, perform community service, and maintain a positive lifestyle.

Southern Nevada's military community is fortunate to have this chapter working as an ally to improve the lives of veterans. The organization also advocates on behalf of America's national defense, an issue I believe is crucial for our country. I am grateful to each and every member of this organization for their service and sacrifice in defending our Nation. There is no way to adequately thank the men and women who sacrifice their lives for our freedoms. Their service is invaluable to our country.

As a member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, I have had no greater honor than the opportunity to engage with the men and women who served in our Nation's military. I recognize Congress has a responsibility not only to honor the brave individuals who serve our Nation, but also to ensure they are cared for when they return home. I remain committed to upholding this promise for our veterans and servicemembers in Nevada and throughout the Nation. I am grateful to have organizations like the southern Nevada chapter working towards a common goal: fighting to ensure the needs of our veterans are met.

Today I ask my colleagues and all Nevadans to join me in recognizing the southern Nevada chapter of the Military Officers Association of America, an organization with a noble and charitable mission. I am humbled and honored to recognize its 50th anniversary, and I wish to thank all of the hardworking members for everything they do.•

REMEMBERING THAIS F. O'DONNELL BLATNIK

• Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, today I wish to honor the life of a dear friend and a remarkable West Virginian who passed away on December 9th, 2015. Former West Virginia State senator and house of delegates member, Thais F. O'Donnell Blatnik, was a dedicated public servant and an inspiring leader who was respected and admired by all who knew her. She led an extraordinary life that will always be remembered in the hearts of the countless individuals whose lives she touched.

Thais was a proud West Virginian from our State's northern panhandle. She was born and raised in the town of Weirton, where she grew up with her loving parents and her two younger sisters, Eileen and Kay. It was there in the small town of Weirton that Thais would plant her roots and cultivate an inherent love and commitment to her community, the northern panhandle region, and her entire State.

Thais went on to live a long and prosperous life, filled with immense success. But she never strayed too far from her loved ones and friends in Weirton and the northern panhandle. After graduating from high school, she attended and graduated from West Liberty University and launched a tireless career in journalism. After college, Thais returned to her beloved hometown to work for the Weirton Daily Times. She also spent part of her career working for the Wheeling Intelligencer and as an editor for the Dominion Post.

During her journalism career, Thais developed her inquisitive nature along with her passion for asking the hard questions. She was a true force, and she was tough but fair when it came to telling the news. She covered all levels of politics, and she even had the opportunity to interview three U.S. Presidents: President Kennedy, President Ford, and President Roosevelt. As a result of her work in journalism, she was emboldened to run for office herself and to stand up for the northern panhandle communities she loved so dearly.

Just as Thais was a fierce journalist, she became an equally strong and passionate public servant. Genuinely committed to improving the lives of all West Virginians, she represented Ohio County for 8 years in the house of delegates and another 8 years in the State senate. I was proud to work alongside her and call her my colleague during my time in the State senate. Thais spent her time at the statehouse fighting to improve the lives of all West Virginians, but specifically women and children and those struggling with mental health and disabilities. She was honored for her great work and for her service as Mental Health Directors Legislator of the Year and recognized by the West Virginia Association for the Developmentally Disabled for her faithful work helping children with exceptionalities. Thais also served as the executive director of the Wheeling Area Training Center for the Handicapped, WATCH.

Thais was not only reputable and accomplished in her public life, but she was also an unparalleled example of a devoted wife, a proud mother, and a wonderful grandmother. She was married to the late Dr. Albert M. Blatnik for more than 48 years and paid tribute to him in a book she wrote titled ''Here's Al.'' Thais received love and support throughout her life from Al as well as her children—Floyd, Judy, and David—and her grandchildren—Katie, Jack, Joe, Maggie, and Sam—who lovingly called her ''Meme.'' During their lives, Thais and Al led their grandchildren across the country introducing them to exciting new experiences.

Anyone who knew Thais Blatnik can tell you about her incredible passion for her community and her State and her ability to inspire each person she encountered. She made a difference throughout West Virginia and will be forever remembered for her many years of service. She was truly a hero to so many in our State, and though she will be greatly missed, her memory will always live on.•

RECOGNIZING THE HENRY FORD HEALTH SYSTEM

• Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize Henry Ford Health System as it celebrates delivering a century of high-quality and innovative health care services to the metropolitan Detroit community.

In 1909, Henry Ford, David Whitney, and a few other leading Detroit-area businessmen recognized the need for a major health care center in Detroit and set out to open Detroit General Hospital. After experiencing several years of delays, Henry Ford took over the entire project and renamed the facility ''Henry Ford Hospital'', which opened its doors to the public on October 1, 1915.

From the outset, Henry Ford was focused upon adapting the insights and innovations he pioneered in the automotive industry for use in the delivery of health care services. Among his innovations were a first-in-the-Nation center for treating chemical dependency and an accountability system for promoting shorter patient waiting times. Over the years, Henry Ford Health System's commitment to innovation saw breakthroughs in the administration of electrocardiograms, improvements in the design of hospital beds, and advancements in medication regiments for treating bacterial infections.

Throughout its history, Henry Ford Health System has been committed to meet the evolving needs of the metro Detroit region. Recognizing the need for access to low-cost health care services, Henry Ford Hospital partnered with the State of Michigan in 1970 to

create the Community Health and Social Services, CHASS, clinic in southwest Detroit. Around the same time, Henry Ford Health System also began partnering with the Detroit public schools to provide in-school health services to students.

With the growing population in Detroit's suburbs, Henry Ford Health System began to expand, opening new medical centers in Troy, Dearborn, and West Bloomfield. Today Henry Ford Health System has grown from a single facility with 48 beds into a regional health care provider which admits around 89,000 patients each year and delivers approximately 3.5 million clinic visits. The staff has also grown to more than 23,000 employees, making Henry Ford Health System the fifth largest employer in the Metro Detroit region.

In recognition of its outstanding commitment to delivering world-class health care services in a novel and effective manner, Henry Ford Health System is the only organization to receive all five major health care quality awards: the Foster G. McGaw Prize in 2004, the Joint Commission's Ernest Amory Codman and John M. Eisenberg Awards in 2006 and 2011, the American Hospital Association's McKesson Quest for Quality Prize in 2010, and the Malcolm Baldrige Award in 2011. As a recipient of the Baldrige Award, Henry Ford Health System joins an elite group of organizations who have been recognized for outstanding innovations in their respective fields.

I am honored to ask my colleagues to join me today in recognizing Henry Ford Health System's 100th anniversary. This significant milestone is a great opportunity to reflect upon its century-long record of fostering innovations in the development and delivery of health care services, its commitment to providing the best possible outcomes for its patients, and the transformative effect it continues to make, both in the health care field and metro Detroit. Henry Ford Health System has made a remarkable impact in southeast Michigan over the last century, and I wish its leadership, medical professionals, and staff well in continuing to fulfill its mission in the years and decades ahead.●

TRIBUTE TO JUDGE HAIGANUSH R. BEDROSIAN

● Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, as this year draws to a close, so too does a long and accomplished legal career for Rhode Island Family Court Chief Judge Haiganush R. Bedrosian. She will retire from the bench at the end of December after serving on the family court for over 35 years. Judge Bedrosian is a trailblazer and a skilled leader in the Rhode Island legal community. She will be missed.

Judge Bedrosian, the daughter of Armenian immigrants, is a lifelong Rhode Islander who grew up in Cranston. She attended Cranston East High School and then Brown University's Pembroke College, where she graduated with a degree in political science in 1965.

She says that when she graduated from Pembroke, she was told ''women don't go to law school'' and she had best look for work elsewhere. That didn't sound right to her.

Judge Bedrosian enrolled at Suffolk Law School, where she excelled. She earned a clerkship with Rhode Island Supreme Court Justice Thomas Paolino. After her clerkship, she rose quickly in the legal profession, serving as an assistant general counsel for the Providence & Worcester Railroad, representing children in private practice and serving as a special assistant to the Rhode Island Attorney General in the Criminal Division.

In 1980, Rhode Island Governor J. Joseph Garrahy nominated her to serve on Rhode Island's family court, making her the first woman to sit on the family court bench. Over the course of her tenure, she has built a reputation for fairness, compassion, and thorough command of the law. She has deftly handled some of the most complex and difficult cases to come before the Court.

She rose to the position of chief judge on the family court in 2010—another first for a woman in Rhode Island—where she has proven herself an able leader. She has promoted mediation as a way to resolve challenging family disputes more quickly and with less stress on the parties involved. She has advocated for improvements to the way juveniles are treated in our justice system, both at the State and Federal levels. She has worked to combat human trafficking and sexual violence. And she has expanded the family treatment drug court, a smart and effective program to address drug offenses that involve youth and families.

In addition to her good work in the courtroom, Judge Bedrosian has contributed a great deal to her community. She remains a committed member of the congregation of Saints Vartanantz Armenian Apostolic Church in Providence where she is a frequent volunteer. She has also founded and served as president of the Rhode Island Trial Judges Association.

We will miss Judge Bedrosian's steady hand and compassionate, reasoned rulings on the bench. But we wish her well in the next chapter of her life. Best of luck, Your Honor.●

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 2 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 2130. An act to provide legal certainty to property owners along the Red River in Texas, and for other purposes.

MEASURES REFERRED

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

H.R. 2130. An act to provide legal certainty to property owners along the Red River in Texas, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

PETITIONS AND MEMORIALS

The following petitions and memorials were laid before the Senate and were referred or ordered to lie on the table as indicated:

POM–124. A joint resolution adopted by the Legislature of the State of Alabama applying to the United States Congress, pursuant to Article V of the Constitution of the United States, to call a convention of the states limited to proposing amendments that impose fiscal restraints on the federal government, limit the power and jurisdiction of the federal government, and limit the terms of office of federal government officials; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 112

Whereas, the Founders of our Constitution empowered state legislators to be guardians of liberty against future abuses of power by the federal government; and

Whereas, the federal government has created a crushing national debt through improper and imprudent spending; and

Whereas, the federal government has invaded the legitimate roles of the states through the manipulative process of federal mandates, most of which are unfunded to a great extent; and

Whereas, the federal government has ceased to live under a proper interpretation of the Constitution of the United States; and

Whereas, it is the solemn duty of the states to protect the liberty of our people, particularly for the generations to come, to propose amendments to the Constitution of the United States through a Convention of the States under Article V to place clear restraints on these and related abuses of power: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Legislature of Alabama, both houses thereof concurring, That the Legislature of the State of Alabama hereby applies to Congress, under the provisions of Article V of the Constitution of the United States, for the calling of a convention of the states limited to proposing amendments that impose fiscal restraints on the federal government, limit the power and jurisdiction of the federal government, and limit the terms of office for its officials. This is an application for a Convention of States. By definition, a Convention of States requires the equality of all state parties necessitating a rule of one state, one vote. Congress has no authority to adopt any rule to the contrary; and be it further

Resolved, This application is adopted with the understanding that the Legislature will, by law or rule, create rules for its appointment of delegates to any Convention of States, including rules that govern the duty of commissioners or delegates to strictly adhere to the limited subject matter of the convention contained in the state's application; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of State is hereby directed to transmit copies of this application to the President and Secretary of the United States Senate and to the Speaker and Clerk of the United States House of Representatives, and to the members of the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States Congress from this state; and to also transmit copies hereof to the presiding officers of each of the legislative

houses in the several states, requesting their cooperation; and be it further

Resolved, That this application constitutes a continuing application in accordance with Article V of the Constitution of the United States until the Legislatures of at least two-thirds of the several states have made applications on the same subject.

POM–125. A communication from a citizen of the State of Illinois memorializing the State of Illinois's petition to the United States Congress calling for a constitutional convention for the purpose of proposing amendments; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. CORKER, from the Committee on Foreign Relations:

Special Report entitled ''Legislative Activities Report of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, One Hundred Thirteenth Congress'' (Rept. No. 114–178).

By Mr. CORKER, from the Committee on Foreign Relations, without amendment and with a preamble:

S. Res. 189. A resolution expressing the sense of the Senate regarding the 25th anniversary of democracy in Mongolia.

By Mr. CORKER, from the Committee on Foreign Relations, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute and with a preamble:

S. Res. 320. A resolution congratulating the people of Burma on their commitment to peaceful elections.

By Mr. CORKER, from the Committee on Foreign Relations, without amendment and with an amended preamble:

S. Res. 326. A resolution celebrating the 135th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the United States and Romania.

EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEE

The following executive reports of nominations were submitted:

By Mr. GRASSLEY for the Committee on the Judiciary.

Dana J. Boente, of Virginia, to be United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia for the term of four years.

Robert Lloyd Capers, of New York, to be United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York for the term of four years.

John P. Fishwick, Jr., of Virginia, to be United States Attorney for the Western District of Virginia for the term of four years.

Emily Gray Rice, of New Hampshire, to be United States Attorney for the District of New Hampshire for the term of four years.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

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

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

S. 2383. A bill to withdraw certain Bureau of Land Management land in the State of Utah from all forms of public appropriation, to provide for the shared management of the withdrawn land by the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of the Air Force to facilitate enhanced weapons testing and pilot training, enhance public safety, and provide for continued public access to the withdrawn land, to provide for the exchange of certain Federal land and State land, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. FLAKE:

S. 2384. A bill to amend the Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act of 1978 to provide for the consideration by State regulatory authorities and nonregulated electric utilities of whether subsidies should be provided for the deployment, construction, maintenance, or operation of a customer-side technology; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources .

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

S. 2385. A bill to strengthen protections for the remaining populations of wild elephants, rhinoceroses, and other imperiled species through country-specific anti-poaching efforts and anti-trafficking strategies, to promote the value of wildlife and natural resources, to curtail the demand for illegal wildlife products in consumer countries, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mrs. GILLIBRAND (for herself and Mr. SCHUMER):

S. 2386. A bill to authorize the establishment of the Stonewall National Historic Site in the State of New York as a unit of the National Park System, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. WYDEN (for himself, Mr. BROWN, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. SANDERS, Ms. WARREN, and Mr. MERKLEY):

S. 2387. A bill to restore protections for Social Security, Railroad retirement, and Black Lung benefits from administrative offset; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. CRUZ (for himself and Mr. LEE):

S. 2388. A bill to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to provide for reciprocal marketing approval of certain drugs, biological products, and devices that are authorized to be lawfully marketed abroad, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

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

S. 2389. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to extend the rural add-on payment in the Medicare home health benefit, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself and Mr. LEAHY):

S. 2390. A bill to provide adequate protections for whistleblowers at the Federal Bureau of Investigation; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. SANDERS (for himself, Mr. MARKEY, and Mr. MERKLEY):

S. 2391. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to permanently extend certain energy tax provisions; to the Committee on Finance.

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

S. 2392. A bill to enhance beneficiary and provider protections and improve transparency in the Medicare Advantage market, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. WHITEHOUSE (for himself and Mr. BLUMENTHAL):

S. 2393. A bill to extend temporarily the extended period of protection for members of uniformed services relating to mortgages, mortgage foreclosure, and eviction, and for other purposes; considered and passed.

By Mr. CRUZ (for himself and Mr. SESSIONS):

S. 2394. A bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to improve the H–1B visa program, to repeal the diversity visa lottery program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. MCCAIN (for himself, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. FLAKE, and Mr. SCHUMER):

S. 2395. A bill to reauthorize the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. ISAKSON (for himself and Mr. PERDUE):

S. 2396. A bill to designate the Federal building and United States courthouse located at 121 Spring Street SE in Gainesville, Georgia, as the ''Sidney Olsin Smith, Jr. Federal Building and United States Courthouse''; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. REID (for himself, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. TESTER, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. BOOKER, Ms. BALDWIN, and Mr. SCHUMER):

S. 2397. A bill to amend the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act to authorize the Secretary of Health and Human Services to make grants to States that extend or eliminate unexpired statutes of limitation applicable to laws involving child sexual abuse; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. SANDERS:

S. 2398. A bill to provide benefits and services to workers who have lost their jobs or have experienced a reduction in wages or hours due to the transition to clean energy, to amend the National Labor Relations Act to establish an efficient system to enable employees to form, join, or assist labor organizations, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. SANDERS:

S. 2399. A bill to provide for emissions reductions, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. MCCAIN (for himself and Ms. AYOTTE):

S.J. Res. 28. A joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Secretary of Agriculture relating to inspection of fish of the order Siluriformes; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

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

By Mr. MCCONNELL (for himself and Mr. REID):

S. Res. 333. A resolution to direct the Senate Legal Counsel to appear as amicus curiae in the name of the Senate in Bank Markazi, The Central Bank of Iran v. Deborah D. Peterson, et al. (S. Ct.); considered and agreed to.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 469

At the request of Mrs. MURRAY, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. KIRK) was added as a cosponsor of S. 469, a bill to improve the reproductive assistance provided by the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs to severely wounded, ill,

or injured members of the Armed Forces, veterans, and their spouses or partners, and for other purposes.

S. 571

At the request of Mr. INHOFE, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 571, a bill to amend the Pilot's Bill of Rights to facilitate appeals and to apply to other certificates issued by the Federal Aviation Administration, to require the revision of the third class medical certification regulations issued by the Federal Aviation Administration, and for other purposes.

S. 578

At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Ms. MIKULSKI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 578, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to ensure more timely access to home health services for Medicare beneficiaries under the Medicare program.

S. 624

At the request of Mr. BROWN, the name of the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 624, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to waive coinsurance under Medicare for colorectal cancer screening tests, regardless of whether therapeutic intervention is required during the screening.

S. 706

At the request of Mrs. BOXER, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 706, a bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to require institutions of higher education to have an independent advocate for campus sexual assault prevention and response.

S. 727

At the request of Mr. KING, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 727, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to include biomass heating appliances for tax credits available for energy-efficient building property and energy property.

S. 901

At the request of Mr. MORAN, the name of the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. MCCASKILL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 901, a bill to establish in the Department of Veterans Affairs a national center for research on the diagnosis and treatment of health conditions of the descendants of veterans exposed to toxic substances during service in the Armed Forces that are related to that exposure, to establish an advisory board on such health conditions, and for other purposes.

S. 1455

At the request of Mr. MARKEY, the names of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY) and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) were added as cosponsors of S. 1455, a bill to provide access to medication-assisted therapy, and for other purposes.

S. 1562

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the name of the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1562, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to reform taxation of alcoholic beverages.

S. 1659

At the request of Mr. LEAHY, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. CARPER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1659, a bill to amend the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to revise the criteria for determining which States and political subdivisions are subject to section 4 of the Act, and for other purposes.

S. 1697

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the names of the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. AYOTTE), the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER) and the Senator from Ohio (Mr. PORTMAN) were added as cosponsors of S. 1697, a bill to provide an exception from certain group health plan requirements to allow small businesses to use pre-tax dollars to assist employees in the purchase of policies in the individual health insurance market, and for other purposes.

S. 1890

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the names of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER) and the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) were added as cosponsors of S. 1890, a bill to amend chapter 90 of title 18, United States Code, to provide Federal jurisdiction for the theft of trade secrets, and for other purposes.

S. 1915

At the request of Ms. AYOTTE, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1915, a bill to direct the Secretary of Homeland Security to make anthrax vaccines and antimicrobials available to emergency response providers, and for other purposes.

S. 2067

At the request of Mr. WICKER, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2067, a bill to establish EUREKA Prize Competitions to accelerate discovery and development of disease-modifying, preventive, or curative treatments for Alzheimer's disease and related dementia, to encourage efforts to enhance detection and diagnosis of such diseases, or to enhance the quality and efficiency of care of individuals with such diseases.

S. 2186

At the request of Mr. COATS, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. 2186, a bill to provide the legal framework necessary for the growth of innovative private financing options for students to fund postsecondary education, and for other purposes.

S. 2193

At the request of Mr. CRUZ, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. KIRK) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2193, a bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to increase penalties for individuals who illegally reenter the United States after being removed and for other purposes.

S. 2196

At the request of Mr. CASEY, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2196, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for the non-application of Medicare competitive acquisition rates to complex rehabilitative wheelchairs and accessories.

S. 2336

At the request of Mr. COONS, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2336, a bill to modernize laws, and eliminate discrimination, with respect to people living with HIV/AIDS, and for other purposes.

S. 2337

At the request of Mrs. FEINSTEIN, the names of the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN) and the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY) were added as cosponsors of S. 2337, a bill to improve homeland security by enhancing the requirements for participation in the Visa Waiver Program, and for other purposes.

S. 2348

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2348, a bill to implement the use of Rapid DNA instruments to inform decisions about pretrial release or detention and their conditions, to solve and prevent violent crimes and other crimes, to exonerate the innocent, to prevent DNA analysis backlogs, and for other purposes.

S. 2351

At the request of Mr. ISAKSON, the names of the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER) and the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER) were added as cosponsors of S. 2351, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to extend the annual comment period for payment rates under Medicare Advantage.

S. 2363

At the request of Mr. CRUZ, the name of the Senator from Alabama (Mr. SHELBY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2363, a bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to permit the Governor of a State to reject the resettlement of a refugee in that State unless there is adequate assurance that the alien does not present a security risk and for other purposes.

S. 2373

At the request of Ms. CANTWELL, the name of the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2373, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for Medicare coverage of certain lymphedema compression treatment items as items of durable medical equipment.

S. 2377

At the request of Mr. REID, the names of the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) and the Senator from Maryland (Ms. MIKULSKI) were added as cosponsors of S. 2377, a bill to defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and protect and secure the United States, and for other purposes.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. WYDEN (for himself, Mr. BROWN, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. SANDERS, Ms. WARREN, and Mr. MERKLEY):

S. 2387. A bill to restore protections for Social Security, Railroad retirement, and Black Lung benefits from administrative offset; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, every day, Social Security provides vital benefits to millions of Americans who worked and paid into the system. To ensure workers would receive full access to these fundamental lifeline benefits, for many years, the law protected these earned benefits from attempts to recover debts. However, 20 years ago, Congress suddenly reversed course, and made a change to the law that allowed the government to cut Social Security and other hard-earned benefit payments in order to collect student loan and other Federal debts, like home loans owed to the Veterans Administration, and food stamp overpayments.

Now more than ever, the loss of these protections is creating a major hardship for American Citizens who rely on Social Security and other earned benefits to make ends meet. Student loan debt is becoming an increasingly serious problem in in Oregon and across the nation, with students and their families burdened by crushing student loan debt. Even in the best circumstances, many families will struggle to pay off crippling loans for years to come. However, for people who rely on benefits like Social Security after retirement, disability, or the death of a family member, making payments on student loans or other federal debts can become an insurmountable hardship.

Because of the lifeline nature of these earned benefits, for more than 40 years the law prevented all creditors from collecting hard-earned Social Security, Railroad Retirement, and Black Lung benefits to recoup debts. The only exceptions included unpaid Federal taxes, child support or alimony payments, and court-ordered victim restitution. These protections helped ensure that our social safety net programs were functioning as intended—something I think we can all agree is essential to preserving Social Security and other earned benefits.

Astonishingly, when the law changed as part of a 1996 omnibus budget bill, these changes were never fully debated in Congress. This means Members of Congress never had the chance to really explore how this policy would affect beneficiaries. The legislation ultimately included some protections for the most vulnerable, but even those protections have not been updated in 20 years.

We now realize what a profound effect the loss of these protections has had on retirees and individuals with disabilities, who often live on fixed incomes. More and more seniors and people with disabilities are having their Social Security and other lifeline benefits taken away to pay federal debts. For example, according to a September 2014 GAO report, the number of individuals whose Social Security benefits were offset to pay student loan debt increased significantly between 2002 and 2013, from about 31,000 to 155,000. For individuals 65 and older with student loan-related Social Security garnishments, the number grew from about 6,000 to about 36,000 over the same period. Congress should restore sanity to the system, and reestablish the protections that these beneficiaries deserve.

That is why I, along with Senators BROWN, WHITEHOUSE, GILLIBRAND, KLOBUCHAR, SANDERS and WARREN are introducing the Protection of Social Security Benefits Restoration Act. The bill would restore the strong protections in the law that prevented the government from taking away earned benefits to pay Federal debts, and guarantee beneficiaries will be able to maintain a basic standard of living by receiving the benefits they have earned. The bill is supported by Social Security Works, The Strengthen Social Security Coalition, AFL–CIO, Justice in Aging, Campaign for America's Future, Global Policy Solutions, Student Debt Crisis, the National Organization for Women, RootsAction.org, Project Springboard, The Alliance for a Just Society, the Economic Opportunity Institute, the Progressive Change Campaign Committee, The Arc of the United States, The Public Higher Education Network of Massachusetts, the American Federation of Government Employees, and the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

S. 2387

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Protection of Social Security Benefits Restoration Act''.

SEC. 2. PROTECTING SOCIAL SECURITY, RAILROAD RETIREMENT, AND BLACK LUNG BENEFITS FROM ADMINISTRATIVE OFFSET.

(a) PROHIBITION ON ADMINISTRATIVE OFFSET AUTHORITY.—

(1) ASSIGNMENT UNDER SOCIAL SECURITY ACT.—Section 207 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 407) is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(d) Subparagraphs (A), (C), and (D) of section 3716(c)(3) of title 31, United States Code, as such subparagraphs were in effect on the date before the date of enactment of the Protection of Social Security Benefits Restoration Act, shall be null and void and of no effect.''.

(2) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

(A) Section 14(a) of the Railroad Retirement Act of 1974 (45 U.S.C. 231m(a)) is amended by adding at the end the following: ''. The provisions of section 207(d) of the Social Security Act shall apply with respect to this title to the same extent as they apply in the case of title II of such Act.''.

(B) Section 2(e) of the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act (45 U.S.C. 352(e)) is amended by adding at the end the following: ''The provisions of section 207(d) of the Social Security Act shall apply with respect to this title to the same extent as they apply in the case of title II of such Act.''

(b) REPEAL OF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFSET AUTHORITY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Paragraph (3) of section 3716(c) of title 31, United States Code, is amended—

(A) by striking ''(3)(A)(i) Notwithstanding'' and all that follows through ''any overpayment under such program).'';

(B) by striking subparagraphs (C) and (D); and

(C) by redesignating subparagraph (B) as paragraph (3).

(2) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Paragraph (5) of such section is amended by striking ''the Commissioner of Social Security and''.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply to any collection by administrative offset occurring on or after the date of enactment of this Act of a claim arising before, on, or after the date of enactment of this Act.

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

S. 2389. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to extend the rural add-on payment in the Medicare home health benefit, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise today with my colleague from Washington, Senator CANTWELL, to introduce the Preserve Access to Medicare Rural Home Health Services Act of 2015. This legislation would extend the modest increase in payments for home health services in rural areas that otherwise will expire on January 1 of 2018.

Home health has become an increasingly important part of our health care system. The kinds of highly skilled—and often technically complex—services that our nation's home health caregivers provide have enabled millions of our most frail and vulnerable older and disabled citizens to avoid hospitals and nursing homes and stay just where they want to be—in the comfort, privacy, and security of their own homes. I have accompanied several of Maine's caring home health nurses on their visits to patients and have seen first hand the difference that they are making for patients and their families.

Surveys have shown that the delivery of home health services in rural areas can be as much as 12 to 15 percent more costly because of the extra travel time

required to cover long distances between patients, higher transportation expenses, and other factors. Because of the longer travel times, rural caregivers are unable to make as many visits in a day as their urban counterparts. For example, home health care agencies in Aroostook County in Northern Maine, where I am from, cover almost 6,700 square miles, with an average population of fewer than 11 persons per square mile. These agencies' costs are understandably much higher than other agencies located in more urban areas due to the long distances the staff must drive to see clients. Moreover, the staff is not able to see as many patients due to time on the road.

Agencies serving rural areas are also frequently smaller than their urban counterparts, which means that their relative costs are higher. Smaller agencies with fewer patients and fewer visits mean that fixed costs, particularly those associated with meeting regulatory requirements, are spread over a much smaller number of patients and visits, increasing overall per-patient and per-visit costs.

Moreover, in many rural areas, home health agencies are the primary caregivers for homebound beneficiaries with limited access to transportation. These rural patients often require more time and care than their urban counterparts and are understandably more expensive for agencies to serve. If the extra three per cent rural payment is not extended, agencies may be forced to decide not to accept rural patients with greater care needs. That could translate into less access to health care for ill, homebound seniors. The result would likely be that these seniors would be hospitalized more frequently and would have to seek care in nursing homes, adding considerable cost to the system.

Failure to extend the rural add-on payment would only put more pressure on rural home health agencies that are already operating on very narrow margins and could force some of the agencies to close their doors altogether. If any of these agencies were forced to close, the Medicare patients in that region could lose all of their access to home care.

The legislation we are introducing today will extend the rural add-on for 5 years and help to ensure that Medicare patients in rural areas continue to have access to the home health services they need. Moreover, we would offset costs of the bill by reducing the home health outlier fund by .25 percent over the same 5 years. I urge our colleagues to join us as cosponsors.

By Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself and Mr. LEAHY):

S. 2390. A bill to provide adequate protections for whistleblowers at the Federal Bureau of Investigation; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, in his 2013 confirmation hearing, FBI Director James Comey called whistleblowers ''a critical element of a functioning democracy.''

That is what I have been saying for years. Whistleblowers expose waste, fraud, and abuse. They help keep Government honest and make sure taxpayer dollars are spent wisely. By pointing out problems, whistleblowers foster transparency and make it possible for an organization to do better.

Agencies should value their contributions. Instead, agencies often ignore whistleblower complaints or worse—retaliate against whistleblowers for bringing wrongdoing to light.

Across the Federal Government, whistleblowers are treated like skunks at a picnic, instead of the dedicated public servants they are. Unfortunately, the Federal Bureau of Investigation is no exception on that point. However, the FBI is the exception when it comes to legal protections for whistleblowers.

Unlike every other federal agency, the FBI is the only agency where employees are not protected for reporting wrongdoing to their direct supervisors or others within their chain-of-command. This makes no sense.

Studies show the great majority of whistleblowers first make disclosures to their supervisors. The FBI's own policy encourages reports to supervisors within the chain-of-command. Nevertheless, an FBI employee who makes a disclosure of waste, fraud, or abuse to their supervisor has no protection under law if the supervisor retaliates.

It is no surprise, then, that a 2015 report by the Government Accountability Office found that, of the 54 closed FBI whistleblower complaints it reviewed where documentation showed the reason for closing the case, at least 17 cases were dismissed in part because an employee made a disclosure to someone in their chain-of-command or management.

Why is there this gaping hole in FBI whistleblower protections? Because, unlike every other federal law enforcement agency, the FBI is statutorily exempt from government-wide whistleblower protection laws. As a result, it lives under its own unique regulatory scheme conceived, created, and controlled entirely within the Department of Justice. There is no independent review.

This unique exemption for the FBI has led to outrageous delays in the adjudication of FBI whistleblower complaints due to endless internal appeals and the low priority that FBI whistleblower cases receive at the Justice Department.

Currently, FBI whistleblower cases are adjudicated by the Department's Office of Attorney Recruitment and Management—an office whose very name clearly shows it was not designed to address reprisal cases. Appeals are considered by the Deputy Attorney General's office. That office has made clear that it has other priorities that render it incapable of even minimal communications with whistleblowers to inform them of their case status. Clearly, we need to do better.

I have worked with many FBI whistleblowers over the years who put everything on the line just to tell the truth. In exchange for their courage, they faced delays of up to a decade in adjudicating their cases, a deaf ear from the highest levels of the Justice Department, and in many cases, no protection at all.

Consider the case of Michael German. Michael testified at our hearing in March this year where we examined the effectiveness—or lack thereof—of the Justice Department's FBI whistleblower regulations.

Before he resigned from the FBI in 2004, Michael German was a decorated undercover special agent who successfully risked his life to infiltrate white supremacist and neo-Nazi hate groups across the United States, some with ties to foreign terrorist groups. He discovered that a portion of a meeting between two such groups had been illegally recorded by mistake.

Rather than following the rules and documenting the error, as he suggested, a supervisor told him to ''pretend it didn't happen.'' But he refused to back down. He reported the wrongdoing to his Assistant Special Agent in Charge. Then the FBI ''froze him out and made him a 'pariah.' ''

Because Special Agent German disclosed wrongdoing to his ASAC instead of one of the nine specifically designated entities in the Justice Department regulations, he was not protected. His case was not even investigated ''in earnest,'' according to him, until he resigned from the FBI and reported the matter to Congress.

This is the tragedy of weak FBI whistleblower protections: If this bill had been law when Michael German first blew the whistle, this country might still have the benefit of this decorated FBI Special Agent in our fight against terrorism. He is by far not the only FBI whistleblower sidelined and ostracized by the failures of current law and policy.

In today's world, we cannot afford to lose public servants like Michael German. That is why today, with my cosponsor Senator LEAHY, I am introducing this hi-partisan legislation, the FBI Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act of 2015.

Among other things, this bill will for the first time provide legal protection to FBI employees who report wrongdoing to their supervisors, provide a more independent process for whistleblowers who have suffered reprisal, and increase oversight and transparency of the FBI whistleblower complaint process.

This bill is a long time coming. I urge my colleagues to support it.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

S. 2390

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Federal Bureau of Investigation Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act of 2015''.

SEC. 2. FBI WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 2303 of title 5, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

''§ 2303. Prohibited personnel practices in the Federal Bureau of Investigation

''(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section—

''(1) the term 'administrative law judge' means an administrative law judge appointed by the Attorney General under section 3105 or used by the Attorney General under section 3344;

''(2) the term 'Inspector General' means the Inspector General of the Department of Justice;

''(3) the term 'personnel action' means any action described in section 2302(a)(2)(A) with respect to an employee in, or applicant for, a position in the Federal Bureau of Investigation (other than a position of a confidential, policy-determining, policymaking, or policy-advocating character);

''(4) the term 'prohibited personnel practice' means a prohibited personnel practice described in subsection (b); and

''(5) the term 'protected disclosure' means any disclosure of information by an employee in, or applicant for, a position in the Federal Bureau of Investigation—

''(A) made—

''(i) for an employee, to a supervisor in the direct chain of command of the employee, up to and including the head of the employing agency;

''(ii) to the Inspector General;

''(iii) to the Office of Professional Responsibility of the Department of Justice;

''(iv) to the Office of Professional Responsibility of the Federal Bureau of Investigation;

''(v) to the Inspection Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation;

''(vi) to a Member of Congress;

''(vii) to the Office of Special Counsel; or

''(viii) to an employee designated by any officer, employee, office, or division described in clauses (i) through (vii) for the purpose of receiving such disclosures; and

''(B) which the employee or applicant reasonably believes evidences—

''(i) any violation of any law, rule, or regulation; or

''(ii) gross mismanagement, a gross waste of funds, an abuse of authority, or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety.

''(b) PROHIBITED PRACTICES.—Any employee of the Federal Bureau of Investigation or another component of the Department of Justice who has authority to take, direct others to take, recommend, or approve any personnel action, shall not, with respect to such authority—

''(1) take or fail to take, or threaten to take or fail to take, a personnel action with respect to an employee in, or applicant for, a position in the Federal Bureau of Investigation because of a protected disclosure;

''(2) take or fail to take, or threaten to take or fail to take, any personnel action against an employee in, or applicant for, a position in the Federal Bureau of Investigation because of—

''(A) the exercise of any appeal, complaint, or grievance right granted by any law, rule, or regulation—

''(i) with regard to remedying a violation of paragraph (1); or

''(ii) other than with regard to remedying a violation of paragraph (1);

''(B) testifying for or otherwise lawfully assisting any individual in the exercise of any right referred to in clause (i) or (ii) of subparagraph (A);

''(C) cooperating with or disclosing information to the Inspector General of an agency, or the Special Counsel, in accordance with applicable provisions of law; or

''(D) refusing to obey an order that would require the individual to violate a law; or

''(3) implement or enforce any nondisclosure policy, form, or agreement, if such policy, form, or agreement does not contain the statement described in section 2302(b)(13).

''(c) PROCEDURES.—

''(1) FILING OF A COMPLAINT.—An employee in, or applicant for, a position in the Federal Bureau of Investigation may seek review of a personnel action alleged to be in violation of subsection (b) by filing a complaint with the Office of the Inspector General.

''(2) INVESTIGATION.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—The Inspector General shall investigate any complaint alleging a personnel action in violation of subsection (b), consistent with the procedures and requirements described in section 1214.

''(B) DETERMINATION.—The Inspector General—

''(i) shall issue a decision containing the findings of the Inspector General supporting the determination of the Inspector General; and

''(ii) if the Inspector General determines that reasonable grounds exist to believe that a personnel action occurred, exists, or is to be taken, in violation of subsection (b), the Inspector General shall request from an administrative law judge, and the administrative law judge, without further proceedings, shall issue, a preliminary order staying the personnel action.

''(3) FILING OF OBJECTIONS.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 60 days after the Inspector General issues a decision under paragraph (2)(B)(i), either party may file objections to the decision and request a hearing on the record.

''(B) NO EFFECT ON STAY.—The filing of objections under subparagraph (A) shall not affect the stay of a personnel action under a preliminary order issued under paragraph (2)(B)(ii).

''(C) NO OBJECTIONS FILED.—If no party has filed objections as of the date that is 61 days after the date the Inspector General issues a decision—

''(i) the decision is final and not subject to further review; and

''(ii) if the Inspector General had determined that reasonable grounds exist to believe that a personnel action occurred, exists, or is to be taken, in violation of subsection (b)—

''(I) an administrative law judge, without further proceedings, shall issue an order permanently staying the personnel action; and

''(II) upon motion by the employee, and after an opportunity for a hearing, an administrative law judge may issue an order that provides for corrective action as described under section 1221(g).

''(4) REVIEW BY ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—If objections are filed under paragraph (3)(A), an administrative law judge shall review the decision by the Inspector General on the record after opportunity for agency hearing.

''(B) CORRECTIVE ACTION.—An administrative law judge may issue an order providing for corrective action as described under section 1221(g).

''(C) DETERMINATION.—An administrative law judge shall issue a written decision explaining the grounds for the determination by the administrative law judge under this paragraph.

''(D) EFFECT OF DETERMINATION.—The determination by an administrative law judge under this paragraph shall become the decision of the Department of Justice without further proceedings, unless there is an appeal to, or review on motion of, the Attorney General within such time as the Attorney General shall by rule establish.

''(5) REVIEW BY ATTORNEY GENERAL.—

''(A) TIMEFRAME.—

''(i) IN GENERAL.—Upon an appeal to, or review on motion of, the Attorney General under paragraph (4)(D), the Attorney General, through reference to such categories of cases, or other means, as the Attorney General determines appropriate, shall establish and announce publicly the date by which the Attorney General intends to complete action on the matter, which shall ensure expeditious consideration of the appeal or review, consistent with the interests of fairness and other priorities of the Attorney General.

''(ii) FAILURE TO MEET DEADLINE.—If the Attorney General fails to complete action on an appeal or review by the announced date, and the expected delay will exceed 30 days, the Attorney General shall publicly announce the new date by which the Attorney General intends to complete action on the appeal or review.

''(B) DETERMINATION.—The Attorney General shall issue a written decision explaining the grounds for the determination by the Attorney General in an appeal or review under paragraph (4)(D).

''(6) PUBLICATION OF DETERMINATIONS.—

''(A) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.—Except as provided in subparagraph (B), the Attorney General shall make written decisions issued by administrative law judges under paragraph (4)(C) and written decisions issued by the Attorney General under paragraph (5)(B) publicly available.

''(B) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in subparagraph (A) shall be construed to limit the authority of an administrative law judge or the Attorney General to limit the public disclosure of information under law or regulations.

''(7) JUDICIAL REVIEW.—Any determination by an administrative law judge or the Attorney General under this subsection shall be subject to judicial review under chapter 7. A petition for judicial review of such a determination shall be filed in the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit or any court of appeals of competent jurisdiction.

''(d) REGULATIONS.—The Attorney General shall prescribe regulations to carry out subsection (c) that—

''(1) ensure that prohibited personnel practices shall not be taken against an employee in, or applicant for, a position in the Federal Bureau of Investigation; and

''(2) provide for the administration and enforcement of subsection (c) in a manner consistent with applicable provisions of sections 1214 and 1221 and in accordance with the procedures under subchapter II of chapter 5 and chapter 7.

''(e) REPORTING.—Not later than March 1 of each year, the Attorney General shall make publically available a report containing—

''(1) the number and nature of allegations of a prohibited personnel practice received during the previous year;

''(2) the disposition of each allegation of a prohibited personnel practice resolved during the previous year;

''(3) the number of unresolved allegations of a prohibited personnel practice pending as of the end of the previous year and, for each such unresolved allegation, how long the allegation had been pending as of the end of the previous year;

''(4) the number of disciplinary investigations and actions taken with respect to each allegation of a prohibited personnel practice during the previous year;

''(5) the number of instances during the previous year in which the Inspector General found a reasonable basis that a prohibited personnel practice had occurred that were appealed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation; and

''(6) the number of allegations of a prohibited personnel practice resolved through settlement, including the number that were resolved as a result of mediation.

''(f) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit the jurisdiction of any office under any other provision of law to conduct an investigation to determine whether a prohibited personnel practice has been or will be taken.''.

(b) GAO REPORT.—

(1) DEFINITION.—In this subsection, the term ''prohibited personnel practice'' means a prohibited personnel practice described in section 2303(b) of title 5, United States Code, as added by subsection (a).

(2) REPORT.—Not later than 4 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to Congress a report on the effects of the amendment made by subsection (a), which shall include—

(A) an evaluation of the timeliness of resolution of allegations of a prohibited personnel practice;

(B) an analysis of the corrective action provided in instances of a prohibited personnel practice;

(C) the number and type of disciplinary actions taken in instances of a prohibited personnel practice;

(D) an evaluation of the communication by the Inspector General of the Department of Justice with an individual alleging a prohibited personnel practice regarding the investigation and resolution of the allegation;

(E) an assessment of the mediation process of the Department of Justice; and

(F) a discussion of how the use of administrative law judges and review under chapters 5 and 7 of title 5, United States Code, affected the process of investigating and resolving allegations of a prohibited personnel practice.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, whistleblowers serve an essential role in providing transparency and accountability in the Federal Government. It is important that all government employees are provided with strong and effective avenues to come forward with evidence of government abuse and misuse. To ensure that whistleblowers feel comfortable speaking up when they discover wrongdoing, it is also imperative that they are afforded protections from retaliation. That is why Senator GRASSLEY and I are joining together to introduce the Federal Bureau of Investigation, ''FBI'', Whistleblower Protection Enhancements Act of 2015.

Current FBI policies do not go far enough to protect whistleblowers. In March, the Judiciary Committee held a hearing that highlighted a number of serious problems facing whistleblowers at the FBI. We received testimony about the lack of protections for employees who report waste, fraud, or abuse to their direct supervisors. We also heard instances of the FBI failing to comply with regulatory requirements when conducting retaliation investigations, and that adjudication of contested cases can take years. One former employee, Michael German, testified in detail about how he was forced to end his distinguished career at the FBI after he disclosed to Congress serious deficiencies in the agency's handling of counterterrorism investigations. He chose to do this after making a protected whistleblower disclosure at the FBI that went nowhere while the retaliation continued.

The concerns expressed at the hearing echo concerns that were identified in two recent reports on the FBI whistleblower framework, one by the Department of Justice and the other by Government Accountability Office. Clearly the status quo is unacceptable. Congress should extend to FBI whistleblowers the same level of protection that is afforded other Federal employees who speak out about waste, fraud, or abuse. That is what Senator GRASSLEY and I seek to do today with this bill.

Our legislation closely tracks the protections contained in the Whistleblower Protection Act. Importantly, we extend whistleblower protections to FBI employees who blow the whistle to supervisors in their chain of command. This common sense fix is crucial to protect those employees who dare to speak up and report concerns to their superiors. The bill also provides clear guidance on the investigation and adjudication of retaliation claims. Investigations will now be handled solely by the Office of Inspector General, rather than sharing this responsibility with the Office of Professional Responsibility. This will provide much needed clarity and consistency in the process. Contested cases will now be adjudicated by Administrative Law Judges instead of by the Office of Attorney Recruitment and Management. Under this new process the Administrative Procedures Act will apply, ensuring a hearing on the record and strong procedural protections for all parties.

This bipartisan bill will help to ensure that FBI employees are able to blow the whistle on waste, fraud, or abuse at the FBI and not face personal repercussions for doing so. I urge the Senate to act quickly to take up and pass this important bipartisan legislation.

By Mr. SANDERS (for himself, Mr. MARKEY, and Mr. MERKLEY):

S. 2391. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to permanently extend certain energy tax provisions; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, one of the great moral issues of our time is the global crisis of climate change. Let me be very clear about climate change. Climate change is not a Democratic issue or a progressive issue. It is not a Republican issue or a conservative issue. What it is, is an issue that has everything to do with physics. It is an issue of physics. What we know beyond a shadow of a doubt is that the debate is over, and that is that the vast majority of the scientists who have studied the issues are quite clear. What they tell us over and over again is that climate change is real, climate change is caused by human activity, and climate change is already causing devastating problems throughout our country and, in fact, throughout the world.

What the scientists also tell us is that we have a relatively short window of opportunity to bring about the fundamental changes we need in our global energy system to transform our energy system from fossil fuel to energy efficiency and sustainable energy. We have a limited window of opportunity. What the scientists are telling us very clearly is if we do not seize that opportunity, if we do not lead the world—working with China, Russia, India and other countries—in transforming the global energy system, the planet we leave to our children and our grandchildren will be significantly less habitable than the planet we enjoy.

My nightmare is that 20, 30, 40 years from now our kids and our grandchildren will look Members of the Senate and the House in the eye, and they will say: The scientists told you what would happen and you did nothing. Why did you not react? How hard was it to stand up to the fossil fuel industry and transform our energy system away from coal and oil into energy efficiency and wind, solar, geothermal, and other sustainable energies?

Pope Francis recently made what I thought to be a very profound statement. He said that our planet is on a suicidal direction—a suicidal direction—in terms of climate change. What a frightening and horrible thought. How irresponsible can we be to ignore what the entire scientific community is saying?

I know there are many of my colleagues who refuse to acknowledge the reality. As perhaps the most progressive Member of the U.S. Senate let me simply say this: I have differences with my Republican colleagues on virtually every issue. That goes without saying, but there is something very different about this issue. I have been in hearings with my Republican colleagues where I heard doctors and scientists talk about cancer, about Alzheimer's, about diabetes, about all kinds of illnesses, and I may disagree with my Republican colleagues about how we go forward, how much we should fund NIH, but I have never heard my Republican colleagues attack doctors or researchers or scientists for their views on cancer research or Alzheimer's research. As I do, they respect that research. But somehow or another, when it comes to the issue of climate change, at best what we are seeing Republicans do—many Republicans, most Republicans—is ignore the issue or claim they are not scientists or, at worst, attack those scientists who are doing the research.

Why is that? Why is it that my Republican colleagues accept the research

on cancer, on Alzheimer's, on all kinds of illnesses, and they respect scientists who are working in all kinds of areas. But somehow or another when it comes to the issue of climate change, my Republican friends are in denial? What I will say is that this has nothing to do with science, and it has sadly and tragically everything to do with our corrupt campaign finance laws, which allow large corporations and billionaires to contribute as much money as they want into the political process. In my view, the reality is that any Republican—and I happen to believe that many Republicans understand the truth about climate change. But I also believe that any Republican who stood up and said ''You know what, I just talked to some scientists'' or ''I just read some of the literature, and this climate change is real, it is dangerous, and we have to do something about it''—I believe that on that day when that Republican stands up, the money will stop flowing from the fossil fuel industry, from the Koch brothers, and there will be a strong likelihood that Republican would be primaried in the next election.

According to the Center for Responsive Politics, at the national level where companies have to report what they spend on lobbying and campaign contributions, the oil companies, coal companies, and electric utilities have spent a staggering $2.2 billion in Federal lobbying since 2009 and another $330 million in Federal campaign contributions. That is just at the Federal level—over $2.5 billion in lobbying and campaign contributions in just 6 years. Even in Washington, DC, that is a lot of money, and that is just the money that we know about.

That is not all of it. That is not the end of it. As a result of the disastrous Citizens United Supreme Court decision, which allowed corporations and billionaires to spend unlimited sums of money, we know that the Koch brothers, who make most of their money in the fossil fuel industry, and a handful of their friends will be spending some $900 million—$900 million—from one family and a few of their friends in the 2016 election cycle. Clearly, one of the reasons they are investing so much in this election cycle is that they intend to continue doing everything they can to make sure Congress does not go forward to protect our kids and our grandchildren against the ravages of climate change.

According to an 8-month investigation by journalists at Inside Climate News, Exxon—now ExxonMobil—may have conducted extensive research on climate change as early as 1977, leading top Exxon scientists to conclude both that climate change is real and that it was caused, in part, by the carbon pollution resulting from the use of Exxon's petroleum-based products. In addition, the purported internal business memoranda accompanying the reporting asserted that Exxon's climate science program was launched in response to a perceived existential threat to its business model. In other words, the scientists at ExxonMobil, who are scientists, discovered the truth, and upon hearing the truth, ExxonMobil poured millions of dollars into organizations whose main function was to deny the reality of climate change.

The efforts to transform our energy system are taking place not only here in Washington, the Nation's Capital, but at the State and local level as well. In States such as Arizona and Florida, roadblocks are being put up to stop people from gaining access to renewable energy sources such as wind and especially rooftop solar. In States such as Arizona and Florida and many of our Southern States with huge solar exposure, there is huge potential for solar. Yet we are now seeing politicians, at the behest of the fossil fuel industry, put up roadblock after roadblock to make it harder for people to move to solar or wind.

I have heard a lot of the arguments from the fossil fuel industry as to why we should not transform our energy system, and many of those arguments are repeated here on the floor by some of my colleagues. But the truth is that it turns out that transforming our energy system away from fossil fuel and into energy efficiency and sustainable energy will create a significant number of new and decent-paying jobs, and it will lower energy bills in communities all across this country.

My own State of Vermont participates in a regional greenhouse gas initiative cap-and-trade program for the power sector. Since 2009, the program has created over 14,000 net jobs, and carbon pollution levels dropped by 15 percent at the same time consumers, businesses, and other energy users saw their electricity and heating bills go down by $459 million. The majority of those savings came from energy efficiency. All the while, jobs were created, not exported, and we relied on clean domestic energy instead of oil from the Middle East.

Energy efficiency clearly makes an enormous amount of sense. It is clearly the low-hanging fruit as we transform our energy system.

I have been in homes in Vermont that have been effectively weatherized, and they are seeing heating bills drop by 50 percent. People in those homes are living in more comfort, and jobs are being created by those people who install the insulation and other energy-efficient tools, not to mention all of the folks who are manufacturing the insulation, windows, and efficient roofing.

According to the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy, energy efficiency provides a larger return on investment than any individual energy source because for every $1 invested in energy efficiency, we see $4 in total benefits for all consumers. For every $1 billion invested in efficiency upgrades, we see a creation of 19,000 direct and indirect jobs.

These numbers are great and speak for themselves, but acting on climate change is also a moral obligation. While we will all suffer—all over our country and all over the world—the impacts of climate change, the sad truth is that climate impacts fall especially hard upon the most vulnerable people in our society. Minority and low-income communities in the United States are disproportionately impacted by the causes of climate change. According to a 2012 study by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the NAACP, the nearly 6 million people in the United States who live within 3 miles of a coal-burning powerplant have an average per capita annual income of just over $18,000 a year. Among the people who live within 3 miles of a coal powerplant, 39 percent are people of color, while people of color compromise only 36 percent of the total population of the United States.

The bottom line is that when we talk about climate change and its impact upon our planet and all the people, we should bear in mind that this is happening not only in the United States but all over the world. The people who will suffer the most are low-income people and people living in poverty.

I am introducing legislation called the American Clean Energy Investment Act of 2015. This legislation is built upon the fact that the prices for wind and solar power have plummeted over the last decade, cutting carbon pollution and creating tens of thousands of new jobs in the process. Meanwhile, the fossil fuel industry benefits from permanent subsidies worth tens of billions of dollars each year. Incentives for renewable energy and energy efficiency are temporary and are too often allowed to elapse entirely.

My legislation permanently extends and makes refundable some of our most important renewable energy tax credits for energy efficiency and sustainable energy, including sources such as solar, wind, and geothermal. Permanently extending these incentives will drive over $500 billion in clean energy investments between now and 2030 and are an integral part of putting us on a pathway to more than doubling the size of our clean energy workforce to 10 million American workers. The costs for these incentives are completely offset by repealing the special interest corporate welfare in the Tax Code for the fossil fuel industries.

If we are going to be serious about dealing with the threat of climate change, we need to end the polluter welfare that subsidizes increased pollution from fossil fuels and instead invest those resources in clean energy solutions that reduce pollution. Doing this will save lives, protect our economy, and reduce the threats from climate change at the same time we are creating millions of good-paying jobs here in the United States.

Our legislation is supported by the Solar Energy Industries Association,

the American Wind Energy Association, 350.org, and cosponsored by Senators MERKLEY and MARKEY.

We have a national responsibility to protect the livelihoods of the working families and communities who help power and build this country. We must act now to reenergize our manufacturing base, bolster our clean energy economy, and protect the livelihoods of energy workers and the communities they support.

As a result of these concerns, this bill provides up to 3 years of unemployment insurance, health care, and pensions for workers who lose their jobs due to our transition to a clean energy economy. In other words, we understand—as was very much the case with our moving away from tobacco farming in this country—that the people who do the work in coal, oil, and other fossil fuels are not to blame for the fact that the product they produce is causing so many problems in our country. Our job is to protect and transition them to other decent-paying jobs, and the government has a responsibility to help with that transition.

Based on what the scientists are telling us, we need to make very significant cuts in carbon pollution emissions and we need to do it as soon as possible. It is absolutely vital that we do what many economists tell us we must do, and that is to put a price on carbon. It is the simplest and most direct way to make the kinds of cuts in carbon pollution that we have to make if we are going to successfully transition from fossil fuel to energy efficiency and sustainable energy. That is why within the Climate Protection and Justice Act that I am introducing, there will be a tax on carbon. Directly pricing carbon is a key part of the solution of transforming our energy system. Many experts support a fee on carbon pollution emissions, including liberal, moderates, and even prominent conservatives such as George Shultz, Nobel laureate economist Gary Becker, Mitt Romney's former adviser Gregory Mankiw, former Reagan adviser Art Laffer, former Republican Bob Inglis, and many others. The idea of a price on carbon is not just a progressive concept, it is one that is being supported by economists throughout the political spectrum.

The Nation's leading corporations, including the Nation's five biggest oil giants, are already planning their future budgets with the assumptions that there will be a cost applied to carbon emissions. In other words, some of the very companies that have strongly opposed action to address climate change are recognizing the reality in front of them, and that is that the United States is going to—hopefully sooner rather than later—address the crisis of climate change and that there will be a tax on carbon. This tax works by setting enforceable pollution-reduction targets for each decade, including a 40-percent reduction below 1990 levels by 2030 and a more than 80-percent reduction level by 2050.

This legislation sets a price on carbon pollution for fossil fuel producers or importers. Proceeds from the carbon pollution fee are returned to the bottom 80 percent of households making less than $100,000 a year to offset them for any increase they might experience in increased energy costs as a result of this transition. For an average family of four, this will amount to a rebate of roughly $900 in 2017 and will grow to an annual rebate of $1,900 in 2030. It would only apply upstream, meaning at the oil refinery, coal mine, natural gas processing plant, or point of importation. It would apply to fewer than 3,000 of the largest fossil fuel polluters in this country.

EPA's existing authority to regulate carbon pollution, sources from powerplants, vehicles, and other sources is reaffirmed, and if the United States is not on track to meet its emissions reduction targets, the EPA shall issue new regulations to ensure that it does.

Importantly, based on lessons learned from the cap-and-trade law in California, a Federal interagency council will oversee the creation and distribution of a climate justice resiliency fund block grant program to States, territories, tribes, municipalities, counties, localities, and nonprofit community organizations. The council will provide $20 billion annually for these grants in communities that are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change for important programs they are running.

This legislation strengthens our manufacturing sector through a border tariff adjustment mechanism which shields energy-intensive, trade-exposed industries such as steel, aluminum, glass, pulp and paper, from unfair international trade policies. The monies raised by the green tariff are used to help improve industrial energy efficiency.

Farmers receive dedicated funding through the USDA's Rural Energy for America Program to improve on farm energy efficiency and to adopt onsite renewable energy. The bill includes incentives for farmers to adopt no-till practices and creates an incentive program to encourage the adoption of sustainable fertilizer application practices.

Finally, the bill includes Federal electricity market reforms that reduce pollution, increase efficiency, and reduce costs by ensuring equitable grid access for demand response programs.

At the end of the day, the Congress of the United States is going to have to make some very important and fundamental decisions, and the most important is whether we believe in science. We can have many disagreements on many issues, but we should not have a disagreement about whether we base public policy on science rather than campaign contributions. That really is the issue we are dealing with right now.

We are in a critical moment in world history. Our planet is becoming warmer, sea levels are rising, and communities all over the world that are on seacoasts are being threatened. The ocean is being acidified to an unprecedented level, which has huge impacts in so many areas, including the ability of people to fish and gain nutrients from the ocean.

We are looking at unprecedented levels of heat waves in India, Pakistan, and Europe that have killed thousands of people. We are looking at forest fires on the west coast of that country that are unprecedented in terms of their duration and their ferocity.

So we have to make a decision about whether we stand with our children and our grandchildren or whether we stand with campaign contributors from the fossil fuel industry.

Climate change is real. Climate change is caused by human activity. Climate change is already causing devastating damage on this planet. Our job is now to stand with our children, to stand with our grandchildren, and to make certain that they have a planet that is healthy and that is habitable. That is what the legislation I am introducing will do.

By Mr. REID (for himself, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. TESTER, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. BOOKER, Ms. BALDWIN, and Mr. SCHUMER):

S. 2397. A bill to amend the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act to authorize the Secretary of Health and Human Services to make grants to States that extend or eliminate unexpired statutes of limitation applicable to laws involving child sexual abuse; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

S. 2397

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

SECTION 1. CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (42 U.S.C. 5101 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"TITLE III—GRANTS FOR THE PREVENTION OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

"SEC. 301. FINDINGS.

''Congress finds that—

''(1) child sexual abuse is a pernicious crime perpetrated through threats of violence, intimidation, manipulation, and abuse of power;

''(2) due to the subversive nature of this crime, the average age of disclosure of incestuous child sexual abuse does not occur until a victim is over 25 years old;

''(3) because many State statutes of limitations applicable to laws involving child sexual abuse fail to give victims adequate time to come forward and report their abuse, numerous victims are unable to seek fair and just remediation against their abusers; and

''(4) due to the especially heinous nature of child sexual abuse, it is imperative that perpetrators of this crime are punished, prevented from reoffending, and victims have

the opportunity to see their abusers brought to justice.

''SEC. 302. DEFINITIONS.

''In this title—

''(1) the term 'eligible State' means a State or Indian tribe that, not later than September 30 of the preceding fiscal year does not have any statute of limitations applicable to laws involving child sexual abuse; and

''(2) the term 'Indian tribe' means a tribe identified in the list published by the Secretary of the Interior in the Federal Register pursuant to section 104 of the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of 1994 (25 U.S.C. 479a–1).

''SEC. 303. GRANT PROGRAM.

''The Secretary, in consultation with the Attorney General, is authorized to make grants to eligible States for the purpose of assisting eligible States in developing, establishing, and operating programs designed to improve—

''(1) the assessment and investigation of suspected child sexual abuse cases, in a manner that limits additional trauma to the child and the family of the child;

''(2) the investigation and prosecution of cases of child sexual abuse; and

''(3) the assessment and investigation of cases involving children with disabilities or serious health-related problems who are suspected victims of child sexual abuse.

''SEC. 304. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

''There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this title $40,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2016 through 2025.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall apply to any violation of a law involving child sexual abuse committed before the date of the enactment of this Act if the statute of limitations applicable to that law had not run as of the date of enactment of this Act.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 333—TO DIRECT THE SENATE LEGAL COUNSEL TO APPEAR AS AMICUS CURIAE IN THE NAME OF THE SENATE IN BANK MARKAZI, THE CENTRAL BANK OF IRAN V. DEBORAH D. PETERSON, ET AL. (S. CT.)

Mr. MCCONNELL (for himself and Mr. REID of Nevada) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 333

Whereas, in the case of *Bank Markazi, The Central Bank of Iran v. Deborah D. Peterson, et al.*, No. 14–770, pending in the Supreme Court of the United States, the constitutionality of section 502 of the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012, Pub. L. No. 112–158, 126 Stat. 1214, 1258 (2012), codified at 22 U.S.C. §8772, has been placed in issue;

Whereas, pursuant to sections 703(c), 706(a), and 713(a) of the Ethics in Government Act of 1978, 2 U.S.C. 288b(c), 288e(a), and 288*l*(a), the Senate may direct its counsel to appear as amicus curiae in the name of the Senate in any legal action in which the powers and responsibilities of Congress under the Constitution are placed in issue: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate Legal Counsel is directed to appear as amicus curiae on behalf of the Senate in the case of *Bank Markazi, The Central Bank of Iran v. Deborah D. Peterson, et al.*, to defend the constitutionality of section 502 of the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 2922. Mr. MCCONNELL proposed an amendment to the bill H.R. 2250, making appropriations for the Legislative Branch for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

SA 2923. Mr. MCCONNELL proposed an amendment to the bill H.R. 2250, supra.

SA 2924. Mr. MCCONNELL (for Mr. NELSON (for himself and Ms. AYOTTE)) proposed an amendment to the bill S. 142, to require special packaging for liquid nicotine containers, and for other purposes.

SA 2925. Mr. MCCONNELL (for Mr. NELSON (for himself and Ms. AYOTTE)) proposed an amendment to the bill S. 142, supra.

SA 2926. Mr. MCCONNELL (for Mr. FRANKEN (for himself and Mr. CORNYN)) proposed an amendment to the bill S. 993, to increase public safety by facilitating collaboration among the criminal justice, juvenile justice, veterans treatment services, mental health treatment, and substance abuse systems.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 2922. Mr. MCCONNELL proposed an amendment to the bill H.R. 2250, making appropriations for the Legislative Branch for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; as follows:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

That the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2016 (Public Law 114-53) is amended by striking the date specified in section 106(3) and inserting ''December 16, 2015''.

This Act may be cited as the ''Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2016''.

SA 2923. Mr. MCCONNELL proposed an amendment to the bill H.R. 2250, making appropriations for the Legislative Branch for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; as follows:

To amend the title to read:

''Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2016''.

SA 2924. Mr. MCCONNELL (for Mr. NELSON (for himself and Ms. AYOTTE)) proposed an amendment to the bill S. 142, to require special packaging for liquid nicotine containers, and for other purposes; as follows:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Child Nicotine Poisoning Prevention Act of 2015''.

SEC. 2. SPECIAL PACKAGING FOR LIQUID NICOTINE CONTAINERS.

(a) REQUIREMENT.—Notwithstanding section 2(f)(2) of the Federal Hazardous Substances Act (15 U.S.C. 1261(f)(2)) and section 3(a)(5) of the Consumer Product Safety Act (15 U.S.C. 2052(a)(5)), any nicotine provided in a liquid nicotine container sold, offered for sale, manufactured for sale, distributed in commerce, or imported into the United States shall be packaged in accordance with the standards provided in section 1700.15 of title 16, Code of Federal Regulations, as determined through testing in accordance with the method described in section 1700.20 of title 16, Code of Federal Regulations, and any subsequent changes to such sections adopted by the Commission.

(b) SAVINGS CLAUSE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Nothing in this Act shall be construed to limit or otherwise affect the authority of the Secretary of Health and Human Services to regulate, issue guidance, or take action regarding the manufacture, marketing, sale, distribution, importation, or packaging, including child-resistant packaging, of nicotine, liquid nicotine, liquid nicotine containers, electronic cigarettes, electronic nicotine delivery systems or other similar products that contain or dispense liquid nicotine, or any other nicotine-related products, including—

(A) authority under the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 301 et seq.) and the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act (Public Law 111–31) and the amendments made by such Act; and

(B) authority for the rulemaking entitled ''Deeming Tobacco Products to Be Subject to the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, as Amended by the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act; regulations on the Sale and Distribution of Tobacco Products and the Required Warning Statements for Tobacco Products'' (April 2014) (FDA–2014–N–0189), the rulemaking entitled ''Nicotine Exposure Warnings and Child-Resistant Packaging for Liquid Nicotine, Nicotine-Containing E-Liquid(s), and Other Tobacco Products'' (June 2015) (FDA–2015–N–1514), and subsequent actions by the Secretary regarding packaging of liquid nicotine containers.

(2) CONSULTATION.—If the Secretary of Health and Human Services adopts, maintains, enforces, or imposes or continues in effect any packaging requirement for liquid nicotine containers, including a child-resistant packaging requirement, the Secretary shall consult with the Commission, taking into consideration the expertise of the Commission in implementing and enforcing this Act and the Poison Prevention Packaging Act of 1970 (15 U.S.C. 1471 et seq.).

(c) APPLICABILITY.—Notwithstanding section 3(a)(5) of the Consumer Product Safety Act (15 U.S.C. 2052(a)(5)) and section 2(f)(2) of the Federal Hazardous Substances Act (15 U.S.C. 1261(f)(2)), the requirement of subsection (a) shall be treated as a standard for the special packaging of a household substance established under section 3(a) of the Poison Prevention Packaging Act of 1970 (15 U.S.C. 1472(a)).

(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) COMMISSION.—The term ''Commission'' means the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

(2) LIQUID NICOTINE CONTAINER.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding section 2(f)(2) of the Federal Hazardous Substances Act (15 U.S.C. 1261(f)(2)) and section 3(a)(5) of the Consumer Product Safety Act (15 U.S.C. 2052(a)(5)), the term ''liquid nicotine container'' means a package (as defined in section 2 of the Poison Prevention Packaging Act of 1970 (15 U.S.C. 1471))—

(i) from which nicotine in a solution or other form is accessible through normal and foreseeable use by a consumer; and

(ii) that is used to hold soluble nicotine in any concentration.

(B) EXCLUSION.—The term ''liquid nicotine container'' does not include a sealed, prefilled, and disposable container of nicotine in a solution or other form in which such container is inserted directly into an electronic cigarette, electronic nicotine delivery system, or other similar product, if the nicotine in the container is inaccessible through customary or reasonably foreseeable handling or use, including reasonably foreseeable ingestion or other contact by children.

(3) NICOTINE.—The term ''nicotine'' means any form of the chemical nicotine, including any salt or complex, regardless of whether the chemical is naturally or synthetically derived.

SEC. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This Act shall take effect on the date that is 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SA 2925. Mr. MCCONNELL (for Mr. NELSON (for himself and Ms. AYOTTE)) proposed an amendment to the bill S. 142, to require special packaging for liquid nicotine containers, and for other purposes; as follows:

Amend the title so as to read: ''A bill to require special packaging for liquid nicotine containers, and for other purposes.''.

SA 2926. Mr. MCCONNELL (for Mr. FRANKEN (for himself and Mr. CORNYN)) proposed an amendment to the bill S. 993, to increase public safety by facilitating collaboration among the criminal justice, juvenile justice, veterans treatment services, mental health treatment, and substance abuse systems; as follows:

On page 26, line 24, strike ''$30,000,000'' and insert ''$18,000,000''.

On page 27, line 2, strike ''20 percent'' and insert ''28 percent''.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Armed Services be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on December 10, 2015, at 9:30 a.m.

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

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on December 10, 2015, at 10 a.m., in room SD–366 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

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

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on December 10, 2015, at 10 a.m. to conduct a hearing entitled ''Independent South Sudan: A Failure of Leadership.''

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

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on December 10, 2015, at 10 a.m., in room SD–226 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

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

SUBCOMMITTEE ON REGULATORY AFFAIRS AND FEDERAL MANAGEMENT

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on Regulatory Affairs and Federal Management of the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on December 10, 2015, at 10 a.m. to conduct a hearing entitled, ''Implementing Solutions: The Importance of Following Through on GAO and OIG Recommendations.''

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). The majority leader.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session for the consideration of Calendar Nos. 397 through 414 and all nominations on the Secretary's desk in the Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Foreign Service, and Navy; that the nominations be confirmed en bloc and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order; that any statements related to the nominations be printed in the RECORD; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

The nominations considered and confirmed en bloc are as follows:

IN THE MARINE CORPS

The following named officer for appointment to the grade of lieutenant general in the United States Marine Corps while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be lieutenant general

Lt. Gen. John E. Wissler

IN THE NAVY

The following named officer for appointment as the Chief of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery and Surgeon General and for appointment in the United States Navy to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., sections 601 and 5137:

To be vice admiral

Rear Adm. Clinton F. Faison, III

IN THE ARMY

The following named officer for appointment as The Surgeon General, United States Army, and for appointment in the United States Army to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., sections 601 and 3036:

To be lieutenant general

Maj. Gen. Nadja Y. West

The following Army National Guard of the United States officer for appointment in the Reserve of the Army to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., sections 12203 and 12211:

To be brigadier general

Col. Edward E. Hildreth, III

The following named officers for appointment to the grade indicated in the United States Army under title 10, U.S.C., section 624:

To be brigadier general

Colonel Jennifer G. Buckner
Colonel Sean A. Gainey
Colonel David T. Isaacson
Colonel Patrick B. Roberson

IN THE AIR FORCE

The following Air National Guard of the United States officers for appointment in the Reserve of the Air Force to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., sections 12203 and 12212:

To be brigadier general

Col. Blake A. Gettys
Col. Karen E. Mansfield

The following Air National Guard of the United States officers for appointment in the Reserve of the Air Force to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., sections 12203 and 12212:

To be brigadier general

Col. Todd M. Branden
Col. Mark A. Crosby
Col. Fermin A Rubio

The following Air National Guard of the United States officers for appointment in the Reserve of the Air Force to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., sections 12203 and 12212:

To be brigadier general

Col. David M. Bakos
Col. Vance C. Bateman
Col. Sandra L. Best
Col. Jeffrey C. Bozard
Col. William D. Bunch
Col. Rafael Carrero
Col. Larry K. Clark
Col. Kevin D. Clotfelter
Col. Marshall C. Collins
Col. James N. Cox
Col. Jason R. Cripps
Col. Christopher S. Croxton
Col. Francis N. Detorie
Col. Ruben Fernandez-Vera
Col. John T. Ferry
Col. John E. Flowers
Col. Michael J. Francis
Col. Vincent R. Franklin
Col. Clay L. Garrison
Col. Kevin J. Heer
Col. Dana A. Hessheimer
Col. Gene W. Hughes, Jr.
Col. James T. Johnson
Col. Gregory F. Jones
Col. Marshall L. Kjelvik
Col. James R. Kriesel
Col. Ronald S. Lambe
Col. Andrew J. MacDonald
Col. Stephen J. Maher
Col. Matthew J. Manifold
Col. Maren McAvoy
Col. Gregory S. McCreary
Col. Stephen B. Mehring
Col. Jessica Meyeraan
Col. Billy M. Nabors
Col. Jeffrey L. Newton
Col. Peter Nezamis
Col. Patrick R. Renwick
Col. Stephen M. Ryan
Col. Peter R. Schneider
Col. Gregory N. Schnulo
Col. Greg A. Semmel
Col. Ray M. Shepard
Col. Marc A. Sicard
Col. Paul R. Silvestri
Col. Christopher A. Stratmann
Col. Peter F. Sullivan, Jr.
Col. Tami S. Thompson
Col. Joseph B. Wilson
Col. Gregory S. Woodrow

The following Air National Guard of the United States officer for appointment in the Reserve of the Air Force to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., sections 12203 and 12212:

To be major general

Brig. Gen. Edward P. Maxwell

The following Air National Guard of the United States officers for appointment in the Reserve of the Air Force to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., sections 12203 and 12212:

To be major general

Brig. Gen. Robert C. Bolton
Brig. Gen. Charles W. Chappuis, Jr.
Brig. Gen. Dawne L. Deskins
Brig. Gen. Timothy L. Frye
Brig. Gen. Paul D. Jacobs
Brig. Gen. Mark E. Jannitto
Brig. Gen. Ronald W. Solberg
Brig. Gen. James K. Vogel
Brig. Gen. William L. Welsh
Brig. Gen. Wayne A. Zimmet

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Air Force to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be lieutenant general

Maj. Gen. John D. Bansemer

The following named officer for appointment in the Reserve of the Air Force to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 12203:

To be brigadier general

Col. Russell A. Muncy

The following named officer for appointment in the Reserve of the Air Force to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 12203:

To be brigadier general

Col. Patricia N. Beyer

The following named officer for appointment in the Reserve of the Air Force to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 12203:

To be brigadier general

Col. Christopher W. Lentz

The following named officers for appointment in the Reserve of the Air Force to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 12203:

To be brigadier general

Col. Lee Ann T. Bennett
Col. Richard M. Casto
Col. Jonathan M. Ellis
Col. James J. Fontanella
Col. John P. Healy
Col. Daniel J. Heires
Col. Robert A. Huston
Col. William R Kountz, Jr.
Col. Albert V. Lupenski
Col. Tyler D. Otten
Col. Russell P. Reimer
Col. Harold E. Rogers, Jr.
Col. Tracey A. Siems

IN THE ARMY

The following named officer for appointment to the grade indicated in the United States Army under title 10, U.S.C., section 624:

To be major general

Brig. Gen. John C. Thomson, III

The following Army National Guard of the United States officer for appointment in the Reserve of the Army to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., sections 12203 and 12211:

To be major general

Brig. Gen. Sylvia R. Crockett

IN THE AIR FORCE

The following named officers for appointment in the United States Air Force to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 624:

To be brigadier general

Col. Kenneth T. Bibb, Jr.
Col. Angela M. Cadwell
Col. Martin A. Chapin
Col. James R. Cluff
Col. Charles S. Corcoran
Col. Sean M. Farrell
Col. Chad P. Franks
Col. Alexus G. Grynkewich
Col. Timothy D. Haugh
Col. Christopher D. Hill
Col. Eric T. Hill
Col. Samuel C. Hinote
Col. William G. Holt, II
Col. Linda S. Hurry
Col. Matthew C. Isler
Col. Kyle J. Kremer
Col. John C. Kubinec
Col. Douglas K. Lamberth
Col. Lance K. Landrum
Col. Jeannie M. Leavitt
Col. William J. Liguori, Jr.
Col. Michael J. Lutton
Col. Corey J. Martin
Col. Tom D. Miller
Col. Richard G. Moore, Jr.
Col. James D. Peccia, III
Col. Heather L. Pringle
Col. Michael J. Schmidt
Col. James R. Sears, Jr.
Col. Daniel L. Simpson
Col. Mark H. Slocum
Col. Robert S. Spalding, III
Col. William A. Spangenthal
Col. Edward W. Thomas Jr
Col. John T. Wilcox, II
Col. Michael P. Winkler

NOMINATIONS PLACED ON THE SECRETARY'S DESK

IN THE AIR FORCE

PN970 AIR FORCE nominations (105) beginning BRYAN K. ALLEN, and ending GARRICK H. YOKOE, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 19, 2015.

IN THE ARMY

PN971 ARMY nomination of James D. Ferguson, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 19, 2015.

PN972 ARMY nominations (8) beginning KELVIN L. BROWN, and ending PAUL L. WAGNER, II, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 19, 2015.

PN973 ARMY nominations (3) beginning DAESOO LEE, and ending BRIAN D. RAY, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 19, 2015.

PN974 ARMY nomination of Wayne W. Santos, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 19, 2015.

PN975 ARMY nomination of Anthony J. Fadell, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 19, 2015.

PN976 ARMY nomination of Ricardo Alonsojournet, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 19, 2015.

PN977 ARMY nomination of Jeffrey M. Sloan, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 19, 2015.

PN978 ARMY nominations (2) beginning ANDREW C. DILLON, and ending ANDRE R. HOLDER, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 19, 2015.

PN979 ARMY nomination of Rebecca R. Tomsyck, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 19, 2015.

PN980 ARMY nomination of Everett S. P. Spain, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 19, 2015.

PN981 ARMY nomination of Shane R. Reeves, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 19, 2015.

PN982 ARMY nominations (5) beginning DAVID E. BENTZEL, and ending BRIAN U. T. KIM, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 19, 2015.

PN983 ARMY nominations (4) beginning TERESA L. BRININGER, and ending RICHARD A. VILLARREAL, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 19, 2015.

PN984 ARMY nominations (39) beginning KEVIN R. BASS, and ending D003940, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 19, 2015.

PN985 ARMY nominations (19) beginning KIMBERLIE A. BIEVER, and ending PAMELA M. WULF, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 19, 2015.

PN986 ARMY nominations (9) beginning DAVID BARRETT, and ending JENNIFER S. ZUCKER, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 19, 2015.

PN987 ARMY nominations (2) beginning DAVID W. LAWS, and ending JOHN E. SWANBERG, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 19, 2015.

PN988 ARMY nomination of William A. Altmire, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 19, 2015.

PN989 ARMY nomination of Jesus J. T. Nufable, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 19, 2015.

PN990 ARMY nominations (6) beginning RUBEN BERMUDEZPAGAN, and ending TODD W. SCHAFFER, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 19, 2015.

PN991 ARMY nomination of Joshua A. Carlisle, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 19, 2015.

PN992 ARMY nomination of William C. Moorhouse, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 19, 2015.

PN993 ARMY nomination of Gregg T. Olsowy, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 19, 2015.

PN994 ARMY nomination of Roger S. Giraud, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 19, 2015.

PN995 ARMY nomination of Steven M. Wilke, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 19, 2015.

IN THE COAST GUARD

PN997 COAST GUARD nominations (3) beginning CORINNA M. FLEISCHMANN, and ending KIMBERLY C. YOUNG-MCLEAR, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 19, 2015.

PN998 COAST GUARD nominations (247) beginning MICHAEL S. ADAMS, JR., and ending JAMES R. ZOLL, JR., which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 19, 2015.

PN999 COAST GUARD nominations (173) beginning JASON C. ALEKSAK, and ending YAMASHEKA Z. YOUNG-MCLEAR, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 19, 2015.

IN THE FOREIGN SERVICE

PN72–5 FOREIGN SERVICE nomination of Daniel Sylvester Cronin, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 13, 2015.

PN877–2 FOREIGN SERVICE nomination of Derell Kennedo, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of September 21, 2015.

PN939 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (119) beginning Steven Carl Aaberg, and ending Sandra M. Zuniga Guzman, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 10, 2015.

PN951–1 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (3) beginning James F. Entwistle, and ending Daniel R. Russel, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 19, 2015.

PN954 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (102) beginning Christopher Volciak, and ending Edward L. Robinson, III, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 19, 2015.

IN THE NAVY

PN996 NAVY nomination of Kenneth C. Collins, II, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 19, 2015.

NOMINATION DISCHARGED AND EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Environment and Public Works Committee be discharged from consideration of PN714 and the Senate proceed to consider the following nominations en bloc: PN714, Calendar Nos. 385, 392, and 426.

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

The clerk will report the nominations en bloc.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nominations of Richard Capel Howorth, of Mississippi, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2020; Cherry Ann Murray, of Kansas, to be Director of the Office of Science, Department of Energy; Eric Drake Eberhard, of Washington, to be a Member of the Board of Trustees of the Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Foundation for a term expiring October 6, 2018; and Darryl L. DePriest, of Illinois, to be Chief Counsel for Advocacy, Small Business Administration.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate on the nominations en bloc?

If not, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Howorth, Murray, Eberhard, and DePriest nominations en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to the nominations; that any statements related to the nominations be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate then resume legislative session.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that on Monday, December 14, at 5 p.m., the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations: Calendar Nos. 393 through 396; that there be 30 minutes for debate on the Starzak nomination equally divided in the usual form; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the Senate proceed to vote without intervening action or debate on the nominations in the order listed; that following disposition of the nominations, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to any of the nominations; that any statements related to the nominations be printed in the Record; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate then resume legislative session.

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

CHILD NICOTINE POISONING PREVENTION ACT OF 2015

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 35, S. 142.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 142) to require the Consumer Product Safety Commission to promulgate a rule to require child safety packaging for liquid nicotine containers, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

S. 142

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Child Nicotine Poisoning Prevention Act of 2015''.

SEC. 2. CHILD SAFETY PACKAGING FOR LIQUID NICOTINE CONTAINERS.

(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) COMMISSION.—The term ''Commission'' means the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

(2) LIQUID NICOTINE CONTAINER.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The term ''liquid nicotine container'' means a consumer product, as defined in section 3(a)(5) of the Consumer Product Safety Act (15 U.S.C. 2052(a)(5)) notwithstanding subparagraph (B) of such section, that consists of a container that—

(i) has an opening from which nicotine in a solution or other form is accessible and can flow freely through normal and foreseeable use by a consumer; and

(ii) is used to hold soluble nicotine in any concentration.

(B) EXCLUSIONS.—The term ''liquid nicotine container'' does not include nicotine in a solution or other form in a sealed, pre-filled, disposable container inserted directly into an electronic cigarette or other similar device, so long as the nicotine in the container is inaccessible or cannot flow freely out of such container or electronic cigarette or other similar device through normal and foreseeable use by a consumer.

(3) NICOTINE.—The term ''nicotine'' means any form of the chemical nicotine, including any salt or complex, regardless of whether the chemical is naturally or synthetically derived.

(4) SPECIAL PACKAGING.—The term ''special packaging'' has the meaning given such term in section 2 of the Poison Prevention Packaging Act of 1970 (15 U.S.C. 1471).

(b) REQUIRED USE OF SPECIAL PACKAGING FOR LIQUID NICOTINE CONTAINERS.—

(1) RULEMAKING.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding section 3(a)(5)(B) of the Consumer Product Safety Act (15 U.S.C. 2052(a)(5)(B)) or section 2(f)(2) of the Federal Hazardous Substances Act (15 U.S.C. 1261(f)(2)), not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Commission shall promulgate a rule requiring special packaging for liquid nicotine containers.

(B) AMENDMENTS.—The Commission may promulgate such amendments to the rule promulgated under subparagraph (A) as the Commission considers appropriate.

(2) EXPEDITED PROCESS.—The Commission shall promulgate the rule under paragraph (1) in accordance with section 553 of title 5, United States Code.

(3) INAPPLICABILITY OF CERTAIN RULEMAKING REQUIREMENTS.—The following provisions shall not apply to a rulemaking under paragraph (1):

(A) Sections 7 and 9 of the Consumer Product Safety Act (15 U.S.C. 2056 and 2058).

(B) Section 3 of the Federal Hazardous Substances Act (15 U.S.C. 1262).

(C) Subsections (b) and (c) of section 3 of the Poison Prevention Packaging Act of 1970 (15 U.S.C. 1472).

(4) SAVINGS CLAUSE.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit or diminish the authority of the Food and Drug Administration to regulate the manufacture, marketing, sale, or distribution of liquid nicotine, liquid nicotine containers, electronic cigarettes, or similar products that contain or dispense liquid nicotine.

(5) ENFORCEMENT.—A rule promulgated under paragraph (1) shall be treated as a standard applicable to a household substance established under section 3(a) of the Poison Prevention Packaging Act of 1970 (15 U.S.C. 1472(a)).

(c) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—Not later than 3 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Commission shall submit to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate and the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House of Representatives a report detailing the rule and requirements promulgated under this Act and any enforcement actions taken thereunder.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported substitute be withdrawn; that the Nelson substitute amendment be agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be read three times and passed; that the amendment to the title be agreed to; and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The committee-reported substitute amendment was withdrawn.

The amendment (No. 2924) in the nature of a substitute was agreed to, as follows:

(Purpose: In the nature of a substitute)

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Child Nicotine Poisoning Prevention Act of 2015''.

SEC. 2. SPECIAL PACKAGING FOR LIQUID NICOTINE CONTAINERS.

(a) REQUIREMENT.—Notwithstanding section 2(f)(2) of the Federal Hazardous Substances Act (15 U.S.C. 1261(f)(2)) and section 3(a)(5) of the Consumer Product Safety Act (15 U.S.C. 2052(a)(5)), any nicotine provided in a liquid nicotine container sold, offered for sale, manufactured for sale, distributed in commerce, or imported into the United States shall be packaged in accordance with the standards provided in section 1700.15 of title 16, Code of Federal Regulations, as determined through testing in accordance with the method described in section 1700.20 of title 16, Code of Federal Regulations, and any subsequent changes to such sections adopted by the Commission.

(b) SAVINGS CLAUSE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Nothing in this Act shall be construed to limit or otherwise affect the authority of the Secretary of Health and Human Services to regulate, issue guidance, or take action regarding the manufacture, marketing, sale, distribution, importation, or packaging, including child-resistant packaging, of nicotine, liquid nicotine, liquid nicotine containers, electronic cigarettes, electronic nicotine delivery systems or other similar products that contain or dispense liquid nicotine, or any other nicotine-related products, including—

(A) authority under the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 301 et seq.) and the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act (Public Law 111–31) and the amendments made by such Act; and

(B) authority for the rulemaking entitled ''Deeming Tobacco Products to Be Subject to the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, as Amended by the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act; regulations on the Sale and Distribution of Tobacco Products and the Required Warning Statements for Tobacco Products'' (April 2014) (FDA–2014–N–0189), the rulemaking entitled ''Nicotine Exposure Warnings and Child-Resistant Packaging for Liquid Nicotine, Nicotine-Containing E-Liquid(s), and Other Tobacco Products'' (June 2015) (FDA–2015–N–1514), and subsequent actions by the Secretary regarding packaging of liquid nicotine containers.

(2) CONSULTATION.—If the Secretary of Health and Human Services adopts, maintains, enforces, or imposes or continues in effect any packaging requirement for liquid nicotine containers, including a child-resistant packaging requirement, the Secretary shall consult with the Commission, taking into consideration the expertise of the Commission in implementing and enforcing this Act and the Poison Prevention Packaging Act of 1970 (15 U.S.C. 1471 et seq.).

(c) APPLICABILITY.—Notwithstanding section 3(a)(5) of the Consumer Product Safety Act (15 U.S.C. 2052(a)(5)) and section 2(f)(2) of the Federal Hazardous Substances Act (15 U.S.C. 1261(f)(2)), the requirement of subsection (a) shall be treated as a standard for the special packaging of a household substance established under section 3(a) of the Poison Prevention Packaging Act of 1970 (15 U.S.C. 1472(a)).

(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) COMMISSION.—The term ''Commission'' means the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

(2) LIQUID NICOTINE CONTAINER.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding section 2(f)(2) of the Federal Hazardous Substances Act (15 U.S.C. 1261(f)(2)) and section 3(a)(5) of the Consumer Product Safety Act (15 U.S.C. 2052(a)(5)), the term ''liquid nicotine container'' means a package (as defined in section 2 of the Poison Prevention Packaging Act of 1970 (15 U.S.C. 1471))—

(i) from which nicotine in a solution or other form is accessible through normal and foreseeable use by a consumer; and

(ii) that is used to hold soluble nicotine in any concentration.

(B) EXCLUSION.—The term ''liquid nicotine container'' does not include a sealed, prefilled, and disposable container of nicotine in a solution or other form in which such container is inserted directly into an electronic cigarette, electronic nicotine delivery system, or other similar product, if the nicotine in the container is inaccessible through customary or reasonably foreseeable handling or use, including reasonably foreseeable ingestion or other contact by children.

(3) NICOTINE.—The term ''nicotine'' means any form of the chemical nicotine, including any salt or complex, regardless of whether the chemical is naturally or synthetically derived.

SEC. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This Act shall take effect on the date that is 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

The bill (S. 142), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

The amendment (No. 2925) was agreed to, as follows:

(Purpose: To amend the title)

Amend the title so as to read: ''A bill to require special packaging for liquid nicotine containers, and for other purposes.''.

COMPREHENSIVE JUSTICE AND MENTAL HEALTH ACT OF 2015

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 62, S. 993.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 993) to increase public safety by facilitating collaboration among the criminal justice, juvenile justice, veterans treatment services, mental health treatment, and substance abuse systems.

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. I further ask unanimous consent that the Franken amendment be agreed to.

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

The amendment (No. 2926) was agreed to, as follows:

(Purpose: To modify the authorization of appropriations)

On page 26, line 24, strike ''$30,000,000'' and insert ''$18,000,000''.

On page 27, line 2, strike ''20 percent'' and insert ''28 percent''.

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

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall it pass?

The bill (S. 993), as amended, was passed, as follows:

S. 993

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Comprehensive Justice and Mental Health Act of 2015''.

SEC. 2. TABLE OF CONTENTS.

The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title.
Sec. 2. Table of contents.
Sec. 3. Findings.
Sec. 4. Sequential intercept model.
Sec. 5. Veterans treatment courts.
Sec. 6. Prison and jails.
Sec. 7. Allowable uses.
Sec. 8. Law enforcement training.
Sec. 9. Federal law enforcement training.
Sec. 10. GAO report.
Sec. 11. Evidence based practices.
Sec. 12. Transparency, program accountability, and enhancement of local authority.
Sec. 13. Grant accountability.
Sec. 14. Reauthorization of appropriations.

SEC. 3. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) An estimated 2,000,000 individuals with serious mental illnesses are booked into jails each year, resulting in prevalence rates of serious mental illness in jails that are 3 to 6 times higher than in the general population. An even greater number of individuals who are detained in jails each year have mental health problems that do not rise to the level of a serious mental illness but may still require a resource-intensive response.

(2) Adults with mental illnesses cycle through jails more often than individuals without mental illnesses, and tend to stay longer (including before trial, during trial, and after sentencing).

(3) According to estimates, almost ¾ of jail detainees with serious mental illnesses have co-occurring substance use disorders, and individuals with mental illnesses are also much more likely to have serious physical health needs.

(4) Among individuals under probation supervision, individuals with mental disorders are nearly twice as likely as other individuals to have their community sentence revoked, furthering their involvement in the criminal justice system. Reasons for revocation may be directly or indirectly related to an individual's mental disorder.

SEC. 4. SEQUENTIAL INTERCEPT MODEL.

(a) REDESIGNATION.—Section 2991 of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3797aa) is amended by redesignating subsection (i) as subsection (n).

(b) SEQUENTIAL INTERCEPT MODEL.—Section 2991 of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3797aa) is amended by inserting after subsection (h) the following:

''(i) SEQUENTIAL INTERCEPT GRANTS.—

''(1) DEFINITION.—In this subsection, the term 'eligible entity' means a State, unit of local government, Indian tribe, or tribal organization.

''(2) AUTHORIZATION.—The Attorney General may make grants under this subsection to an eligible entity for sequential intercept mapping and implementation in accordance with paragraph (3).

''(3) SEQUENTIAL INTERCEPT MAPPING; IMPLEMENTATION.—An eligible entity that receives a grant under this subsection may use funds for—

''(A) sequential intercept mapping, which—

''(i) shall consist of—

''(I) convening mental health and criminal justice stakeholders to—

''(aa) develop a shared understanding of the flow of justice-involved individuals with mental illnesses through the criminal justice system; and

''(bb) identify opportunities for improved collaborative responses to the risks and needs of individuals described in item (aa); and

''(II) developing strategies to address gaps in services and bring innovative and effective programs to scale along multiple intercepts, including—

''(aa) emergency and crisis services;

''(bb) specialized police-based responses;

''(cc) court hearings and disposition alternatives;

''(dd) reentry from jails and prisons; and

''(ee) community supervision, treatment and support services; and

''(ii) may serve as a starting point for the development of strategic plans to achieve positive public health and safety outcomes; and

''(B) implementation, which shall—

''(i) be derived from the strategic plans described in subparagraph (A)(ii); and

''(ii) consist of—

''(I) hiring and training personnel;

''(II) identifying the eligible entity's target population;

''(III) providing services and supports to reduce unnecessary penetration into the criminal justice system;

''(IV) reducing recidivism;

''(V) evaluating the impact of the eligible entity's approach; and

''(VI) planning for the sustainability of effective interventions.''.

SEC. 5. VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS.

Section 2991 of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3797aa) is amended by inserting after subsection (i), as so added by section 4, the following:

''(j) ASSISTING VETERANS.—

''(1) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

''(A) PEER TO PEER SERVICES OR PROGRAMS.—The term 'peer to peer services or programs' means services or programs that connect qualified veterans with other veterans for the purpose of providing support and mentorship to assist qualified veterans in obtaining treatment, recovery, stabilization, or rehabilitation.

''(B) QUALIFIED VETERAN.—The term 'qualified veteran' means a preliminarily qualified offender who—

''(i) served on active duty in any branch of the Armed Forces, including the National Guard or Reserves; and

''(ii) was discharged or released from such service under conditions other than dishonorable.

''(C) VETERANS TREATMENT COURT PROGRAM.—The term 'veterans treatment court program' means a court program involving collaboration among criminal justice, veterans, and mental health and substance abuse agencies that provides qualified veterans with—

''(i) intensive judicial supervision and case management, which may include random and frequent drug testing where appropriate;

''(ii) a full continuum of treatment services, including mental health services, substance abuse services, medical services, and services to address trauma;

''(iii) alternatives to incarceration; and

''(iv) other appropriate services, including housing, transportation, mentoring, employment, job training, education, and assistance in applying for and obtaining available benefits.

''(2) VETERANS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—The Attorney General, in consultation with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, may award grants under this subsection to applicants to establish or expand—

''(i) veterans treatment court programs;

''(ii) peer to peer services or programs for qualified veterans;

''(iii) practices that identify and provide treatment, rehabilitation, legal, transitional, and other appropriate services to qualified veterans who have been incarcerated; and

''(iv) training programs to teach criminal justice, law enforcement, corrections, mental health, and substance abuse personnel how to identify and appropriately respond to incidents involving qualified veterans.

''(B) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under this subsection, the Attorney General shall give priority to applications that—

''(i) demonstrate collaboration between and joint investments by criminal justice, mental health, substance abuse, and veterans service agencies;

''(ii) promote effective strategies to identify and reduce the risk of harm to qualified veterans and public safety; and

''(iii) propose interventions with empirical support to improve outcomes for qualified veterans.''.

SEC. 6. PRISON AND JAILS.

Section 2991 of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3797aa) is amended by inserting after subsection (j), as so added by section 5, the following:

''(k) CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES.—

''(1) DEFINITIONS.—

''(A) CORRECTIONAL FACILITY.—The term 'correctional facility' means a jail, prison, or other detention facility used to house people who have been arrested, detained, held, or convicted by a criminal justice agency or a court.

''(B) ELIGIBLE INMATE.—The term 'eligible inmate' means an individual who—

''(i) is being held, detained, or incarcerated in a correctional facility; and

''(ii) manifests obvious signs of a mental illness or has been diagnosed by a qualified mental health professional as having a mental illness.

''(2) CORRECTIONAL FACILITY GRANTS.—The Attorney General may award grants to applicants to enhance the capabilities of a correctional facility—

''(A) to identify and screen for eligible inmates;

''(B) to plan and provide—

''(i) initial and periodic assessments of the clinical, medical, and social needs of inmates; and

''(ii) appropriate treatment and services that address the mental health and substance abuse needs of inmates;

''(C) to develop, implement, and enhance—

''(i) post-release transition plans for eligible inmates that, in a comprehensive manner, coordinate health, housing, medical, employment, and other appropriate services and public benefits;

''(ii) the availability of mental health care services and substance abuse treatment services; and

''(iii) alternatives to solitary confinement and segregated housing and mental health screening and treatment for inmates placed in solitary confinement or segregated housing; and

''(D) to train each employee of the correctional facility to identify and appropriately respond to incidents involving inmates with mental health or co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorders.''.

SEC. 7. ALLOWABLE USES.

Section 2991(b)(5)(I) of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3797aa(b)(5)(I)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(v) TEAMS ADDRESSING FREQUENT USERS OF CRISIS SERVICES.—Multidisciplinary teams that—

''(I) coordinate, implement, and administer community-based crisis responses and long-term plans for frequent users of crisis services;

''(II) provide training on how to respond appropriately to the unique issues involving frequent users of crisis services for public service personnel, including criminal justice, mental health, substance abuse, emergency room, healthcare, law enforcement, corrections, and housing personnel;

''(III) develop or support alternatives to hospital and jail admissions for frequent users of crisis services that provide treatment, stabilization, and other appropriate supports in the least restrictive, yet appropriate, environment; and

''(IV) develop protocols and systems among law enforcement, mental health, substance abuse, housing, corrections, and emergency medical service operations to provide coordinated assistance to frequent users of crisis services.''.

SEC. 8. LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING.

Section 2991(h) of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3797aa(h)) is amended—

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

''(F) ACADEMY TRAINING.—To provide support for academy curricula, law enforcement officer orientation programs, continuing education training, and other programs that teach law enforcement personnel how to identify and respond to incidents involving persons with mental health disorders or co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorders.''; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

''(4) PRIORITY CONSIDERATION.—The Attorney General, in awarding grants under this subsection, shall give priority to programs that law enforcement personnel and members of the mental health and substance abuse professions develop and administer cooperatively.''.

SEC. 9. FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING.

Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Attorney General shall provide direction and guidance for the following:

(1) TRAINING PROGRAMS.—Programs that offer specialized and comprehensive training, in procedures to identify and appropriately respond to incidents in which the unique needs of individuals who have a mental illness are involved, to first responders and tactical units of—

(A) Federal law enforcement agencies; and

(B) other Federal criminal justice agencies such as the Bureau of Prisons, the Administrative Office of the United States Courts, and other agencies that the Attorney General determines appropriate.

(2) IMPROVED TECHNOLOGY.—The establishment of, or improvement of existing, computerized information systems to provide timely information to employees of Federal law enforcement agencies, and Federal criminal justice agencies to improve the response of such employees to situations involving individuals who have a mental illness.

SEC. 10. GAO REPORT.

No later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States, in coordination with the Attorney General, shall submit to Congress a report on—

(1) the practices that Federal first responders, tactical units, and corrections officers are trained to use in responding to individuals with mental illness;

(2) procedures to identify and appropriately respond to incidents in which the unique needs of individuals who have a mental illness are involved, to Federal first responders and tactical units;

(3) the application of evidence-based practices in criminal justice settings to better address individuals with mental illnesses; and

(4) recommendations on how the Department of Justice can expand and improve information sharing and dissemination of best practices.

SEC. 11. EVIDENCE BASED PRACTICES.

Section 2991(c) of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3797aa(c)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (3), by striking ''or'' at the end;

(2) by redesignating paragraph (4) as paragraph (6); and

(3) by inserting after paragraph (3), the following:

''(4) propose interventions that have been shown by empirical evidence to reduce recidivism;

''(5) when appropriate, use validated assessment tools to target preliminarily qualified offenders with a moderate or high risk of recidivism and a need for treatment and services; or''.

SEC. 12. TRANSPARENCY, PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY, AND ENHANCEMENT OF LOCAL AUTHORITY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 2991(a) of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3797aa(a)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (7)—

(A) in the heading, by striking ''MENTAL ILLNESS'' and inserting ''MENTAL ILLNESS; MENTAL HEALTH DISORDER''; and

(B) by striking ''term 'mental illness' means'' and inserting ''terms 'mental illness' and 'mental health disorder' mean''; and

(2) by striking paragraph (9) and inserting the following:

''(9) PRELIMINARILY QUALIFIED OFFENDER.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—The term 'preliminarily qualified offender' means an adult or juvenile accused of an offense who—

''(i)(I) previously or currently has been diagnosed by a qualified mental health professional as having a mental illness or co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse disorders;

''(II) manifests obvious signs of mental illness or co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse disorders during arrest or confinement or before any court; or

''(III) in the case of a veterans treatment court provided under subsection (i), has been diagnosed with, or manifests obvious signs of, mental illness or a substance abuse disorder or co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse disorder;

''(ii) has been unanimously approved for participation in a program funded under this section by, when appropriate—

''(I) the relevant—

''(aa) prosecuting attorney;

''(bb) defense attorney;

''(cc) probation or corrections official; and

''(dd) judge; and

''(II) a representative from the relevant mental health agency described in subsection (b)(5)(B)(i);

''(iii) has been determined, by each person described in clause (ii) who is involved in approving the adult or juvenile for participation in a program funded under this section, to not pose a risk of violence to any person in the program, or the public, if selected to participate in the program; and

''(iv) has not been charged with or convicted of—

''(I) any sex offense (as defined in section 111 of the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act (42 U.S.C. 16911)) or any offense relating to the sexual exploitation of children; or

''(II) murder or assault with intent to commit murder.

''(B) DETERMINATION.—In determining whether to designate a defendant as a preliminarily qualified offender, the relevant prosecuting attorney, defense attorney, probation or corrections official, judge, and mental health or substance abuse agency representative shall take into account—

''(i) whether the participation of the defendant in the program would pose a substantial risk of violence to the community;

''(ii) the criminal history of the defendant and the nature and severity of the offense for which the defendant is charged;

''(iii) the views of any relevant victims to the offense;

''(iv) the extent to which the defendant would benefit from participation in the program;

''(v) the extent to which the community would realize cost savings because of the defendant's participation in the program; and

''(vi) whether the defendant satisfies the eligibility criteria for program participation unanimously established by the relevant prosecuting attorney, defense attorney, probation or corrections official, judge and mental health or substance abuse agency representative.''.

(b) TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 2927(2) of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3797s–6(2)) is amended by striking ''has the meaning given that term in section 2991(a).'' and inserting ''means an offense that—

''(A) does not have as an element the use, attempted use, or threatened use of physical force against the person or property of another; or

''(B) is not a felony that by its nature involves a substantial risk that physical force against the person or property of another may be used in the course of committing the offense.''.

SEC. 13. GRANT ACCOUNTABILITY.

Section 2991 of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3797aa) is amended by inserting after subsection (k), as so added by section 6, the following:

''(l) ACCOUNTABILITY.—All grants awarded by the Attorney General under this section shall be subject to the following accountability provisions:

''(1) AUDIT REQUIREMENT.—

''(A) DEFINITION.—In this paragraph, the term 'unresolved audit finding' means a finding in the final audit report of the Inspector General of the Department of Justice that the audited grantee has utilized grant funds for an unauthorized expenditure or otherwise unallowable cost that is not closed or resolved within 12 months from the date when the final audit report is issued.

''(B) AUDITS.—Beginning in the first fiscal year beginning after the date of enactment of this subsection, and in each fiscal year thereafter, the Inspector General of the Department of Justice shall conduct audits of recipients of grants under this section to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse of funds by grantees. The Inspector General shall determine the appropriate number of grantees to be audited each year.

''(C) MANDATORY EXCLUSION.—A recipient of grant funds under this section that is found to have an unresolved audit finding shall not be eligible to receive grant funds under this section during the first 2 fiscal years beginning after the end of the 12-month period described in subparagraph (A).

''(D) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under this section, the Attorney General shall give priority to eligible applicants that did not have an unresolved audit finding during the 3 fiscal years before submitting an application for a grant under this section.

''(E) REIMBURSEMENT.—If an entity is awarded grant funds under this section during the 2-fiscal-year period during which the entity is barred from receiving grants under subparagraph (C), the Attorney General shall—

''(i) deposit an amount equal to the amount of the grant funds that were improperly awarded to the grantee into the General Fund of the Treasury; and

''(ii) seek to recoup the costs of the repayment to the fund from the grant recipient that was erroneously awarded grant funds.

''(2) NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION REQUIREMENTS.—

''(A) DEFINITION.—For purposes of this paragraph and the grant programs under this part, the term 'nonprofit organization' means an organization that is described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and is exempt from taxation under section 501(a) of such Code.

''(B) PROHIBITION.—The Attorney General may not award a grant under this part to a nonprofit organization that holds money in offshore accounts for the purpose of avoiding paying the tax described in section 511(a) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

''(C) DISCLOSURE.—Each nonprofit organization that is awarded a grant under this section and uses the procedures prescribed in regulations to create a rebuttable presumption of reasonableness for the compensation of its officers, directors, trustees, and key employees, shall disclose to the Attorney General, in the application for the grant, the process for determining such compensation, including the independent persons involved in reviewing and approving such compensation, the comparability data used, and contemporaneous substantiation of the deliberation and decision. Upon request, the Attorney General shall make the information disclosed under this subparagraph available for public inspection.

''(3) CONFERENCE EXPENDITURES.—

''(A) LIMITATION.—No amounts made available to the Department of Justice under this section may be used by the Attorney General, or by any individual or entity awarded discretionary funds through a cooperative agreement under this section, to host or support any expenditure for conferences that uses more than $20,000 in funds made available by the Department of Justice, unless the head of the relevant agency or department, provides prior written authorization that the funds may be expended to host the conference.

''(B) WRITTEN APPROVAL.—Written approval under subparagraph (A) shall include a written estimate of all costs associated with the conference, including the cost of all food, beverages, audio-visual equipment, honoraria for speakers, and entertainment.

''(C) REPORT.—The Deputy Attorney General shall submit an annual report to the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate and the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives on all conference expenditures approved under this paragraph.

''(4) ANNUAL CERTIFICATION.—Beginning in the first fiscal year beginning after the date of enactment of this subsection, the Attorney General shall submit, to the Committee

on the Judiciary and the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate and the Committee on the Judiciary and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives, an annual certification—

''(A) indicating whether—

''(i) all audits issued by the Office of the Inspector General under paragraph (1) have been completed and reviewed by the appropriate Assistant Attorney General or Director;

''(ii) all mandatory exclusions required under paragraph (1)(C) have been issued; and

''(iii) all reimbursements required under paragraph (1)(E) have been made; and

''(B) that includes a list of any grant recipients excluded under paragraph (1) from the previous year.

''(m) PREVENTING DUPLICATIVE GRANTS.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—Before the Attorney General awards a grant to an applicant under this section, the Attorney General shall compare potential grant awards with other grants awarded under this Act to determine if duplicate grant awards are awarded for the same purpose.

''(2) REPORT.—If the Attorney General awards duplicate grants to the same applicant for the same purpose the Attorney General shall submit to the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate and the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives a report that includes—

''(A) a list of all duplicate grants awarded, including the total dollar amount of any duplicate grants awarded; and

''(B) the reason the Attorney General awarded the duplicate grants.''.

SEC. 14. REAUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

Subsection (n) of section 2991 of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3797aa), as redesignated by section 4(a), is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)—

(A) in subparagraph (B), by striking ''and'' at the end;

(B) in subparagraph (C), by striking the period and inserting ''; and''; and

(C) by adding at the end the following:

''(D) $18,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2016 through 2020.''; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

''(3) LIMITATION.—Not more than 28 percent of the funds authorized to be appropriated under this section may be used for purposes described in subsection (j) (relating to veterans).''.

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

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

INDIAN TRIBAL ENERGY DEVELOPMENT AND SELF-DETERMINATION ACT AMENDMENTS OF 2015

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 242, S. 209.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 209) to amend the Indian Tribal Energy Development and Self-Determination Act of 2005, and for other purposes.

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the Barrasso amendment No. 2714 be agreed to, the bill, as amended, be read a third time and passed, and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The amendment (No. 2714) in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

(The amendment is printed in the RECORD of October 20, 2015, under ''Text of Amendments.'')

The bill (S. 209), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

CHURCH PLAN CLARIFICATION ACT OF 2015

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Finance be discharged from further consideration of S. 2308 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2308) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to clarify the treatment of church pension plans, and for other purposes.

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The bill (S. 2308) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 2308

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Church Plan Clarification Act of 2015''.

SEC. 2. CHURCH PLAN CLARIFICATION.

(a) APPLICATION OF CONTROLLED GROUP RULES TO CHURCH PLANS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 414(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended—

(A) by striking ''For purposes'' and inserting the following:

''(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in paragraph (2), for purposes'', and

(B) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(2) SPECIAL RULES RELATING TO CHURCH PLANS.—

''(A) GENERAL RULE.—Except as provided in subparagraphs (B) and (C), for purposes of this subsection and subsection (m), an organization that is otherwise eligible to participate in a church plan shall not be aggregated with another such organization and treated as a single employer with such other organization for a plan year beginning in a taxable year unless—

''(i) one such organization provides (directly or indirectly) at least 80 percent of the operating funds for the other organization during the preceding tax year of the recipient organization, and

''(ii) there is a degree of common management or supervision between the organizations such that the organization providing the operating funds is directly involved in the day-to-day operations of the other organization.

''(B) NONQUALIFIED CHURCH-CONTROLLED ORGANIZATIONS.—Notwithstanding subparagraph (A), for purposes of this subsection and subsection (m), an organization that is a nonqualified church-controlled organization shall be aggregated with 1 or more other nonqualified church-controlled organizations, or with an organization that is not exempt from tax under section 501, and treated as a single employer with such other organization, if at least 80 percent of the directors or trustees of such other organization are either representatives of, or directly or indirectly controlled by, such nonqualified church-controlled organization. For purposes of this subparagraph, the term 'nonqualified church-controlled organization' means a church-controlled tax-exempt organization described in section 501(c)(3) that is not a qualified church-controlled organization (as defined in section 3121(w)(3)(B)).

''(C) PERMISSIVE AGGREGATION AMONG CHURCH-RELATED ORGANIZATIONS.—The church or convention or association of churches with which an organization described in subparagraph (A) is associated (within the meaning of subsection (e)(3)(D)), or an organization designated by such church or convention or association of churches, may elect to treat such organizations as a single employer for a plan year. Such election, once made, shall apply to all succeeding plan years unless revoked with notice provided to the Secretary in such manner as the Secretary shall prescribe.

''(D) PERMISSIVE DISAGGREGATION OF CHURCH-RELATED ORGANIZATIONS.—For purposes of subparagraph (A), in the case of a church plan, an employer may elect to treat churches (as defined in section 403(b)(12)(B)) separately from entities that are not churches (as so defined), without regard to whether such entities maintain separate church plans. Such election, once made, shall apply to all succeeding plan years unless revoked with notice provided to the Secretary in such manner as the Secretary shall prescribe.''.

(2) CLARIFICATION RELATING TO APPLICATION OF ANTI-ABUSE RULE.—The rule of 26 CFR 1.414(c)–5(f) shall continue to apply to each paragraph of section 414(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended by paragraph (1).

(3) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by paragraph (1) shall apply to years beginning before, on, or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(b) APPLICATION OF CONTRIBUTION AND FUNDING LIMITATIONS TO 403(b) GRANDFATHERED DEFINED BENEFIT PLANS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 251(e)(5) of the Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 1982 (Public Law 97–248), is amended—

(A) by striking ''403(b)(2)'' and inserting ''403(b)'', and

(B) by inserting before the period at the end the following: '', and shall be subject to the applicable limitations of section 415(b) of such Code as if it were a defined benefit plan under section 401(a) of such Code (and not to the limitations of section 415(c) of such Code).''.

(2) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this subsection shall apply to years beginning before, on, or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(c) AUTOMATIC ENROLLMENT BY CHURCH PLANS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—This subsection shall supersede any law of a State that relates to wage, salary, or payroll payment, collection, deduction, garnishment, assignment, or

withholding which would directly or indirectly prohibit or restrict the inclusion in any church plan (as defined in section 414(e) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986) of an automatic contribution arrangement.

(2) DEFINITION OF AUTOMATIC CONTRIBUTION ARRANGEMENT.—For purposes of this subsection, the term ''automatic contribution arrangement'' means an arrangement—

(A) under which a participant may elect to have the plan sponsor or the employer make payments as contributions under the plan on behalf of the participant, or to the participant directly in cash,

(B) under which a participant is treated as having elected to have the plan sponsor or the employer make such contributions in an amount equal to a uniform percentage of compensation provided under the plan until the participant specifically elects not to have such contributions made (or specifically elects to have such contributions made at a different percentage), and

(C) under which the notice and election requirements of paragraph (3), and the investment requirements of paragraph (4), are satisfied.

(3) NOTICE REQUIREMENTS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The plan sponsor of, or plan administrator or employer maintaining, an automatic contribution arrangement shall, within a reasonable period before the first day of each plan year, provide to each participant to whom the arrangement applies for such plan year notice of the participant's rights and obligations under the arrangement which—

(i) is sufficiently accurate and comprehensive to apprise the participant of such rights and obligations, and

(ii) is written in a manner calculated to be understood by the average participant to whom the arrangement applies.

(B) ELECTION REQUIREMENTS.—A notice shall not be treated as meeting the requirements of subparagraph (A) with respect to a participant unless—

(i) the notice includes an explanation of the participant's right under the arrangement not to have elective contributions made on the participant's behalf (or to elect to have such contributions made at a different percentage),

(ii) the participant has a reasonable period of time, after receipt of the explanation described in clause (i) and before the first elective contribution is made, to make such election, and

(iii) the notice explains how contributions made under the arrangement will be invested in the absence of any investment election by the participant.

(4) DEFAULT INVESTMENT.—If no affirmative investment election has been made with respect to any automatic contribution arrangement, contributions to such arrangement shall be invested in a default investment selected with the care, skill, prudence, and diligence that a prudent person selecting an investment option would use.

(5) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This subsection shall take effect on the date of the enactment of this Act.

(d) ALLOW CERTAIN PLAN TRANSFERS AND MERGERS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 414 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(z) CERTAIN PLAN TRANSFERS AND MERGERS.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—Under rules prescribed by the Secretary, except as provided in paragraph (2), no amount shall be includible in gross income by reason of—

''(A) a transfer of all or a portion of the accrued benefit of a participant or beneficiary, whether or not vested, from a church plan that is a plan described in section 401(a) or an annuity contract described in section 403(b) to an annuity contract described in section 403(b), if such plan and annuity contract are both maintained by the same church or convention or association of churches,

''(B) a transfer of all or a portion of the accrued benefit of a participant or beneficiary from an annuity contract described in section 403(b) to a church plan that is a plan described in section 401(a) or an annuity contract described in section 403(b), if such plan and annuity contract are both maintained by the same church or convention or association of churches, or

''(C) a merger of a church plan that is a plan described in section 401(a), or an annuity contract described in section 403(b) with an annuity contract described in section 403(b), if such plan and annuity contract are both maintained by the same church or convention or association of churches.

''(2) LIMITATION.—Paragraph (1) shall not apply to a transfer or merger unless the participant's or beneficiary's total accrued benefit immediately after the transfer or merger is equal to or greater than the participant's or beneficiary's total accrued benefit immediately before the transfer or merger, and such total accrued benefit is nonforfeitable after the transfer or merger.

''(3) QUALIFICATION.—A plan or annuity contract shall not fail to be considered to be described in sections 401(a) or 403(b) merely because such plan or annuity contract engages in a transfer or merger described in this subsection.

''(4) DEFINITIONS.—For purposes of this subsection:

''(A) CHURCH OR CONVENTION OR ASSOCIATION OF CHURCHES.—The term 'church or convention or association of churches' includes an organization described in subparagraph (A) or (B)(ii) of subsection (e)(3).

''(B) ANNUITY CONTRACT.—The term 'annuity contract' includes a custodial account described in section 403(b)(7) and a retirement income account described in section 403(b)(9).

''(C) ACCRUED BENEFIT.—The term 'accrued benefit' means—

''(i) in the case of a defined benefit plan, the employee's accrued benefit determined under the plan, and

''(ii) in the case of a plan other than a defined benefit plan, the balance of the employee's account under the plan.''.

(2) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by this subsection shall apply to transfers or mergers occurring after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(e) INVESTMENTS BY CHURCH PLANS IN COLLECTIVE TRUSTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—In the case of—

(A) a church plan (as defined in section 414(e) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986), including a plan described in section 401(a) of such Code and a retirement income account described in section 403(b)(9) of such Code, and

(B) an organization described in section 414(e)(3)(A) of such Code the principal purpose or function of which is the administration of such a plan or account,

the assets of such plan, account, or organization (including any assets otherwise permitted to be commingled for investment purposes with the assets of such a plan, account, or organization) may be invested in a group trust otherwise described in Internal Revenue Service Revenue Ruling 81–100 (as modified by Internal Revenue Service Revenue Rulings 2004–67, 2011–1, and 2014–24), or any subsequent revenue ruling that supersedes or modifies such revenue ruling, without adversely affecting the tax status of the group trust, such plan, account, or organization, or any other plan or trust that invests in the group trust.

(2) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This subsection shall apply to investments made after the date of the enactment of this Act.

PHYLLIS E. GALANTI ARBORETUM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Veterans' Affairs be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 2693 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2693) to designate the arboretum at the Hunter Holmes McGuire VA Medical Center in Richmond, Virginia, as the ''Phyllis E. Galanti Arboretum.''

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The bill (H.R. 2693) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

FORECLOSURE RELIEF AND EXTENSION FOR SERVICEMEMBERS ACT OF 2015

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 2393, submitted earlier today by Senator WHITEHOUSE.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2393) to extend temporarily the extended period of protection for members of uniformed services relating to mortgages, mortgage foreclosure, and eviction, and for other purposes.

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The bill (S. 2393) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 2393

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Foreclosure Relief and Extension for Servicemembers Act of 2015''.

SEC. 2. TEMPORARY EXTENSION OF EXTENDED PERIOD OF PROTECTIONS FOR MEMBERS OF UNIFORMED SERVICES RELATING TO MORTGAGES, MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE, AND EVICTION.

Section 710(d) of the Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012 (Public Law 112–154; 50 U.S.C. 3953 note) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by striking ''December 31, 2015'' and inserting ''December 31, 2017''; and

(2) in paragraph (3), by striking ''January 1, 2016'' and inserting ''January 1, 2018''.

DIRECTING SENATE LEGAL COUNSEL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 333, submitted earlier today.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 333) to direct the Senate Legal Counsel to appear as amicus curiae in the name of the Senate in Bank Markazi, The Central Bank of Iran v. Deborah D. Peterson, et al. (S. Ct.)

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the Supreme Court has taken up a case presenting the question whether a provision of the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012, which provides terrorism victims in the case of Peterson v. Islamic Republic of Iran, Case No. 10 Civ. 4518, filed in the Southern District of New York, with the right, notwithstanding any other law, to obtain money damages for existing judgments against Iran from certain Iranian bonds held in the United States, violates the separation of powers.

The plaintiffs here are victims and families of victims of Iran-sponsored terrorist attacks, including the 1983 Beirut Marine barracks bombing and the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing, who hold billions of dollars in unpaid compensatory damages judgments against Iran. In 2010, they initiated an action in Federal court seeking turnover of $1.75 billion in bond assets held by Citibank in New York, which through two foreign intermediary banks were ultimately owned by Bank Markazi, the Central Bank of Iran, which is wholly owned by the Iranian Government.

Plaintiffs argued they were entitled to the assets under the Terrorism Risk Insurance Act of 2002, TRIA, which permits the satisfaction of terrorism judgments from ''the blocked assets of any agency or instrumentality of th[e] terrorist party.'' Pub. L. No. 107–297, §201(a), 116 Stat. 2322, 2337. Bank Markazi argued the assets were not subject to execution under TRIA because they were held on behalf of intermediaries and therefore, under controlling state law, those assets could not be considered Iran's property.

Against that backdrop and with plaintiffs' motion for seeking execution pending, Congress enacted section 502 of the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012. 22 U.S.C. §8772. That statute identified plaintiffs' case by name and docket number and directed that, ''notwithstanding any other provision of law'' the assets ''shall be subject to execution or attachment in aid of execution in order to satisfy any judgment to the extent of any compensatory damages awarded against Iran.'' 22 U.S.C. §8772(a)(1), (b). It also expressly disclaimed any effect on ''any [other] proceedings.'' 22 U.S.C. §8772(c)(1). Before permitting execution against the assets, the statute required the court to determine both whether Iran holds title or interest in the assets and whether any ''other person possesses a constitutionally protected interest in the assets.'' 22 U.S.C. §8772(a)(2).

Bank Markazi challenged section 502 as unconstitutional for violating the separation of powers between the legislative and judicial branches explicated in United States v. Klein, 80 U.S. (13 Wall.) 128 (1871), by effectively dictating the outcome of a single case. After making the statutory determinations that Iran and only Iran held a beneficial interest in the assets, the district court rejected Bank Markazi's constitutional challenge. Peterson v. Islamic Republic of Iran, slip op (S.D.N.Y. March 13, 2013), 2013 WL 1155576. The court, noting it was required to determine whether Iran holds title or interest in the assets, as well as whether any other party holds a protected interest in the assets, held that ''[t]he statute does not itself 'find' turnover required; such determination is specifically left to the Court.'' Id. at 31.

On appeal, a unanimous Second Circuit panel affirmed. Peterson v. Islamic Republic of Iran, 758 F.3d 185 (2d Cir. 2014). The appellate court noted that ''while Klein illustrates that Congress may not 'usurp[] the adjudicative function assigned to the federal courts,' later cases have explained that Congress may 'chang[e] the law applicable to pending cases,' even when the result under the revised law is clear.'' Id. at 191 (citations omitted).

Bank Markazi filed a petition for certiorari with the Supreme Court. After calling for and receiving the views of the United States Solicitor General, who filed an opposition to certiorari defending the constitutionality of section 502, the Supreme Court granted certiorari.

Title VII of the Ethics in Government Act authorizes the Senate to appear as an amicus curiae in any legal action in which the powers and responsibilities of the Congress under the Constitution are placed in issue. Appearance as an amicus curiae in this case would enable the Senate to respond to Bank Markazi's contention that this law infringes on the judiciary's constitutional power to decide cases and controversies and to present to the Court the basis for the Senate's conviction that the law is consistent with the Constitution.

This resolution would authorize the Senate legal counsel to appear in this case in the Senate's name as amicus curiae to support the constitutionality of the statute.

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

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

The resolution (S. Res. 333) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

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

ORDERS FOR MONDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2015

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 3 p.m. on Monday, December 14; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, and the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; further, that following leader remarks, the Senate be in a period of morning business until 5 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each; finally, that at 5 p.m., the Senate then proceed to executive session as under the previous order.

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

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL MONDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2015, AT 3 P.M.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 6:32 p.m., adjourned until Monday, December 14, 2015, at 3 p.m.

DISCHARGED NOMINATION

The Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works was discharged from further consideration of the following nomination unanimous consent and the nomination was confirmed:

RICHARD CAPEL HOWORTH, OF MISSISSIPPI, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY FOR A TERM EXPIRING MAY 18, 2020.

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate December 10, 2015:

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

CHERRY ANN MURRAY, OF KANSAS, TO BE DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF SCIENCE, DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY.

MORRIS K. UDALL AND STEWART L. UDALL FOUNDATION

ERIC DRAKE EBERHARD, OF WASHINGTON, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE MORRIS K. UDALL AND STEWART L. UDALL FOUNDATION FOR A TERM EXPIRING OCTOBER 6, 2018.

IN THE MARINE CORPS

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL IN THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS WHILE ASSIGNED TO A

POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 601:

To be lieutenant general

LT. GEN. JOHN E. WISSLER

IN THE NAVY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT AS THE CHIEF OF THE BUREAU OF MEDICINE AND SURGERY AND SURGEON GENERAL AND FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 601 AND 5137:

To be vice admiral

REAR ADM. CLINTON F. FAISON III

IN THE ARMY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT AS THE SURGEON GENERAL, UNITED STATES ARMY, AND FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 601 AND 3036:

To be lieutenant general

MAJ. GEN. NADJA Y. WEST

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

To be brigadier general

COL. EDWARD E. HILDRETH III

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

To be brigadier general

COLONEL JENNIFER G. BUCKNER
COLONEL SEAN A. GAINEY
COLONEL DAVID T. ISAACSON
COLONEL PATRICK B. ROBERSON

IN THE AIR FORCE

THE FOLLOWING AIR NATIONAL GUARD OF THE UNITED STATES OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE RESERVE OF THE AIR FORCE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 12203 AND 12212:

To be brigadier general

COL. BLAKE A. GETTYS
COL. KAREN E. MANSFIELD

THE FOLLOWING AIR NATIONAL GUARD OF THE UNITED STATES OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE RESERVE OF THE AIR FORCE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 12203 AND 12212:

To be brigadier general

COL. TODD M. BRANDEN
COL. MARK A. CROSBY
COL. FERMIN A. RUBIO

THE FOLLOWING AIR NATIONAL GUARD OF THE UNITED STATES OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE RESERVE OF THE AIR FORCE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 12203 AND 12212:

To be brigadier general

COL. DAVID M. BAKOS
COL. VANCE C. BATEMAN
COL. SANDRA L. BEST
COL. JEFFREY C. BOZARD
COL. WILLIAM D. BUNCH
COL. RAFAEL CARRERO
COL. LARRY K. CLARK
COL. KEVIN D. CLOTFELTER
COL. MARSHALL C. COLLINS
COL. JAMES N. COX
COL. JASON R. CRIPPS
COL. CHRISTOPHER S. CROXTON
COL. FRANCIS N. DETORIE
COL. RUBEN FERNANDEZ–VERA
COL. JOHN T. FERRY
COL. JOHN E. FLOWERS
COL. MICHAEL J. FRANCIS
COL. VINCENT R. FRANKLIN
COL. CLAY L. GARRISON
COL. KEVIN J. HEER
COL. DANA A. HESSHEIMER
COL. GENE W. HUGHES, JR.
COL. JAMES T. JOHNSON
COL. GREGORY F. JONES
COL. MARSHALL L. KJELVIK
COL. JAMES R. KRIESEL
COL. RONALD S. LAMBE
COL. ANDREW J. MACDONALD
COL. STEPHEN J. MAHER
COL. MATTHEW J. MANIFOLD
COL. MAREN MCAVOY
COL. GREGORY S. MCCREARY
COL. STEPHEN B. MEHRING
COL. JESSICA MEYERAAN
COL. BILLY M. NABORS
COL. JEFFREY L. NEWTON
COL. PETER NEZAMIS
COL. PATRICK R. RENWICK
COL. STEPHEN M. RYAN
COL. PETER R. SCHNEIDER
COL. GREGORY N. SCHNULO
COL. GREG A. SEMMEL
COL. RAY M. SHEPARD
COL. MARC A. SICARD
COL. PAUL R. SILVESTRI
COL. CHRISTOPHER A. STRATMANN
COL. PETER F. SULLIVAN, JR.
COL. TAMI S. THOMPSON
COL. JOSEPH B. WILSON
COL. GREGORY S. WOODROW

THE FOLLOWING AIR NATIONAL GUARD OF THE UNITED STATES OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE RESERVE OF THE AIR FORCE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 12203 AND 12212:

To be major general

BRIG. GEN. EDWARD P. MAXWELL

THE FOLLOWING AIR NATIONAL GUARD OF THE UNITED STATES OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE RESERVE OF THE AIR FORCE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 12203 AND 12212:

To be major general

BRIG. GEN. ROBERT C. BOLTON
BRIG. GEN. CHARLES W. CHAPPUIS, JR.
BRIG. GEN. DAWNE L. DESKINS
BRIG. GEN. TIMOTHY L. FRYE
BRIG. GEN. PAUL D. JACOBS
BRIG. GEN. MARK E. JANNITTO
BRIG. GEN. RONALD W. SOLBERG
BRIG. GEN. JAMES K. VOGEL
BRIG. GEN. WILLIAM L. WELSH
BRIG. GEN. WAYNE A. ZIMMET

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 601:

To be lieutenant general

MAJ. GEN. JOHN D. BANSEMER

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

To be brigadier general

COL. RUSSELL A. MUNCY

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

To be brigadier general

COL. PATRICIA N. BEYER

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

To be brigadier general

COL. CHRISTOPHER W. LENTZ

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

To be brigadier general

COL. LEE ANN T. BENNETT
COL. RICHARD M. CASTO
COL. JONATHAN M. ELLIS
COL. JAMES J. FONTANELLA
COL. JOHN P. HEALY
COL. DANIEL J. HEIRES
COL. ROBERT A. HUSTON
COL. WILLIAM R. KOUNTZ, JR.
COL. ALBERT V. LUPENSKI
COL. TYLER D. OTTEN
COL. RUSSELL P. REIMER
COL. HAROLD E. ROGERS, JR.
COL. TRACEY A. SIEMS

IN THE ARMY

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

To be major general

BRIG. GEN. JOHN C. THOMSON III

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

To be major general

BRIG. GEN. SYLVIA R. CROCKETT

IN THE AIR FORCE

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

To be brigadier general

COL. KENNETH T. BIBB, JR.
COL. ANGELA M. CADWELL
COL. MARTIN A. CHAPIN
COL. JAMES R. CLUFF
COL. CHARLES S. CORCORAN
COL. SEAN M. FARRELL
COL. CHAD P. FRANKS
COL. ALEXUS G. GRYNKEWICH
COL. TIMOTHY D. HAUGH
COL. CHRISTOPHER D. HILL
COL. ERIC T. HILL
COL. SAMUEL C. HINOTE
COL. WILLIAM G. HOLT II
COL. LINDA S. HURRY
COL. MATTHEW C. ISLER
COL. KYLE J. KREMER
COL. JOHN C. KUBINEC
COL. DOUGLAS K. LAMBERTH
COL. LANCE K. LANDRUM
COL. JEANNIE M. LEAVITT
COL. WILLIAM J. LIQUORI, JR.
COL. MICHAEL J. LUTTON
COL. COREY J. MARTIN
COL. TOM D. MILLER
COL. RICHARD G. MOORE, JR.
COL. JAMES D. PECCIA III
COL. HEATHER L. PRINGLE
COL. MICHAEL J. SCHMIDT
COL. JAMES R. SEARS, JR.
COL. DANIEL L. SIMPSON
COL. MARK H. SLOCUM
COL. ROBERT S. SPALDING III
COL. WILLIAM A. SPANGENTHAL
COL. EDWARD W. THOMAS, JR.
COL. JOHN T. WILCOX II
COL. MICHAEL P. WINKLER

SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

DARRYL L. DEPRIEST, OF ILLINOIS, TO BE CHIEF COUNSEL FOR ADVOCACY, SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION.

IN THE AIR FORCE

AIR FORCE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH BRYAN K. ALLEN AND ENDING WITH GARRICK H. YOKOE, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON NOVEMBER 19, 2015.

IN THE ARMY

ARMY NOMINATION OF JAMES D. FERGUSON, TO BE MAJOR.

ARMY NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH KELVIN L. BROWN AND ENDING WITH PAUL L. WAGNER II, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON NOVEMBER 19, 2015.

ARMY NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH DAESOO LEE AND ENDING WITH BRIAN D. RAY, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON NOVEMBER 19, 2015.

ARMY NOMINATION OF WAYNE W. SANTOS, TO BE COLONEL.

ARMY NOMINATION OF ANTHONY J. FADELL, TO BE COLONEL.

ARMY NOMINATION OF RICARDO ALONSOJOURNET, TO BE COLONEL.

ARMY NOMINATION OF JEFFREY M. SLOAN, TO BE COLONEL.

ARMY NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH ANDREW C. DILLON AND ENDING WITH ANDRE R. HOLDER, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON NOVEMBER 19, 2015.

ARMY NOMINATION OF REBECCA R. TOMSYCK, TO BE COLONEL.

ARMY NOMINATION OF EVERETT S. P. SPAIN, TO BE COLONEL.

ARMY NOMINATION OF SHANE R. REEVES, TO BE LIEUTENANT COLONEL.

ARMY NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH DAVID E. BENTZEL AND ENDING WITH BRIAN U. T. KIM, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON NOVEMBER 19, 2015.

ARMY NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH TERESA L. BRININGER AND ENDING WITH RICHARD A. VILLARREAL, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON NOVEMBER 19, 2015.

ARMY NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH KEVIN R. BASS AND ENDING WITH D003940, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON NOVEMBER 19, 2015.

ARMY NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH KIMBERLIE A. BIEVER AND ENDING WITH PAMELA M. WULF, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON NOVEMBER 19, 2015.

ARMY NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH DAVID BARRETT AND ENDING WITH JENNIFER S. ZUCKER, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON NOVEMBER 19, 2015.

ARMY NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH DAVID W. LAWS AND ENDING WITH JOHN E. SWANBERG, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON NOVEMBER 19, 2015.

ARMY NOMINATION OF WILLIAM A. ALTMIRE, TO BE COLONEL.

ARMY NOMINATION OF JESUS J. T. NUFABLE, TO BE COLONEL.

ARMY NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH RUBEN BERMUDEZPAGAN AND ENDING WITH TODD W. SCHAFFER, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON NOVEMBER 19, 2015.

ARMY NOMINATION OF JOSHUA A. CARLISLE, TO BE LIEUTENANT COLONEL.

ARMY NOMINATION OF WILLIAM C. MOORHOUSE, TO BE LIEUTENANT COLONEL.

ARMY NOMINATION OF GREGG T. OLSOWY, TO BE LIEUTENANT COLONEL.

ARMY NOMINATION OF ROGER S. GIRAUD, TO BE COLONEL.

ARMY NOMINATION OF STEVEN M. WILKE, TO BE COLONEL.

IN THE NAVY

NAVY NOMINATION OF KENNETH C. COLLINS II, TO BE CAPTAIN.

IN THE COAST GUARD

COAST GUARD NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH CORINNA M. FLEISCHMANN AND ENDING WITH KIMBERLY C. YOUNG–MCLEAR, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON NOVEMBER 19, 2015.

COAST GUARD NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH MICHAEL S. ADAMS, JR. AND ENDING WITH JAMES R. ZOLL, JR., WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON NOVEMBER 19, 2015.

COAST GUARD NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH JASON C. ALEKSAK AND ENDING WITH YAMASHEKA Z. YOUNG–MCLEAR, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON NOVEMBER 19, 2015.

FOREIGN SERVICE

FOREIGN SERVICE NOMINATION OF DANIEL SYLVESTER CRONIN.

FOREIGN SERVICE NOMINATION OF DERELL KENNEDO.

FOREIGN SERVICE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH STEVEN CARL AABERG AND ENDING WITH SANDRA M. ZUNIGA GUZMAN, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON NOVEMBER 10, 2015.

FOREIGN SERVICE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH JAMES F. ENTWISTLE AND ENDING WITH DANIEL R. RUSSEL, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON NOVEMBER 19, 2015.

FOREIGN SERVICE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH CHRISTOPHER VOLCIAK AND ENDING WITH EDWARD L. ROBINSON III, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON NOVEMBER 19, 2015.

TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY

RICHARD CAPEL HOWORTH, OF MISSISSIPPI, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY FOR A TERM EXPIRING MAY 18, 2020.