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Senate

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

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Almighty God, the Earth belongs to You and everything in it. Even when wrong seems overwhelming, You continue to rule. Create in our lawmakers a hunger and thirst for integrity and honesty. Give them pure hearts and truthful lips, accompanied by a passion to glorify You.

Lord, provide them wisdom to live for the honor of Your Name as they remember that they are Your ambassadors. May they look to You for help, knowing that You surround them with the shield of Your Divine favor.

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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, this evening, President Trump will deliver his first State of the Union Address. As tens of millions of Americans tune in, he will continue a time-honored tradition by taking stock of the past year and laying out his vision for the future.

For anyone who has been reading the headlines over the last year and paying

attention to the issues that directly impact middle-class families, the state of our Union will not come as a surprise.

Unemployment is low and consumer confidence is high. The news is packed with all the pay raises, special bonuses, expanded benefits, and new investments that are flowing into American households and communities because of a landmark tax reform law that Congress passed and the President signed in December.

Hundreds of companies have announced that a more competitive tax code is allowing them to quickly ramp up the amount they can invest in their own American workers. This includes some of our country's largest employers.

Walmart is increasing its starting wage for all hourly associates, expanding maternity and parental leave, and giving \$1,000 bonuses to its own employees. Disney, AT&T, and Bank of America are giving \$1,000 tax reform bonuses to more than 100,000 workers each. The list goes on. It is not just the big guys who are benefiting.

Yesterday afternoon, here on the floor, I talked about Verst Logistics in Walton, KY, which paid its full-time workers bonuses as a result of tax reform. I shared the story of a woman who works for Verst. She fought back tears as she explained what this bonus would do for her family. Money had gotten tight around the holidays, but while she and her husband had saved enough to give their five children a merry Christmas, mom and dad were planning to go without gifts of their own. But because Congress seized this opportunity to modernize our Tax Code, she got her very own tax reform bonus. With that extra money she and her husband were able to buy each other Christmas presents after all and enjoy a nice dinner out, to boot.

I can share these stories all day. I am so proud that Congress and the President teamed up to take money out of

Washington's pocket and put it back in the pockets of hard-working Americans who earned it.

Some of our Democratic colleagues don't seem to feel that way. They all voted against a law that would raise take-home pay for American families, who have spent a decade struggling not just to get ahead but oftentimes to simply stay afloat. Several have made news in recent days by scoffing at these bonuses, pay raises, and new benefits.

My friends the Democratic leaders in both the Senate and the House have both used the word "crumbs"—"crumbs." One of their colleagues, the former chair of the DNC, said she doesn't think \$1,000 "goes very far for almost anyone." So \$1,000 doesn't go far for almost anyone? That might be true in New York or San Francisco, but it sure isn't true in Kentucky. I think taking that argument to most kitchen tables would get you laughed out of the room.

Of course, the immediate raises, bonuses, and worker benefits are far from the whole story. Tax reform will also deliver direct relief to middle-class families across America by cutting our tax rates and doubling the standard deduction.

A typical family of four earning a median income will get to keep more than \$2,000 of their own money that they would have otherwise sent to the IRS next year.

Furthermore, the law repeals ObamaCare's punitive individual mandate tax, and soon many Americans are likely to see lower utility rates as utility companies pass along their savings to consumers.

Just yesterday, two major Kentucky utilities asked the Kentucky Public Service Commission for permission to pass \$180 million in tax reform savings on to their customers, which could lower their bills this year. That is particularly important to low-income families, because paying their utility

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



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bill is a big percentage of any of their take-home pay.

We are already seeing early signs that tax reform will create an environment where wages will be higher and opportunity will be more abundant for years, even decades, to come.

President Trump and Republicans in Congress understand that when you make America a more attractive place to invest and create jobs, you are helping American families and communities.

We understand that the myth of an “us versus them” economy, where employers must lose for workers to win, is nothing more than a divisive political talking point with no basis in economics. That is why we seized this generational opportunity to provide a 21st century tax code that will give our country a fairer fight with our competitors overseas. We are already seeing new factories announced and new investments pouring into our country as a result.

Tax reform is far from the only way this President and this Congress have gone to bat for the future of our country. We have taken a machete to the forest of redtape that the Obama administration left behind.

To name just three examples, Congress and the White House have teamed up to roll back regulations that threatened hundreds of thousands of coal jobs, required States to give grants to Planned Parenthood, and had needlessly blocked oil exploration in a small portion of Federal land in Alaska.

After the Senate confirmed President Trump’s Cabinet, from Secretary Mattis at the Pentagon to Administrator Pruitt at the EPA, these fine officials have notched achievement after achievement for the American people, laying the groundwork for a stronger and safer nation.

We have made major progress for American veterans, like Cpl Matthew Bradford of Central Kentucky, a true American hero who will be attending tonight as a guest of the First Lady.

Congress has passed and the President has signed laws that will help our veterans access the healthcare options they need and the employment training programs they deserve. We have much more to do for our heroes, but these first steps are indeed promising.

We have taken big steps in the war against addiction and the scourge of opioids, an issue that is deeply personal for far, far too many American families.

In just his first year in office, the President has begun to transform the Federal judiciary. President Trump had more new circuit court judges confirmed in his first year than any prior President, a testimony to the fine quality of the nominees he sends here to the Senate, and we will vote to confirm another excellent judge later today. And the President rose to the occasion of a Supreme Court vacancy by filling it with a brilliant and experienced jurist in Justice Gorsuch.

On all of these fronts—from middle-class Americans’ pocketbooks to the ongoing fight against ISIL—there is more good news than I can begin to recite this morning.

I very much look forward to attending the State of the Union tonight and hearing from our President. On behalf of all the Americans we represent—men and women from coast to coast who are seeing the economy turn around and their country grow stronger before their eyes—I am glad there will be so much to applaud.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of David Ryan Stras, of Minnesota, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Eighth Circuit.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

REMEMBERING ELDER VON G. KEETCH

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, I rise to honor the life of my friend Elder Von G. Keetch, legal counsel and leader in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. His passing on Friday evening was sudden and unexpected, and I wish to extend my condolences to his family during this difficult time.

Elder Keetch served as a general authority and executive director of the LDS Church’s Public Affairs Department. He helped to shape community and government relations for the church as a recognized expert in constitutional law. His career was devoted to defending religious liberty for all religious institutions. His insight was particularly salient during this ever-changing world. As his daughter Steffani Keetch Dastrup said, “He wanted to defend and support all churches and all religious beliefs and all people’s rights to believe and act

the way they feel is right. That was a big part of his work.”

I consider it a privilege to have worked alongside Elder Keetch over the past several years. I was able to witness firsthand the love he had for his wife, the pride he had in his children, and the devotion he had for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I am grateful for his guidance, for his counsel, and for his friendship.

His humble expertise and kind demeanor will be sorely missed by all those who knew him. His legacy of faith and love will bless his family for generations to come.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

REMEMBERING ED LORENZEN

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, I rise with great sadness to remember Edward Lorenzen, who, along with his 4-year-old son Michael, perished this weekend in a house fire.

Ed was invaluable to my staff during last year’s tax reform debate. The Washington Post honored his contributions to Congress, saying: “Quietly and intelligently, Mr. Lorenzen provided objective, reliable fiscal information, even—or especially—when facts and figures were the last thing wishful thinkers in Washington [or the government] wanted to face.”

The Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, where Ed served as a senior adviser, said: “He was a brilliant budget mind—his guidance and expertise is a void that cannot be filled.”

The committee also remembered his deep love for his children, saying: “We worked every day with a kind, loving man who cherished his three kids, bringing them to the office on occasion and lighting up in their presence and at the sound of their names.”

I cannot imagine the grief Ed and Michael’s family and loved ones face. I would like to extend my deepest sympathies to them during this difficult time. May we all hold our families a little closer today.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, tonight the President will address a joint session of Congress in his first official State of the Union. I want to talk about what I expect the President to say and also what I suspect he will not.

The President will be eager to defend the accomplishments of his nascent administration and take credit for a healthy American economy, pointing to low unemployment, job growth, and a soaring stock market, but the truth is, these trends were present before Donald Trump took office. President Trump was handed an already healthy economy by his predecessor. Like many things in his life, he inherited the healthy economy.

Here are two words we will not hear President Trump say tonight about the

economy—thanks, Obama—because much of the growth in 2017 was created by President Obama's policies and, by many measures, the growth under President Obama was better than under President Trump.

Under President Obama, employment was driven from over 10 percent down into the fours. The tightening of the labor market finally started to reverse the stagnancy of median income. The stock market President Trump often touts on Twitter was booming under President Obama as well.

In President Trump's first year, the economy created 2.06 million jobs. That is less than the 2.24 million jobs created in 2016, the last year of Obama's term.

Again, President Trump, President Obama created more jobs in the last year of his term than you created in the first year of yours. So if you are going to pat yourself on the back, give a shout out to Barack Obama because he did even better than you in job creation.

In 2017, under President Trump, average monthly job growth was lower than in 2016, 2015, 2014, 2013, 2012, and 2011, all under President Obama.

Again, President Trump, job growth in the first year of your term was less than in each of the last 6 years of President Obama's term.

How about the stock market. In the first 6 months of 2017, the percentage growth of the S&P 500 was lower than during the first 6 months of President Obama's term. In the first year of the Trump Presidency, the percentage growth of the Dow was lower than during the first year of President Obama.

So, again, here are two words we would like President Trump to say tonight about the economy: Thanks, Obama. We may never hear President Trump say those words, but he ought to.

I also expect the President to speak about bipartisanship. President Trump understands there is a very low bar when it comes to the topic. His first year in office has been so divisive, even a mere appeal to bipartisanship sounds like progress, but the proof will be in the pudding. Will President Trump pursue real bipartisanship through his actions or will he fall back on empty rhetoric? When it comes to bipartisanship, President Trump has to walk the walk, not just talk the talk intermittently. Mr. President, when it comes to bipartisanship, actions speak a whole lot louder than words.

I would remind President Trump that this has been one of the most partisan administrations many of us have ever worked with. I have worked under President Reagan, President H.W. Bush, and President W. Bush—all Republicans. All of them were legions more bipartisan than President Trump's first year.

What have we seen? An assembly line of partisan CRAs designed not to need a single Democratic vote; a Supreme Court Justice picked by the hard-right

Heritage Foundation and Federalist Society, no consultation, not a consensus nominee; a partisan healthcare bill that failed under reconciliation, specifically designed not to include Democrats; a partisan tax bill that ultimately passed, also under reconciliation—no consultation with Democrats, not a single Democratic vote.

The reason these don't get Democratic votes is President Trump and his administration don't talk to us. They don't ask us what we might suggest. They don't try to create a bipartisan meld which great Presidents have done from the time of George Washington; they just act in a narrow, partisan way, and the American people know it.

There has been hardly a shred of bipartisanship in the Trump era, despite our many appeals for it. The President and congressional Republicans seem to think that bipartisanship happens when one side puts together a bill, pounds the table, and demands the other side support the bill, with no negotiation, no compromise.

They are missing the step where they consult with the other side and work with the other side to earn their support. That is the hard work of legislating in our democracy, but this administration eschews hard work. The Republican majority and the White House have been content to craft legislation on their own, demand Democrats support it, and then label us obstructionists when, without consultation, without compromise, we don't. That dynamic is the root of the ineffectiveness and gridlock in Congress. I sincerely hope that changes.

If the President calls for bipartisanship tonight, I welcome it. But we eagerly await action, not just a sound bite in a speech. We await the honest debate, the good faith give-and-take, and the eventual compromise that are the actual hallmarks of bipartisanship. If those things arise, even though they haven't in the first year, Democrats will gladly work with our Republican colleagues and the White House to get things done for the middle class. But we need to see it to believe it. Mere words in a speech tonight will not create bipartisanship; actions will.

Finally, here is something that President Trump should discuss tonight: Russia sanctions. He ought to impose the sanctions, as Congress voted for in an overwhelmingly bipartisan fashion, or at least explain why he hasn't done so yet. We call on President Trump in the State of the Union to tell Americans that he will support the sanctions 90 percent of America supports or tell us why he will not.

Over a year ago, the U.S. intelligence community concluded that Russian President Putin ordered an influence campaign in 2016 aimed at the U.S. Presidential election. That is a fact. That is a fact that is shocking. A hostile foreign power interfered with an American election and likely influenced it in measurable ways. The Founders of our country feared this

very possibility. They knew that for a democracy to work, the election of the people's representatives must be free, fair, and legitimate, and that foreign powers, even back then, would try to corrupt the process. They wrote safeguards into the Constitution to protect it.

Last year, the American people were the victim of such an attack by an antagonistic foreign power: Russia. I call on President Trump tonight to use his State of the Union to tell Americans what he plans to do about Russian attacks on our democracy.

Implement sanctions, President Trump, or at the very least tell us why you haven't.

Today is the day the President is supposed to obey the sanctions issue Congress voted on overwhelmingly a while back. There is no subject more worthy of a thorough and unbiased investigation than the Russian interference in our elections. Yet the President and his allies have waged a scorched-earth campaign to discredit the investigation in any way possible—by assassinating the character of career civil servants, assailing the credibility of the media, attacking our own law enforcement agencies and officers, even denigrating the institutions of American Government.

The White House and congressional Republicans' attacks on Mueller and his investigation make you believe it was taking place in a banana republic, Erdogan's Turkey, or Putin's Russia, not in the United States of America. What has been done by House Republicans and gone along with by just about the whole Republican establishment is not worthy of this democracy. It makes us look like a banana republic, and it is shameful.

A different kind of President would be encouraging Special Counsel Mueller's investigation and shouting down those forces who tried to interfere with it. A different kind of President would want to know how precisely Russia meddled in our election and would have severely punished Putin for it to discourage him from ever trying it again.

Here we are, 180 days since the President signed the historic Russia sanctions bill passed by this body by a vote of 97 to 2, and he hasn't even implemented those sanctions. He is supposed to do it today, the day of the State of the Union.

Again, Mr. President, implement the sanctions tonight, or at least tell the American people why you are not, opening an invitation to Russia to do it again.

Why won't Donald Trump use the power given to him by a near-unanimous vote in Congress to hold Russia accountable?

The administration refused to implement secondary sanctions against the Russian defense and intelligence sectors. Last night, the administration released a mandated report of Russian

oligarchs that seems to match a list already put together by Forbes magazine. This is a reflection of the lack of seriousness with which they took up this task.

When it comes to sanctions, the White House has engaged in a dangerous Kabuki theater that tries to show strength when in fact there is none. These actions are not good enough. They are for show.

Why is the President so afraid to sanction Putin, his associates, or other corrupt Russian actors and officials? Why is President Trump giving Putin a free pass after he attacked our democracy? What is he so afraid of? The American people are asking that question, and they have their answers.

Only a year after a hostile foreign power shook the very bedrock of our democracy, any other President would spend his first State of the Union talking about efforts that were underway to punish the abuser and prevent such an attack from ever recurring. Why not this President?

If President Trump wishes to save his Presidency from the shame of having failed to address one of the gravest threats threatening our country, he will announce this evening in no uncertain terms that he is sanctioning President Putin. Any other President would have already made it their priority to take decisive action in their first year, but this President is paralyzed when it comes to Putin and his cronies in Russia.

Here are two words the President may not say tonight: "Russia sanctions"—but he ought to.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

HONORING SHERIFF'S DEPUTY HEATH GUMM

MR. GARDNER. Mr. President, I rise to speak about a horrible tragedy that occurred in Adams County, CO, on January 24, just last week. Adams County sheriff's deputy Heath Gumm was pursuing a suspect when he was shot and killed in the line of duty.

Heath was 31 years old and is survived by his wife and other loving family members. He had served with the Adams County Sheriff's Office since 2012, which was not a surprise to those who knew him best, because of his upbringing.

He grew up in a family of first responders. His father is a retired West Metro Fire Protection District engineer. So his teachers and classmates who knew Heath as a student at Mullen High School, in Denver, were not shocked to learn that he had decided to become a law enforcement officer.

As reported by the Denver Post, Heath's ninth grade English teacher, Sean Keefe, said:

By all accounts, he lived his life as a grown man as he did as a kid. He was a good guy. That didn't change. That only got more accentuated as he grew up. He lifted his friends. He made his friends the best version of themselves, and they did that to him as well.

Heath's cousin remembers him as the "kind of man you wanted out there protecting our streets. He was there, fair, funny and friendly to everyone."

Keefe went on to remember Heath as "someone people gravitated towards, and he was someone who people could count on."

It is these qualities that made Heath such an incredible sheriff's deputy.

At a press conference last Thursday, Adams County sheriff Michael McIntosh read parts of a letter he had received from a stranded motorist whom Heath had recently helped when he was out on patrol.

The resident wrote: "Heath made the interaction enjoyable and easy to get through instead of acting like I was in trouble or a nuisance."

Heath showed what it means to be a law enforcement officer who selflessly serves and protects a community. He went to work each and every day—ready to walk that thin blue line.

When we lose an officer in Colorado, I come to this Chamber to honor his sacrifice and recite the words of LTC Dave Grossman, who wrote that American law enforcement is the loyal and brave sheepdog who is always standing watch for the wolf that lurks in the dark.

Unfortunately, many in this Chamber have heard me read that quote far too often in the last weeks.

Across Colorado and across the country, we owe so much to Heath and law enforcement officers for their service. Instead of fleeing to safety, they run toward danger to save lives. They provide hope and safety to our families in the worst of times.

I thank Heath for answering the call. He protected his community. I, along with Coloradans across the State, are forever grateful. We will never forget his sacrifice, and we will always honor his memory.

We also lost a sheriff's deputy on New Year's Eve in Colorado, just a few weeks before. In a tribute to him, I read something that former State Representative Joe Rice had written during his service in the Army. I think it is appropriate to share it now because, each and every day they wake up, I know the thoughts of many in law enforcement are reflected in the words of Representative Joe Rice:

In a few hours, it will be Christmas in Afghanistan. I spent 3 Christmas Days in Iraq. Only on one of them did I have to go out on Christmas Day, itself. I found myself praying that I didn't want to die this day and ruin every future Christmas for my family. I realize that most of the other soldiers I was with were quietly or openly saying the same thing.

So, for all of those around the world who are in harm's way, we pray with you: Please God, just not today.

To our men and women in law enforcement, please know that I pray with you each and every day: Please God, just not this day.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KENNEDY). The Senator from Florida.

DISASTER AID

MR. NELSON. Mr. President, I am absolutely shocked that FEMA has announced that on Wednesday it will stop distributing food and water to Puerto Rico. Cutting this aid to the people of Puerto Rico, while still almost a third of them do not have electricity, is unconscionable and a travesty.

I urge the administration to reverse this disastrous decision immediately and to continue providing the people of Puerto Rico with the help they need as they are trying to recover from two disastrous hurricanes.

This Senator has been speaking on the floor over and over of their desperate needs, but here I am again to remind our colleagues that Puerto Ricans are American citizens, that they are just like the people of any State, including those in the States of Kentucky, Texas, Wyoming, and in so many of the other States where needs might be forgotten. They are our fellow countrymen, and they deserve the same care and protection that we would provide any other citizen in his time of need. They have supplied some of the greatest warriors of our U.S. military in World War I, World War II, Korea, and on up to the present.

If the people of any other State were being neglected like the people of Puerto Rico have been in the wake of this storm, there would be an absolute outrage in this Senate. The people of Puerto Rico need help, but they are not the only ones. Millions of people were affected by the storms that hit last year in my State of Florida, in the State of Texas, in, of course, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and in Puerto Rico, and many were affected by the wildfires in California.

Right now, many of them are desperately waiting for the Senate to act on a disaster supplemental package to help them recover. We are trying to pass it, and it keeps getting shuffled off into the future. We are trying to add to the supplemental—the necessary disaster aid that is needed in agriculture, particularly for the citrus industry in Florida—the financial assistance that is needed in Puerto Rico. I hope our colleagues in the Senate will understand the urgency of this matter. We cannot keep pushing this off into the future. The need to act is now.

In addition, people in Florida are struggling. We should not neglect what is happening on the mainland. It is true in Texas. It is true in California. It is true in Florida. It is true on the islands. The storm destroyed homes and damaged apartments all around Florida, but we haven't seen any real attempt to address the housing needs of the hurricane victims in the State—by the way, including those coming to Florida from Puerto Rico.

Florida received about \$600 million out of the \$7.4 billion, which was made available in the CDBG-DR, in the September supplemental. What percentage is that of \$7.4 billion? It is much less than 10 percent. It defies comprehension. Florida was one of the places that

was the hardest hit last year. Hurricane Irma virtually covered up the entire peninsula of Florida. It wreaked havoc all across the State. Add to that the aftereffects of Hurricane Maria, with thousands fleeing Puerto Rico and going to Florida, and we have a real housing crisis on our hands. The \$600 million, which is to help those who have been left bare by two of the most devastating storms to hit the country in decades, is a drop in the bucket. We should be able to get people the help they need in the time they need it. It is required now—not a year later, not 6 months later, but now.

Schools in Florida have been stretched thin in their having enrolled nearly 12,000 students who have evacuated Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Every child has a right to a quality education, but the school systems cannot do it on their own, not after a natural disaster. Dealing with such a large influx of students in a short period requires extra resources.

The House has passed a package that includes \$2.9 billion for education funding. We desperately need it. The schools and students need this aid now. We cannot keep kicking the can down the road. Their educations cannot wait. You cannot keep relying on teachers to go out and get the extra supplies for them.

I mentioned our citrus growers. The industry has already been devastated by a bacteria called greening. When it gets into the phloem sap of the tree, it kills the tree in 5 years. We are not going to have a citrus industry if we can't find the cure for that. With the extra care of the groves, they have been able to nurture back crops. So here are all of these crops of oranges and grapefruit on the trees, and along comes Irma. In some groves, not only have 100 percent of the crops been blown off the trees, but the trees have been uprooted. That is why we desperately need the money—to clean up and replant.

The farmers in Florida suffered at least \$2.5 billion in losses when Hurricane Irma tore through the State, and that included a lot of our citrus. Citrus alone experienced \$760 million in losses. That is on top of the difficulties that they were having already with the bacteria.

The USDA is estimating that Florida growers will only harvest 46 million boxes this season. Get this: 10 years ago, there were 203 million boxes of citrus harvested. A decade before that, there were 244 million boxes of oranges harvested. For months our farmers have been told to wait their turn. Some of them are going bankrupt. They have waited long enough. They need the help now. We just have to act on this disaster bill.

Additionally, it has been over 100 days since Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico. Over 30 percent of the island remains without power, and parts of the island still lack running water. Some people have running water still, but

they cannot drink it. They have to boil it.

When I was there in the little mountain town of Utuado, the source of water about 2 weeks after the hurricane—with the roads cut off, the only source of outside help was by helicopter, and the running water that they had was from a pipe that was coming out of the mountain, the mountain water draining down. I don't want to mince words here. We have a full-blown humanitarian crisis in Puerto Rico right now. My colleague, MARCO RUBIO from Florida, has been there also, and he is here to testify to the same thing.

As a result, recent estimates suggest that over 300,000 Puerto Ricans may have moved to Florida. Some are fortunate enough to move in with relatives, but others are living in motels that line the I-4 corridor. Some are living out of their cars. This is absolutely heartbreaking. How can we fail fellow American citizens like this? Yet, given the current situation, the administration thinks that now, today, is the appropriate time to cut off food and water for the people of Puerto Rico.

There is no common sense here. FEMA needs to continue to provide food and water to the island until, at the very least, all of the island has access to potable water and electricity. They are suffering, and while the administration is trying to abandon the responsibility of the United States to Puerto Rico, the House aid package shortchanges recovery efforts on the island. We must enhance it in the Senate package.

For instance, it fails to address the current Medicaid crisis that is just a month away. If nothing is done, Puerto Rico's Medicaid Program is going to run out of money. Congress must act; otherwise, over 1 million U.S. citizens will be denied healthcare coverage when they need it the most.

It has been over a month since the House passed the disaster bill. We haven't seen any action. The longer we wait, the more people suffer. It is clear the government is not working the way it should. We need to turn the corner, and it needs to start with this disaster bill being bumped up in the Senate and then quickly passed.

I beg our colleagues, and Senator MARCO RUBIO joins me: Let's take up this bill. Let's fix the deficiencies, and let's pass it immediately.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

MR. RUBIO. Mr. President, I want to begin by thanking Senator NELSON, the senior Senator from our State, for once again raising this on the floor. I am glad to be able to follow him and to make many of the same points about the importance of acting on this.

The Presiding Officer is from a State that has been impacted by storms. He knows that long after the cameras leave and long after the stories have been written, real people's lives have

been disrupted, sometimes permanently, certainly in ways that we don't think about. We have come to think about hurricane damage as roofs being ripped off of buildings and trees in the road, and once those are picked up, everything is back to normal. What we don't recognize is that underneath all of that is the long-term damage done to a small business that went 2 weeks without any sort of income, so they closed.

There is the impact we see in the Florida Keys, where there are a lot of people, for example, who have used their retirement savings to buy a small property that they rent out in the Florida Keys. It is very common. They buy a small townhouse, they rent it out in the winter for people to stay there, and then they use it in the summer for their family.

Well, guess what. This winter they are probably not getting a lot of visitors. In some cases—I know of one in particular—there is all this debris from the storm that is sitting in the canal. It is not very attractive for a visitor to come to the Keys and stay in a townhouse where they can't even go out into the ocean because the canals and the waterways that take them out have refrigerators floating in them and have all kind of debris in them. By the way, there is still debris there from previous storms, almost 15 years—10 years ago.

What does that mean? That means the owner of the unit doesn't have the rent they were using to pay the mortgage. She might be a teacher or he might be a firefighter, and now they are not getting the income they were counting on to make the mortgage, so they potentially could fall behind and could lose this rental property that they had invested in for their family. These are not rich people. These are people who had an investment for the future and had a good business model until the storm came. That is not measured anywhere, but that is real harm.

The small businesses have been harmed. The Florida Keys, in particular, is a place that has had lot of small businesses that have been there for a long time. Some of these places have gone months without clients. If that person doesn't come and rent out that unit I just described, that means that person isn't using the fuel from the local gas station, isn't eating at the local restaurants, and isn't contributing to the local economy.

To top it off, it is so expensive. Imagine if you are a worker at one of these buildings making \$15 an hour. It is so expensive. They already had a housing problem, and this has made it worse. So it would be a mistake to say that the hurricane damage is over, and the effort to address it ends the minute the trees are removed from the road and the roofs are tarped and repaired. It goes on for a while.

In the case of this particular storm, Florida was also impacted by the impact that Maria had on Puerto Rico. As

Senator NELSON just outlined, up to 300,000 American citizens—I say that because there are still a lot of people wondering, why are we giving aid to Puerto Rico? Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory, and its residents are U.S. citizens. There are 300,000 U.S. citizens from Puerto Rico who have moved to Florida. They enrich our State, but our schools weren't counting on the kids, so they have to scramble to deal with that.

Our housing stock—I met with a group of people on Friday. We still have people living in hotels who have been there for 3 or 4 months. Even if they wanted to go out and find an apartment, there is nothing available. There are all sorts of challenges. We have heard stories, for example, that they have to pay a \$75 application fee for each one of the housing units they apply for, even if they are turned down. Just figure that out. If someone applies to just three or four of them, that is a lot of money out of pocket for someone who has already lost everything in the storm. Florida is facing that as well.

I am disappointed. If someone had told me that we would get to the last week of January without taking up disaster relief, I would have been surprised because we had a chance to actually address this at the end of last year. The House sent over a bill that didn't go far enough. The Senate had ideas about how to make it better, and then for reasons involving leverage and using it as a tool to get people to vote for CRs—short-term spending at the end—it has been held up. That is unfortunate because these problems are only getting worse, not better, as time goes on.

Senator NELSON talked about the citrus industry. One of our signature crops, if not our signature crop, was already being challenged by citrus greening, which is a terrible disease. Senator NELSON and I went to some of those groves together, and there are growers who basically were already hurting. They have lost everything for this year. There is no money coming in. The fruit is gone. Once that fruit touches the ground and that ground is wet, you can't sell it. The trees are damaged. It is not as though we can just buy a new tree at Walmart, and in 1 year it produces. It has to put it in the ground, and it takes 5 years before it will start to produce. They are hurting, and they are wondering, should I replant? Is this a good business for me to be in?

Some of these families have been in citrus for three or four or five generations, and this could be the end, not just the end for them but the end of Florida citrus. We helped them in the tax bill with the ability to immediately expense replanting, but that will not be enough. That is why this package has to include USDA resources to help replace these lost trees and rehabilitate the groves that were flooded. This is critical and essential to our food supply.

The Army Corps of Engineers plays a huge role in the State of Florida. For example, there is the Herbert Hoover Dike, which is a dike on Lake Okeechobee that would prevent a catastrophic flooding event, should the lake levels rise too high. We have people living just south of it, and what happened, almost a century ago, is that people died because of flooding there. So this dike was built. It has been found to be and rated among the most vulnerable water infrastructure projects in the Nation, and we are lucky that it wasn't breached in the storm, but it could have been, had the rainfall been located at the right place at the right time. It has been the priority of our delegation for a long time to expedite the construction of rehabilitation to strengthen that dike. This is a good opportunity to do that because there will be other storms. Because the project was delayed when the storm hit, this is a chance to finish that role.

Other parts that are critical to Florida's economy are beach renourishment and intracoastal navigation projects. These are hugely important and not just what makes Florida an attractive place to live; it is the reason people visit. Some of these beaches were severely eroded. Particularly in Northeast Florida, there is no beach, and the water is coming up to the edge of the property lines. If there is no beach, the hotels and the condominiums that rent out on that beach do not have visitors. People will not go there unless there is sand on the beach, and the erosion that happens in a storm like this needs to be fixed.

Of course, we have all been engaged, and I hope all are committed to our Everglades restoration projects. The Everglades are some of the most unique environments on the planet. They happen to be in the United States and happen to be in our home State. In these Everglades restoration projects, we want to continue to make progress toward our goal of saving them.

By the way, the Everglades are a source of water for over 8 million Floridians. So I hope the disaster funding also addresses all the work that was destroyed and the damage that happened to a lot of the restoration projects that were in place.

I will not go deep into education because Senator NELSON has already addressed that, but suffice it to say we had thousands of students who were displaced, and we add to that thousands of people from Puerto Rico whom the school districts welcome but weren't counting on. Now we have to accommodate classroom space. In many cases, for these children, although everyone in Puerto Rico learns English and Spanish, their primary language is Spanish, so we have to get instructors who are able to bring them to proficiency in English. That is a challenge. All of that is falling on the State of Florida as well. While Florida welcomes our fellow Americans from

Puerto Rico who are seeking refuge, the costs need to be accounted for.

We had hospitals that were damaged from the storms, and the repairs to some of these continue to rise. In some cases, these hospital repairs resulted in the closure of the hospital for more than a year.

There is a hospital in the Keys that is going to be completely rebuilt. If you have ever been to the Florida Keys, the distances are bad, and there is a hospital that is going to have to be completely rebuilt.

In addition to all of that, we have our healthcare providers in Florida who provided charitable care, not just to Floridians after the storm but to displaced Americans from Puerto Rico and from the U.S. Virgin Islands. They need to be reimbursed for doing that. They didn't sit back and say: We are not going to do it unless you send us a check. They did it, and there were real expenses. Then they were also hit by the storm, and they are dealing with those new expenses.

By the way, one of the things I hope we will do is expedite hiring authority for medical personnel in HHS because, for years, we have failed to maintain adequate levels of personnel willing to give a couple of weeks of their time to aid in a time of disaster. Our medical teams are depleted, and at this rate we will already have a staffing shortage by the next hurricane season, which is just a few months away.

NOAA, another Federal agency—the disaster bill needs to fund the continued removal of the things I have already discussed: marine debris, lost lobster traps, capsized vessels. There is an environmental component to it, and there is an economic component to it. If our canal is full of refrigerators, debris, things that need to be removed, the water cannot be navigated. The value of all that property is wiped out, and also what is wiped out is the desire of people to come and visit. Beyond increasing—or as we call it around here “plussing up”—critical FEMA accounts like the Disaster Relief Fund, we should also include language in the bill to protect counties, cities, towns, and individual homeowners who received FEMA disaster assistance from the uncertainty about when the Federal Government may come back in a few years and claw back that support. In essence, they can come back in a few years and say: We gave you too much money; give it back to us.

If someone did something wrong, I am not talking about that. I am talking about a good faith estimate that both sides agreed on, and they delivered the money, and then 4 years later they show up and say: Hey, we have looked at it again, and in hindsight we gave you \$1,000 more in the case of an individual or \$50,000 or \$100,000 more in the case of a city or a county, and now they have to scramble to pay this back.

So I will continue to work to make sure that FEMA has the resources it needs to assist for recovery victims for

both short-term and long-term recovery but without this threat of clawback, and there are ways to do that which will allow us to be fiscally responsible.

I have already talked about the housing issue in Monroe County in Southwest Florida. Monroe County is in the Florida Keys, and that is why it is critical that FEMA has the resources to utilize programs such as direct relief assistance, which will enable the Federal Government to lease a property that would not generally be available to the public, such as corporate lodging, to house survivors, to house people, as opposed to just giving them a voucher and saying: Go find a hotel.

Here is what happens. They get a hotel in South Dade in Homestead, and the big rates come in February, and everyone gets kicked out in February because those rooms were booked a year ago at those rates, and they have nowhere to go. It is disruptive. If we were able to lease out an entire long-term corporate housing or lodging facility, these people would have some certainty to go about their lives while their homes and their lives are rebuilt. Programs such as Direct Lease assistance provide the type of flexibility that Florida and, quite frankly, the whole country needs. We are going to continue to advocate for the program so we can provide roofs over the heads of displaced Floridians and Puerto Ricans.

Infrastructure damage throughout Florida is also substantial. In particular, I was able to go down to the Everglades to Flamingo. It is a place we have gone often. It is one of the places we leave from to go fishing with my children. The facilities there were already in bad shape, to be frank. It looked like something out of one of those 1960s black-and-white movies they show in schools.

This place was badly hurt. Again, this is Federal property. That is a national park that belongs to the American people, under the custody of the Federal Government, and it was wiped out and hurt and destroyed. We need to help rebuild it. By the way, that includes airports, NASA—the Kennedy Space Center—which also suffered damages.

I have a couple more points, then I will close.

Housing and Urban Development. On December 14, I introduced the Disaster Assistance Simplification Act. That prohibits HUD from penalizing victims of natural disasters who apply but then turn down an SBA disaster loan. So if you apply for an SBA disaster loan, HUD will come back and take away your assistance or render you ineligible for HUD assistance not because you received the HUD loan but because you applied for it. That should be taken out.

I have worked with colleagues to ensure that this language is included in the upcoming supplemental because I don't understand how we can allow

unsynchronized and burdensome disaster assistance programs to make recovery more difficult for someone impacted by a storm. You just went through a storm. Your business was destroyed. Your home was destroyed. Your family had to move to another county or another city. On top of that, you have to agonize over what the Federal Government may or may not give you. If they gave it to you, you have to agonize over when they may come back and take it away. We can't further victimize victims by penalizing victims who do not take assistance. Our laws are discouraging people from applying for SBA disaster loans.

Again, on that particular point, I am not talking about people who are double-dipping. I am talking about people who applied for HUD and SBA. Just the act of applying for that loan means you can't get the HUD assistance. That is ridiculous.

I will close with Puerto Rico. It doesn't get enough attention, in my mind. We read about the situation every day. Now the articles are saying: Can you believe they still don't have electricity in Puerto Rico? There are a lot of problems that need to be addressed. Puerto Rico had a lot of problems before the storm.

At end of the day, here is the bottom line. Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory. It is the responsibility of the United States. These are American citizens. They are children. They are residents. They wear the uniform of this country. If you go to Arlington Cemetery, not far from here, you will see their names after paying the ultimate sacrifice. They contribute to every area of our lives, whether they choose to live on the mainland or on the island. Perhaps because it isn't always in the headlines, a lot of people just don't understand its status, its importance, and our relationship and obligations.

We have been involved from the very beginning, not just because of the impact it has had on Florida but because, on a personal level, I have so many friends and people I care about who live there. If you live in Florida, you know people who have people they love who live there.

Right after the storm, I sent three members of my staff, who spent over a week at their emergency operations center, just trying to act as a conduit to facilitate between Federal efforts and the efforts of Puerto Rico's government, but the work that remains is extraordinary.

I talk about the people who are still displaced. We have seen the story of people losing their housing vouchers who were staying in a hotel. People say: We just heard from the government in Puerto Rico that your home is habitable so you are done. Check out tomorrow afternoon. They have nowhere to go. If they have family, maybe, but if they don't, where do they go that night? It is a problem. We have seen that happen in Connecticut and fear it could happen in other places.

On the disaster relief, we think recovering is not just about putting up light posts. We think it is about helping the economy grow, about attracting business and investment back, and about helping people who want to stay to be able to stay.

We have a number of provisions we hope will be included. One is a temporary payroll tax deduction so whatever it is you get paid, you get to keep more of it. It would be temporary for a year, but at least it is a way of giving people a raise without being a burden on businesses.

We would also like to see a temporary expansion of the child tax credit. Because of a quirk in the law, people who file taxes from Puerto Rico are not eligible for it at its full value the way someone on the mainland would be. Again, all they have to do is move to Florida, and they can do it.

These are U.S. citizens. If they can fight in our Armed Forces, if they pledge allegiance to our flag, if they are citizens of our Nation, why should they not be entitled to the same tax versions there that they would be if they were living on the mainland?

We also need to deal with, as Senator NELSON talked about, the Medicaid cliff. Because of the healthcare law that passed a number of years ago, the funding mechanism that was created places them in a position where soon they will run out of money in their Medicaid Program. Ultimately, what will happen is, people who need these services will move to Florida or some other State, and then they will sign up for Medicaid in the States and get what they couldn't get in Puerto Rico. It will actually cost more. If money is what you are worried about, it will cost more in the long run not to do it than to do it.

I also think we need to increase funding for energy grid technical assistance from the Department of Energy. On that note, I would say, we are getting reports that they are being forced to rebuild using the exact same equipment that was there before the storm. Some of this equipment is so old, it isn't even manufactured anymore. They don't make it anymore. They had to retrofit and make things up.

If we are going to rebuild or help rebuild the grid in Puerto Rico, shouldn't they be able to put in something that is modern as opposed to rebuilding the old stuff? That makes no sense. It will actually make the system more resilient.

A lot of these proposals may meet with resistance, but they all make sense. We can justify every single one of them. I hope we will pursue them. I worked very closely with Resident Commissioner Jenniffer Gonzalez on these efforts. I am grateful for her strong advocacy and the support of so many of my colleagues on behalf of our fellow Americans in Puerto Rico.

I close by asking our colleagues this. I know we have the policy work this week. The Democrats and Republicans

are doing their thing. I know we have funding issues a week from this Friday that we have to address. I know immigration is an important issue that we need to confront, but do not forget about disaster relief. We have to get it done for the people out west in California, the people in Texas, the people of Florida, the people of Puerto Rico, and for our fellow Americans who were hurt by the hurricanes this season and the fires of 2017.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, as we continue the debate on the issue of immigration as it relates to providing a permanent solution to those young immigrants who benefited from the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, the scope of this debate has expanded to include other issues.

Some of these issues are directly related to the DACA issue, including persistent concerns on our southern border, like improving barriers and border access roads, providing hiring and retention incentives for Customs and Border Protection personnel to ensure that all locations on the border remain secure. Other things being debated, like changes to legal immigration levels, truly need their own debate.

Some appear to have seized on this as an opportunity to push forth an agenda aimed at limiting the future flow of legal immigration. Before this idea gains any steam, we have to fully discuss and debate its potentially enormous impact on our economy. It is easy for some to see unemployed Americans and point to immigrants as a scapegoat. To suggest that every immigrant who passes through our borders represents a job being pried from the hands of an American citizen is far-fetched, at best.

After taking the time to actually examine the facts, the shortsightedness of this thinking is exposed. For example, cleaving the number of new legal immigrants by almost 50 percent—which is what the White House proposal appears to envision over time—would initially reduce the overall rate of economic growth in the United States by an estimated 12.5 percent when compared to currently projected levels through 2045. This is because labor force growth is one of the most important factors tied to economic growth. More troubling, these changes in legal immigration would come just as the aging U.S. population increases our dependence on a growing workforce.

Some have suggested that legal immigrants represent some sort of drag on government resources. In fact, the National Academy of Sciences estimates that the average immigrant contributes, in net present value terms, \$92,000 more in taxes than they receive in benefits over their lifetime.

We can only expect these numbers to increase as we move to a kind of merit

or employment-based system. I should note that in the bipartisan approach in 2015, we did restrict the number of family-based visas. I think it was from a total of 75 percent of legal immigration, we moved it down to 50 percent from family-based visas. At that same time, what we did was reallocate those visas to merit-based or employment-based visas so we wouldn't have an overall drop in legal immigration.

To look into the future of what happens when the philosophy of limiting legal immigration takes hold, we need to look no further than the current economic struggles Japan is having. In a timely piece by Fred Hiatt in the Washington Post this last Sunday, he points out that Japan's population of 127 million is forecast to shrink by one-third over the next half century. The increase in lifespans coupled with a decrease in fertility is projected to lead to near-stagnant economic growth, reduced innovation, labor shortages, and huge pressure on entitlements and pensions in Japan.

These disastrous realities facing Japan are the direct result of that nation's historically low level of immigrants. As Hiatt astutely points out, "You can be pro-growth. You can be anti-immigration. But honestly, you can't be both."

Legal immigration policy is complicated, but it is important, and it is worth debating this reform on its own. There may be a strong appetite for merit-based immigration, but rather than drastically cutting legal and necessary immigration flows, we need to work together to provide a way for the best and brightest to make it to the United States, both for their benefit and ours.

Let's not be lured into thinking that legal immigration is some kind of simplistic zero-sum game that can be easily reformed without consequence. During the last administration, many of us rejected the new normal of low economic growth driven by overregulation and irrational tax policy. It would be a supreme irony if we were to fix those anti-growth fiscal and regulatory policies only to counteract them with immigration restrictions that affect our workforce.

Let's give this important and complex issue the time for discussion, analysis, and debate it deserves and not shoehorn it into a DACA fix.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

THE BUDGET

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I cannot help but note that the fiscal year began October 1 last year. Four months have passed. That is 122 days since the start of the fiscal year, and we still don't have a budget deal to allow us to finish the fiscal year 2018 appropriations bills. That is 122 days, and the Congress has not done their job.

Recently, President Trump has taken to Twitter. He has accused Democrats of holding up funding for our troops.

Well, the idea that Democrats are holding up defense spending doesn't pass the laugh test. I mean, last July—7 months ago—I called for bipartisan budget negotiations, something we have always done in the past. As the vice chairman of Appropriations, I put forward a proposal that would increase defense spending by \$54 billion and would increase nondefense spending by an equal amount of \$54 billion. Basically, what we did when Senator MURRAY and then-Congressman RYAN worked out the budget agreement. We did that years ago based on parity. The proposal was responsible, it was reasonable, and it was based on parity. It was something we have done for years. It would have fully funded President Trump's budget request for our military, but it would also have provided much needed relief from the damaging effects of sequestration that we have seen on both sides of the ledger, defense and nondefense.

But instead of trying to reach a bipartisan budget deal to allow us to finish our spending bills on time, the Republican leadership, which controls the agenda, had other priorities. They spent the last 7 months trying to repeal healthcare for millions of Americans and rolling back important consumer protections. They cut environmental and workplace protections, protections for women in the workplace, and they passed budget-busting tax cuts that primarily benefit big corporations and the wealthiest Americans. As a result of doing that, the funding for our troops, as well as for key domestic priorities, has been left to limp along under four continuing resolutions.

Yesterday, the Trump administration—and I wonder if they have actually looked at the President's budget—accused Democrats of holding defense spending hostage over arbitrary demands for lower priority domestic programs.

I am curious. What are the domestic programs the Trump administration considers a lower priority? Do they consider the services for our veterans that are lacking around this country—do they think helping our veterans is a lower priority? What about the funding to combat the opioid epidemic? Every single State represented by every single Senator here, Republican and Democrat alike, in every corner of our country, has been hurt by the opioid epidemic. Is the Trump administration saying that is a lower priority? How about investments in education for our Nation's children? Is that a lower priority? Is disaster relief for our communities that have been devastated by hurricanes—there are so many—a lower priority? What about replacing our crumbling bridges all across the country before people start dying in record numbers? Is that a lower priority?

The President puts before us a false choice, and it makes me wonder if he is actually seeing the budget his administration proposes. There is no reason we

can't fight for and fund both our military and other domestic programs. It is not an either/or choice. It has never been an either/or choice, whether we have had a Democratic or Republican administration.

One thing we do know is that operating under four continuing resolutions is no way to govern. I think it is time to get serious about reaching a deal.

Later today, the House is going to pass another Defense appropriations bill that will exceed the budget caps by \$73 billion, and they don't even know where it will be spent. But if you don't have a budget deal to raise the caps, this would be a false promise to our military because that funding level would trigger a sequester. It would force a 13-percent across-the-board cut on defense programs. It is not a serious bill; it is a messaging bill.

There are those who are going to tout it on the floor of the House, saying: Look what we are doing to raise it. Will they at least take a moment to say that it actually cuts our defense programs 13 percent across the board? I asked the Secretary of Defense what he thinks about that. He says it would be a disaster.

What we are doing is we have been substituting sound bites for substance. I think we are past the time for that kind of messaging.

The budget and the appropriations process are where we set our priorities as a nation and where we put those priorities into action. That has been our policy here in the Senate under Democratic and under Republican leadership for decades. Instead of doing this basic job, Congress and the President have put the Federal budget on perpetual autopilot, so it never gets done. It comes up, we talk about it, and it doesn't get done. It comes up again, we talk about it, and it doesn't get done. The can has been kicked down the road over and over again.

It makes me think of "Groundhog Day." We are coming up on Groundhog Day. Well, it is "Groundhog Day," plus a sequel, plus another sequel, plus another sequel and yet another sequel. Well, that may have been a funny movie, but this is real life for over 300 million Americans, and 100 Americans are entrusted to make their lives better.

Kicking the can down the road and playing "Groundhog Day" is corrosive and damaging to our Nation and to the American people in countless ways.

Certainly, my experience with a Republican administration and a Democratic administration, many times in the majority in this body and many times in the minority in this body—one thing I have learned, and many of my Republican colleagues tell me the same thing, is that you can't govern by continuing resolution. It is easy. It means you don't have to do your work. But neither the military nor our country can properly function under sequestration. They can't function if we don't do our jobs.

This week, we are taking another recess after this afternoon. I wish we would just stay here and get these bills passed. I am willing to. Vermont is a very nice place to be this time of year—great skiing, lovely place. I have kids and grandkids there, but I will stay here if it means we can get the appropriations bills passed, get us off this corrosive, wasteful continuation of a continuing resolution and sequestration.

The continuing resolution expires on February 8. That is 9 days from today. It is up to the Republican leadership in both Chambers to get serious about striking a bipartisan budget deal. I believe there is something we can do. Talking with both Republican and Democratic Senators, I think we could have a budget deal that would get 60 votes in the Senate. We could raise the caps. We could take care of defense but also take care of a lot of priorities we hear about when we walk down Main Street in the towns and cities we represent. These aren't people who have a partisan attitude; they just want to see the government work.

The States that have suffered from hurricanes and flooding want to see us help them as a nation. If their community is devastated by opioids, they want to see us do something about it. They would like to see the Federal Government do something about stopping the millions of opioids flooding into this country illegally from China. They are not coming across the wall; they are coming from China through the mail, through the post offices we all have in our communities.

Let's start to look at the real threats to America. You don't do it by sound bites; you do it by substance and hard work. There are many Senators on both sides of the aisle who are willing to do that hard work. We have unbelievably talented staff from both Republicans and Democrats who have been working very hard to get us there. Let's start doing that. Let's stop looking for the sound bite. Let's start looking for the substance. I am ready to. I have talked with key Members of both parties about this. It can be done.

I felt honored the other day when Senator Robert Dole, one the titans of this body—a Republican, a conservative Republican—asked me to be one of the two Senators to speak when he received the Congressional Gold Medal. We had a chance to chat first about how we used to do it. Without sounding like the old-timer talking about the good old days, what we would do is the Republicans and Democrats—key Members of both parties—would sit down and we would work something out because we could take each other's word for it. We set aside political posturing, and we did what was best for the country.

Senator Dole joined with Senator Moynihan—a conservative Republican and a liberal Democrat—and they saved Social Security. Senator Dole joined with Senator George McGov-

ern—again, a conservative Republican and a liberal Democrat. As a result, millions of children were fed, others were fed, hungry people were fed in this country and in other countries. What a great humanitarian gesture. Both Senator Dole and Senator McGovern fought in World War II. Both had a distinguished military career. Senator Dole was severely injured. Senator McGovern volunteered to fly many, many missions beyond the number he was required to, even though so many planes in those missions were being shot down. But they came back and said: OK. We did that. Now what are we doing for the people we fought to save?

We should listen to people like that. We should listen to them. We would be a better Senate, we would be a better country if we did.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I wish to speak for 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized.

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I rise today on this 13th day of January to call out this body, the body of the U.S. Senate, for its dereliction of duty. Enough is enough. We need a long-term budget bill for all of America, including my home State of Montana, because that is what Americans expect because it is our job.

It has been 122 days since Congress has failed to pass a budget. What makes this even more egregious is the fact that we haven't done anything but continuing resolution after continuing resolution. There is no certainty in that. And even if we passed a long-term budget deal, it isn't even for that long of a term—through the end of this fiscal year, which is when it needs to be done by.

For the last 122 days, Congress has left community health centers, small business owners, America's families, Montana's families without the certainty of a long-term budget. During that time, Congress has instead settled for four short-term, crisis-funding bills that don't do what is necessary and that provide more uncertainty and more chaos.

I have heard a lot of folks say that government needs to be run like a business. There is no business that would put off what it is doing just because it is convenient. In my real life, I am a farmer. I know that you have to plan. I know that you can't go from month to month with uncertainty ahead of you because if you do, you will end up in a situation where it will put you out of business. You have to be able to

plan, whether it is for the seeds you buy or equipment maintenance or anything else in agriculture. It is the same way in any business, and by the way, it is the same way in government.

Unfortunately, the norm has been a month of funding in continuing resolutions, or 3 weeks, instead of coming to a point where we can fund things until the end of the fiscal year, which will give folks certainty, whether it is the military or our southern border or community health centers.

Why do I bring this up? It is because fully 10 percent of the citizens of Montana depend on community health centers for access to their healthcare. It is in some cases the only source of healthcare for these folks. I have had listening tours and roundtables and over a dozen different public meetings on healthcare over the last year, and I can tell you that these facilities are critically important.

So who cares? Why should we worry about that, because we have a continuing resolution. Why? Because these folks right now, if you go talk to them in the State of Montana and I think in any other State in the Union, they will tell you they are not sure whether they will keep their doors open. That does not provide the kind of certainty they need and the kind of access to healthcare folks in our country need, and Montana is no exception.

We cannot continue governing from crisis to crisis. Montana deserves better. America deserves better. We need a budget that goes to the end of the fiscal year, that provides the kind of certainty and security the American people elected us to do. Congress simply needs to do its job.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

HONORING DEPUTY MARSHAL CHRISTOPHER HILL

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about two separate matters. The first is a very painful and difficult topic, but I feel it is important to address.

I wish to recognize, acknowledge, and honor the heroic life and legacy and sacrifice of one of Pennsylvania's finest: Deputy U.S. Marshal Christopher Hill.

On January 18 of this year, Deputy Hill was shot and killed while he was apprehending a fugitive in Harrisburg, PA. Christopher Hill lived in York, PA. He was only 45 years old. He was a husband and the father of two young children. He dedicated his life to serving and protecting first his country and later his community. He was an 11-year veteran of the U.S. Marshals Service. He was a former U.S. Army Ranger who had been deployed to Somalia. In 2014, Deputy Hill was one of the deputy marshals who helped capture a notorious cop killer in Pennsylvania, Eric Frein, who was the subject of one of the largest and longest manhunts in recent history throughout rural Pennsylvania.

The fact is that day in and day out for a very long period of time, Chris-

topher Hill put his life on the line for the rest of us. He did it as an Army Ranger in Somalia. He did it as a deputy U.S. marshal. I had the privilege of attending the memorial service for him recently. It was extraordinary to hear one after another of the people whom he had served with in various capacities speak about a truly extraordinary individual, a guy who was by all accounts humble and modest but absolutely dedicated with a passion to his family, to his community, and to his country.

Sometimes it is easy for us to forget the risks and sacrifices that are being taken by the men and women who wear various uniforms that represent the various organizations that defend and protect us. But I want to say to the people of Pennsylvania and to the family of Christopher Hill that we are never going to forget the bravery and the sacrifice and the service he provided for all of us.

TAX REFORM

Mr. President, another topic I wish to touch on this afternoon is a much happier topic; that is, the extraordinary consequences we are already seeing of the tax reform we passed just about a month ago.

Yesterday, I had a chance to tour a small- to medium-sized company in the eastern part of Pennsylvania—Easton, PA, which is where they are located. Sussex Wire is the name of the company. They have a very sophisticated technology whereby they take wire, and without heating it and without grinding it, they use a process that turns it into the shape and form that their customers require. It is a very sophisticated process. They can crank out tremendous volumes.

This relatively small business—I think they have 55 employees—is doing very well. It is manufacturing in Pennsylvania, in America. As a direct result of the tax reform we passed, their tax burden has been diminished, and that has, in turn, allowed them to speed up the hiring of five or six new workers—five or six people who don't have a job today, but they are going to have a job soon because Sussex Wire is hiring. Right now they are out looking for the folks who are going to expand their workforce, expand the ability of this terrific company to do even more.

The tax reform is also accelerating their ability to purchase new equipment. The new equipment they buy allows them to do more work more productively. It allows their workers to produce more of the little tools and devices that they produce. When workers produce more, when they are more productive, they can earn more income, and that is exactly what is happening at Sussex Wire. This is before we have had the opportunity to have all of these investments actually take place.

I am thrilled at how quickly we are seeing tangible benefits for the people I represent as a result of this tax reform.

Of course, it is not just Sussex Wire; it is happening all across America. It is

happening certainly all across Pennsylvania, and I hope we will hear about some of the examples tonight when the President gives his State of the Union Address.

At latest count, there are over 3 million American workers who have already gotten an increase in their compensation. Their employers have provided them either a pay raise or a bonus or a contribution to their pension plan or some combination of those things precisely because these businesses have more free cash flow as a result of lower taxes. Three million workers from almost 300 businesses, and since the last time I came to the floor and spoke about this phenomenon, there have been many more Pennsylvanians benefitting from this.

The employees of Home Depot, at 70 locations across Pennsylvania, are benefiting. Those employees—thousands, I suppose, altogether—are receiving \$1,000 each.

FedEx, which has a huge presence in Pennsylvania, has announced \$200 million in raises, \$1.5 billion in new investment in distribution hubs, and another \$1.5 billion that they are contributing to their employees' pensions.

PPG in Pittsburgh, PA, is spending \$50 million in new capital projects, in part because the Tax Code treats that investment better than our Tax Code used to, and it is encouraging more of this investment.

H&K Equipment in Coraopolis in western Pennsylvania is increasing its investments by 15 percent this year, again in response to this tax reform.

The Wall Street Journal reported over the weekend that manufacturing investment is already going up. It is already increasing. This is going to be very beneficial. First of all, it helps all the workers who produce the equipment in which companies are investing. Secondly, someone needs to operate this equipment, so when a company goes out and buys a new piece of equipment, new machinery, there is the job security or the new job being created for the person who operates it. Thirdly, there is the enhancement in productivity, which allows for higher compensation.

This is all happening at a time when our unemployment rate is relatively low. It is at an alltime record low for African Americans. It is low generally by standards of recent decades. This means that demand for more workers is going to translate into upward pressure on wages. I think we are already seeing it. It is very, very encouraging, and it is just a tremendous success for our workers.

I was very confident that this would be among the constructive consequences of our tax reform, but I will confess that I didn't realize it would happen so quickly. This is great news for Pennsylvanians, and it is great news for Americans.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM D. DUHNKE III

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to a former staff member of mine, William D. Duhnke III, who dedicated over 20 years of his life's work to the Senate.

Prior to his time on Capitol Hill, Bill Duhnke served in the U.S. Navy as a naval officer and at the Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces. Bill received his juris doctorate from Catholic University and a bachelor of arts degree from his home State university, the University of Wisconsin. In 1995 Bill Duhnke joined my personal staff to handle defense, foreign relations, and judiciary policy. He quickly revealed his high work ethic and innate ability to thrive when tasked with the most challenging of assignments.

After swiftly climbing the ladder in my office, Bill became my staff director and general counsel when I chaired the Senate Intelligence Committee and later the Senate Banking Committee, where he was general counsel and staff director. He also served as my staff director when I was the ranking member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, when the Democrats were in control.

As a former naval flight officer, Bill always brought a high level of respect and discipline to the workplace. Without hesitation, he was able to spearhead tasks and get things done. Not only was he a trusted adviser, but he was an esteemed manager across Capitol Hill, where he was duly respected. Bill is exceptionally smart and was always well versed on the issues at hand. I would be hard-pressed to recall a time when he was unprepared. I can't think of one.

I am certain that Bill will continue to operate in this manner in his new role as Chairman of the Public Accounting Oversight Board.

I have relied on Bill Duhnke's professional advice and leadership for 20 years, and I know he will be an asset as the Board works to improve audit quality and promote public trust in our securities area. I believe SEC Chairman Jay Clayton has made an excellent choice in selecting Bill Duhnke to chair the PCAOB.

I have no doubt that Bill has stepped into his new leadership position with ease. His intellect and experience ensure his future success in this role, and I am confident that Bill will remain an outstanding leader as he continues on this new path in his career.

It is my honor to offer my deep appreciation and gratitude to Bill Duhnke for his decades of hard work and dedication to the entire country. I am privileged to have had him on my staff for all of those years.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TAX REFORM

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, the good news about tax reform continues to roll in—wage increases, better benefits, increased investment, and employee bonuses. So far, more than 250 companies have announced good news for their employees—pay hikes, increased retirement contributions, or bonuses, and the list continues to grow.

Last week, JPMorgan Chase, Disney, Starbucks, and FedEx all announced increased investment in American workers. JPMorgan Chase announced that it will raise wages for 22,000 workers, add thousands of new jobs, and open 400 new branches in the United States. It also plans to increase its lending to small businesses. Disney will invest in employees' education and provide employee bonuses. Starbucks is raising wages, increasing benefits, and rewarding employees with company stock. FedEx announced plans to expedite raises and invest \$1.5 billion to expand its FedEx Express hub in Indianapolis. It is also making a \$1.5 billion contribution to its pension plan. To top it off, yesterday ExxonMobil announced that, thanks in part to tax reform, it will invest an additional \$35 billion into the U.S. economy over the next 5 years. That means a lot of new jobs and opportunities for American workers.

Stories like this are why we made business tax reform a key part of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. Obviously, a huge priority was immediately lowering Americans' tax bills, which is why we lowered rates across the board, nearly doubled the standard deduction, and doubled the child tax credit. But our other priority was creating the kind of economy in which Americans can thrive for the long-term—an economy that would create good jobs, higher wages, and more opportunities.

So how do we go about doing that? Well, the only way for individual Americans to thrive is for American businesses and the American economy to thrive. So we took action to improve the situation for American businesses.

Prior to the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, American businesses, large and small, were weighed down by high tax rates and growth-killing tax provisions. Plus, our outdated international tax rules left America's global businesses at a competitive disadvantage in the global economy.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act changed all that. We lowered tax rates across the board for owners of small and medium-sized businesses, farms, and ranches. We expanded the business owners' ability to recover investments they make in their businesses, which will free up cash that they can reinvest in their operations and their workers.

We lowered our Nation's massive corporate tax rate, which up until January 1 was the highest corporate tax rate in the developed world. We brought the U.S. international tax sys-

tem into the 21st century by replacing our outdated worldwide system with a modernized territorial tax system so that American businesses are not operating at a disadvantage next to their foreign counterparts. Now, just a month into the new tax law, we are already seeing the results.

Thanks to the new tax law, businesses are seeing a future of growth, and based on those forecasts, they are making plans to invest in their workers, raise wages, create new jobs, and invest in the American economy: AT&T, Boeing, Fiat Chrysler, Bank of America, Home Depot, Great Western Bank in my State of South Dakota, First Hawaiian Bank, SunTrust Bank, Comcast, American Airlines, Southwest Airlines, Humana, Visa, Nationwide Insurance, JetBlue Airlines. The list of companies announcing good news for American workers thanks to tax reform goes on and on and on.

Tech giant Apple announced that as a result of tax reform, it will bring home almost \$250 billion in cash that it has been keeping overseas and invest it here in the United States. That is good news for the American economy, and it is a direct result of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

Before the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, our Tax Code encouraged American businesses to keep cash overseas. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act ended that. Now that we have altered the Tax Code to remove the penalty for bringing profits home to the United States, we can expect to see more companies bringing profits home and investing in the U.S. economy the way that Apple is doing.

We have seen a tremendous amount of good news this month, but it really is only the beginning. As the benefits of tax reform continue to sink in, we expect to see more growth, more jobs, and more opportunities for American workers, and we expect to see the kind of economy that will provide security and prosperity for Americans for the long term.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

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

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:29 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PORTMAN).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Stras nomination?

Mr. BURR. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO) and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO) would have voted "yea."

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

The result was announced—yeas 56, nays 42, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 27 Ex.]

YEAS—56

Alexander	Gardner	Murkowski
Barrasso	Graham	Paul
Blunt	Grassley	Perdue
Boozman	Hatch	Portman
Burr	Heitkamp	Risch
Cassidy	Heller	Roberts
Cochran	Hoeben	Rounds
Collins	Inhofe	Rubio
Corker	Isakson	Sasse
Cornyn	Johnson	Scott
Cotton	Jones	Shelby
Crapo	Kennedy	Sullivan
Cruz	Klobuchar	Thune
Daines	Lankford	Tillis
Donnelly	Lee	Toomey
Enzi	Manchin	Warner
Ernst	McCaskill	Wicker
Fischer	McConnell	Young
Flake	Moran	

NAYS—42

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

NOT VOTING—2

Capito
McCain

The nomination was confirmed.

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

The Senator from Arkansas.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

The Senator from Arkansas.

(The remarks of Mr. BOOZMAN pertaining to the introduction of S. 2364 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. BOOZMAN. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

STOP ACT

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, today I want to talk about the opioid epidemic that has gripped our country and my State of Ohio and talk a little about a report we issued last week with regard to synthetic opioids coming in through the U.S. mail system.

This tragedy has hit Ohio hard. We are not alone, though. Opioids affect every American regardless of age, area code, class, or color. Every State represented here in this body has experienced this—broken families, devastated communities, higher crime rates, friends lost, and, of course, lives taken through opioid overdoses.

The Centers for Disease Control recently reported that more than 63,600 Americans died in 2016 from drug overdoses. That is the last year for which they have statistics, but we all believe it was worse in 2017. With 63,600 Americans dying of overdoses, that means, on average, more than 174 Americans die every single day. That is up from approximately 143 Americans who died, on average, every day from drug overdoses a year earlier in 2015 and 105 Americans who died every day in 2010.

The problem is getting worse, not better. Drug overdoses, in fact, are now the No. 1 cause of death—not just accidental deaths but the No. 1 cause of death—in America for Americans under the age of 50. The reason for this increase in overdose deaths is the spread of heroin, prescription drugs, and now the synthetic opioids—fentanyl and carfentanil. Opioids were involved in more than 42,000—about two-thirds—of the overall deaths in 2016. Opioid deaths were five times higher in 2016 than they were just a few years ago.

This is a national epidemic. It has unfolded in three different waves.

The first wave was the prescription drug epidemic—pain pills—15 to 20 years ago. That started to increase dramatically.

Next, heroin deaths spiked. Heroin was turned to as a less expensive and more accessible way for people who were addicted to pain pills to continue to receive the high—in this case, from heroin coming mostly from Mexico.

Now synthetic forms of heroin are overtaking the illegal opioid market, and the results have been even more deadly. Fentanyl, a synthetic opioid that is 50 times stronger than heroin, has become the new scourge of the epidemic. Fentanyl is so deadly that 2 milligrams of it—as little as two flakes of it—can be lethal. It is cheap, easily accessible, and can be added to make any number of illegal drugs more potent—cocaine, heroin, pills.

In Ohio, fentanyl and its variations, such as carfentanil, were responsible for 60 percent of our State's more than 4,000 overdose deaths in 2016—the most recent year for which we have statistics. That 60 percent is a huge increase from just the previous year, 2015, when fentanyl was responsible for about 37 percent of the deaths. We have had more deaths from overdoses and a lot more deaths linked to fentanyl.

Sadly, again, this situation is getting worse, not better. Just last week in Ottawa County, OH, outside of Toledo, we had five overdoses in 1 single day. We had three people die of overdoses in 1 week. The suspected cause, of course, is fentanyl.

Earlier this month in Akron, a 57-year-old man—a board member of the Akron Public Schools system—was found unconscious in his car from a drug overdose. First responders were thankfully able to revive the man with Narcan—a miracle drug that reverses the effects of overdoses—and treat him at a local hospital. Again, fentanyl caused that overdose.

In July of last year, a 12-year-old Columbus boy encountered fentanyl while he was at his cousin's for a sleepover. He was rushed to the hospital but died days later from a lack of oxygen to his brain as a result of fentanyl.

These synthetic drugs have invaded communities across Ohio and across the country. Unbelievably, this deadly poison is primarily shipped into America from China through our U.S. Postal Service. The Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, which I chair along with ranking member Senator TOM CARPER, recently held a hearing on this issue. It came on the heels of our year-long bipartisan investigation that resulted in a 100-page investigative report that examined how these drug traffickers in China exploit vulnerabilities in our international mail system to ship these deadly synthetic drugs into our communities.

I encourage people to look at that report on the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations website. The results of the report were shocking. We found that it was incredibly easy to buy fentanyl online. By simply searching "fentanyl for sale" on Google, our staff identified hundreds of websites, many affiliated with Chinese labs, all openly advertising this deadly drug. Online sellers were quick to respond, unafraid of being caught, and ready to make a deal. They even offered discounts for bulk purchases and tried to upsell us to carfentanil—fentanyl's even more powerful and deadly cousin.

This is an email from Chinese traffickers offering "a hot sale" for one fentanyl analogue before it is discontinued. Their preferred shipping method is the U.S. Postal Service because, as they told us, the chances of the drugs being seized were so insignificant that delivery was essentially guaranteed.

This chart shows a carfentanil advertisement and the online traffickers

suggesting “USPS” as their preferred shipping method. Why? Because USPS is the way in which the delivery is virtually guaranteed. “DHL, UPS, FedEx, TNT are quicker, but not safe, and will be detained frequently.” Instead, they say: “We suggest USPS only.” Wow.

It is inexcusable that these drugs are as easy to ship as a postcard and that traffickers’ preferred shipment method for these deadly poisons is through a Federal agency. Our post office has become a conduit for these deadly drugs.

By the way, this is incredibly dangerous for the postal employees, the letter carriers, those who have to handle these packages.

I should note that our team never purchased any of these drugs online, but we did use the online sellers’ payment information to determine if others were buying. Of course, we found out that they were. We narrowed our search to just six websites. From those six sites, we identified more than 500 payments to those six online sellers by more than 300 Americans in 43 States just in the last couple of years.

This map shows where the fentanyl went. As you can see, just from those six websites and those few hundred people, it went all over the country. The largest concentration of buyers was in my home State of Ohio, where you see the red. They were also in Pennsylvania and Florida. But, as I mentioned, it went to all 43 States. We were able to track hundreds of packages related to the online purchases.

By analyzing more than 2 million lines of shipment data obtained in our investigation, we located three individuals in the United States who seem to be distributing these drugs. We also identified two other individuals who purchased items to make pills, including pill presses, chemical bonding agents, and empty pill casings.

Our report also reinforced the risk associated with these deadly synthetic drugs. We identified seven individuals who died from fentanyl-related overdoses shortly after receiving packages from these online sellers. One of those seven individuals who died was a 49-year-old Ohioan from the Cleveland area who sent about \$2,500 to an online seller and received 15 packages through the Postal Service over a 10-month period. His autopsy confirmed he died from “acute fentanyl intoxication” just a couple of weeks after receiving a package from this online seller.

We are already working with law enforcement authorities to make sure these drug dealers can be brought to justice. We recently released all our documents to the Department of Homeland Security for them to do their own investigation.

China has responded to our report. A Foreign Ministry spokesman said last week that China stands “ready to work with the U.S. to enhance our coordination in this field.” I welcome China’s cooperation and coordination in this fight. But we need more than words. We need action. We need China to ban

more of these deadly drugs and do it quicker. We need China to shut down these illegal fentanyl laboratories and arrest those responsible for shipping drugs into our country.

I had the opportunity last year to travel to China as part of a congressional delegation, and I was able to speak directly to some of the Chinese authorities, including Premier Li. We talked about these deadly poisons coming into our communities and how we needed more help to be able to shut down these labs and to arrest these individuals. I also made the point that there is evidence that some of this opioid material that is being synthetically produced in China is leaking into their communities and that they have a problem too. We need to work together to shut this down.

One way that we can assist law enforcement in this war on synthetic opioids is by simply providing them the tools they need to identify packages coming in that likely contain these drugs. Whether they are from China, whether they are shipped somewhere else, or whether they are from another country that begins to produce these drugs, we have to do a better job finding these packages and stopping them.

Because of the roughly 500 million packages that come in by mail every year, interdicting these small packages is very difficult. It can be like finding a needle in a haystack. So law enforcement has asked us to help them be able to get the information they need to target suspect packages.

That is why what is called advance electronic data is so very important. This is information that comes in advance—such as what is in the package, where it is from, where it is going—is information for packages entering the United States that can greatly assist our law enforcement.

Customs and Border Protection is responsible for this mail coming into our country, and they want to identify these suspicious packages and be able to trace them back to both the U.S. distributor and user but also, of course, to their overseas traffickers. When they have that information, they are able to stop packages but also then initiate investigations, prosecutions, and arrests.

As part of our investigation, we found that last year the Postal Service only received this advance electronic data on about 36 percent of the more than 498 million packages coming into our country. That means the United States received more than 318 million packages with no data. That means there was little to no screening at all.

We also found that the quality of the data that was provided was often inadequate and unhelpful to law enforcement. Even when the Postal Service conducted a pilot program to screen for these drugs through the use of this data, they only presented 80 percent of these packages targeted by Customs and Border Protection for inspection. In other words, about 20 percent of

these suspect packages came into our communities without inspection, despite being suspect packages.

With these glaring holes in the screening process, it is no wonder these drug dealers choose the Postal Service as their preferred drug delivery system. It is a massive loophole that is undermining the safety and security of our country.

After the September 11, 2001, attacks, collecting the advance electronic data was identified as a national security priority.

In 2002 Congress wrote legislation that required private carriers to collect this advance electronic data and authorized and encouraged the Postal Service to do it but left the implementation up to the Postal Service. That was 16 years ago.

Because of the 2002 law, private carriers like UPS, FedEx, DHL, and others, require useful data on every package entering the United States, while the Postal Service gets its data for less than 40 percent of the hundreds of millions of packages it receives every year. Again, the Postal Service data is sometimes not usable, and 20 percent of those packages targeted because of the data are never presented to law enforcement to be inspected. Folks, this is just wrong. We can and we must do better.

We talked earlier about the number of people dying from fentanyl overdoses and the fact that this is the new scourge. It is coming in our mail system. We have to be able to do better, and we can.

This is why I have introduced what is called the Synthetics Trafficking and Overdose Prevention Act, or STOP Act. This bipartisan bill will require the Postal Service to get that electronic data on all international packages entering the United States. The coauthor of the STOP Act is Senator AMY KLOBUCHAR of Minnesota, and we now have 29 Senate cosponsors from both sides of the aisle. The bipartisan House companion bill is now, I believe, cosponsored by a majority of the House of Representatives. Why? Because this is just a commonsense solution that people understand has to be done.

I urge all of my Senate colleagues to join us in doing what we can to stop some of this poison from coming into America and to at least raise the price on the street of this synthetic heroin that is cheap and accessible.

By holding the Postal Service, a Federal agency, to the same standard we have for private mail carriers, we can give law enforcement the necessary tools they are asking for to identify and stop these deadly poisons from reaching our communities.

I understand that this is just one part of the solution to deal with the opioid epidemic. Trust me; I get that. I have been working on this for over 20 years, focused mostly on the prevention side, treatment, and the recovery. Those are all important. We need to continue to do that because our States

are gripped by these opioids, and all of us need it. But there is clearly a need for a legislative solution to prevent these drugs from entering our country through our own mail system.

The STOP Act is a clear opportunity and responsibility for Congress to help turn the tide of addiction. I urge all of my colleagues to join us in supporting the STOP Act and, by doing so, in saving lives.

I yield back.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, as we all know, tonight the President will address the Nation from the Chamber of the House of Representatives. This is called the State of the Union, and its tradition dates back to George Washington's time when he gave his first annual message in 1790.

Tonight is an important speech. It gives the President a chance not only to look forward but to look back on the first year of his term in office. That first year was marked by a steady stream of impressive accomplishments working together with Congress. These successes are easily missed when the decibel level here in Washington remains so high. The good news all too often gets drowned out by the noise, although, the truth is that the President's policy decisions have been spot-on, particularly when it comes to our Nation's economy.

First and foremost, last year he signed comprehensive tax reform into law. This is something we haven't been able to do since 1986. Our reforms lowered rates across the board for every tax bracket, doubled the child tax credit, and incentivized U.S. businesses to create jobs here at home rather than overseas, and, finally, it repealed the ObamaCare individual mandate, making the Affordable Care Act voluntary and not mandatory.

All across the country, we have seen the chain reaction as at least 263 businesses, large and small, have used the tax savings to increase workers' wages, expand their operations, and create jobs. According to one poll, small businesses' optimism is now at an 11-year high. The economy, thank goodness, continues to improve. A key economic indicator rose more than expected last month, but the momentum has been building over the last 12.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average has reached record highs. Everyone with a 401(k), a savings account, a pension, or somebody who dabbles in the stock market has seen the value of their holdings go up by about 25 per-

cent in this last year. Federal workers who invest in their thrift savings plans through these index funds have seen their retirement funds grow to a huge amount—25 percent—consistent with the stock market.

President Trump's economic policies have been joined by his administration's strong insistence on suspending or eliminating job-stifling regulations. Now, don't get me wrong. Regulations are necessary for public health, safety, and welfare, but they can go too far and stifle innovation and economic growth. Unfortunately, that is what has happened.

He signed an Executive order when he first came to office and has cut at least 16 rules and regulations for every new one that was created. I think his original goal was to cut two for every new one, but, actually, he has done better than that. He has cut 16 for every new one that was created, and that has saved roughly \$8.1 billion in compliance costs.

We need to keep in mind here in Washington that when we pass a law or when we pass a regulation, somebody often has to hire somebody to comply with that law. If there is a change in the Tax Code, you have to hire an accountant to help you figure out how to comply with the law or, if you are a manufacturing facility, you want to make sure OSHA and other Federal agencies don't come in and fine you so you hire people to help you comply with regulations and laws. These aren't people who necessarily help you become more productive; these are just people to keep up with the rules and regulations that emanate from Washington. The savings, as a result of rolling back some of the unnecessary regulations, has been pretty dramatic.

We in Congress did our part using the Congressional Review Act to eliminate heavyhanded regulations passed during the eleventh hour of the last administration.

President Trump's policies have stimulated the economy in other ways too. They have expanded energy infrastructure projects like the Keystone Pipeline and, with the help of Congress, opened part of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for oil and gas exploration. This is something that was set aside specifically for energy production years ago, but as a result of the logjam in Congress, that important natural resource for America was out of bounds because of congressional inaction. Well, no more.

I have flown over the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and, believe me, it is not someplace you would go on a vacation. It is a pretty rough area, but because people think of it as a wildlife refuge, they think, well, maybe this is a threat to the wildlife. Just the opposite is true. We know the caribou population has sprung up in areas where they have an oil pipeline because they use it for nesting grounds. It just goes to show how little the bureaucrats here in Washington who believe there is

nothing they shouldn't regulate or overregulate—they can be wrong.

Meanwhile, the President has been hard at work enforcing our immigration laws, something he was elected to do. He has added immigration judges and removed more than 36 percent more criminal gang members than in fiscal year 2016.

When it comes to immigration in the Senate, we have been working together to find a bipartisan solution for the recipients of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals—the so-called DACA Program.

People will remember this was something President Obama did, unilaterally circumventing Congress, and the courts later told him, no, he couldn't do it, placing the future of some 690,000 young DACA recipients in jeopardy. President Trump wisely has given us a deadline of March 5, but kicked it back to Congress to do what only Congress can do; that is, to come up with a solution. The President, helpfully, has laid out his priorities, and now we in this Congress have to come up with a consensus on how to move forward.

We know these young adults deserve future certainty, but also we don't want to repeat the mistakes of the past. We finally need to secure our borders and fix the flaws in our immigration laws that are exploited by the human traffickers and coyotes, and we aim to do both. There has to be symmetry. On one hand, we can show the sort of compassion that Americans have always shown, but we also need to have the security and knowledge that our laws and our border will be enforced.

The President shares this dual aim. On Sunday, my friend and fellow Texan, Roger Rocha, the head of the League of United Latin American Citizens—or LULAC—sent a letter to President Trump. Now, you wouldn't ordinarily think that LULAC and President Trump would see eye to eye, but here, President Rocha congratulated the President for setting what LULAC called a reasonable framework for immigration reform and border security. LULAC stated that as long as we stay within the President's parameters, the organization can support the eventual proposal because they are eager to make sure these young people—some 690,000—have a positive future. The President has gone over and above that and said, not only the people who signed up for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, but those who were eligible and who did not sign up can still participate in this pathway the President has prescribed for them, as long as we do our job when it comes to border security—dealing with the diversity lottery visa and dealing with chain migration.

I think LULAC's endorsement of these four parameters is very encouraging. It is huge news. LULAC has more than 145,000 members, and it is heralded as one of the oldest civil rights organizations in America itself.

It believes that now is the time to move forward, and that is something, hopefully, all of us will agree with.

LULAC believes the President's framework will keep the momentum of progress on its proper trajectory, they say. What this means is, President Trump is now on the brink of delivering something to the American people—certainty to DACA recipients, enforcement of our immigration laws, and securing our borders—that previous Presidents have been unable to do. Let me say that again. What this means is, President Trump is now on the brink of delivering to the American people certainty for the DACA recipients, enforcement of our immigration laws, and securing our borders, something previous Presidents have been unable to accomplish.

Democrats remain at a standstill on the very issue they have advocated for years, though. To my Democratic colleagues, I say the following: We are still waiting to see your alternative that could become law. The President has made a proposal. So you owe it to the American people, and you certainly owe it to the DACA recipients—whom some people call the Dreamers—you owe it to them to come up with an alternative. We can't negotiate with ourselves; we need a negotiating partner who will work with us in good faith to get to a solution that can get a Presidential signature. We are running out of time, and we need to get this done.

One unsung story of President Trump's first year has been the reshaping of the Federal judiciary. He nominated 73 Federal judges, including Neil Gorsuch, above all, who was confirmed to the U.S. Supreme Court last spring. We have helped him see that 12 appellate court judges have now assumed the robe and taken to the bench. This, of course, is the intermediate appellate court that, for all practical purposes, is the court of last resort, since the Supreme Court of the United States only hears about 80 cases a year. They decide cases where the appellate courts disagree or where there is a dissent by one of the judges, and usually it is the circuit courts that are the final word, interpreting, of course, Supreme Court precedence.

I am particularly proud of two of those supreme court justices: Don Willett, formerly of the Texas Supreme Court, and Jim Ho, who has served as my chief judiciary counsel, among other distinguished service, and who was a law clerk for Clarence Thomas and served as solicitor general of Texas. I am proud of the fact that these two men are now serving on the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Last but not least, the President has worked to increase defense spending and shown deft leadership in handling a broad array of foreign threats. I think that is, in part, responsible and due to the incredible team he has surrounded himself with, including General McMaster, the National Security Advisor; Rex Tillerson, the Secretary of

State; and James Mattis, Secretary of Defense. They are a strong and impressive team, and they serve the President and the Nation well by providing the President the kind of advice he needs to lead and to keep our country safe and to maintain America's leadership in world affairs.

We know, for example, that under our military leaders' strategy, as authorized and enabled by the President himself, the terrorist organization ISIS has lost most of its territory and many of its followers.

This administration has also strengthened U.S. policy in Iran, which is the No. 1 state sponsor of international terrorism. He has held Syria accountable for crossing redlines when they violated international norms by using chemical weapons—something the previous administration declined to do. This administration has stood up to an increasingly belligerent North Korea and used diplomacy to encourage China to use its clout as a bordering nation to North Korea to try to dissuade Kim Jong Un from pursuing his nuclear power goals. I hope that is successful.

It is no surprise, then, that based on polling data, Americans are substantially more satisfied with the Nation's military strength, security from terrorism, and the state of the economy now than they were at the end of the previous administration.

Our President is only 1 year into his term, but he has already changed this country's political landscape. I share his goal of continuing to build a safer, stronger, and prouder America.

The question then becomes how, working together, we can do that. During tonight's State of the Union Address, there are a few specific topics I look forward to hearing more about—shared priorities for the upcoming year—for example, rebuilding our Nation's depleted infrastructure. I recently introduced a bill with our colleague the senior Senator from Virginia. It would expand an infrastructure financing authority already in use by many States and local governments. I come from a big State, where we have a growing population, and we need to continue to build our infrastructure there to keep commerce flowing and to keep our roads safe and to protect our environment. This legislation I have introduced with my colleague from Virginia would raise the statutory cap on something known as private activity bonds, which assist various types of transportation construction.

In the near future, I expect to introduce other infrastructure initiatives, and I look forward to working with my colleagues as well as this administration to see them signed into law.

I am also keen to hear the President's thoughts on issues relating to public safety and law enforcement. I myself am a strong proponent of the Second Amendment, but I believe tragedies like that which occurred in Sutherland Springs prove the incredible

danger of dangerous felons purchasing and possessing firearms. That is illegal, but it happens, and, unfortunately, the consequences can be devastating to the families affected.

That is why I have introduced the bill we call the Fix NICS Act. NICS, of course, is the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, which makes sure that when you go in to purchase a firearm, if you are a convicted felon, if you have been committed for mental illness, or if you are guilty of domestic violence, you cannot legally buy a firearm in America, but if the background check system isn't uploaded properly, as in this case the Air Force declined—or I should say failed—to provide the necessary information to the criminal background check system, somebody can go in and lie and purchase firearms they can't otherwise legally purchase. That is why it is so important that we fix the National Instant Criminal Background Check System. That is something that has broad bipartisan support, and I hope to see it passed into law soon.

I see my colleague from Rhode Island here whom I have been working with on prison reform, another issue I hope the President touches on this evening, and I believe he will. I believe one of the most effective ways for us to legislate is to let the States be the laboratories of democracy. In this case, many of our States have been laboratories of democracy when it comes to reforming our criminal justice system and specifically our prison system. I know, for a long time, people had this idea that we are going to lock up folks and throw away the key, but the reality is, people who go to prison usually get out of prison. The question is, Are they going to be better prepared when they get out and hopefully avoid reincarceration and hopefully become productive members of society or are they just simply going to be warehoused and then let out, only to repeat their criminal acts and end up back in prison again?

We have had some enormous success in Texas and others States about incentivizing low- and medium-risk offenders, to provide them an opportunity to deal with their drug or alcohol problem or to learn a skill that they can earn a living with once they get out of prison or to get a GED. They have been very successful in cutting down on the rate of recidivism, decreasing the crime rate, and along the way saving the taxpayers money because they don't have to just build another prison to warehouse more people. We can keep the hard-core criminals locked up while we extend an olive branch and some help, a helping hand to those who will take advantage of it to turn their lives around and become productive members of society. So I am looking forward to the President talking about that.

I know the President will be talking about that and other important issues, such as immigration, and he will be

speaking from the heart tonight, and we should all listen to his words carefully. Whether we voted for this President or not, he is the duly elected President of the United States, and we, I believe, are obligated—those of us in Congress—to work with him, where we can, to try to help make things better for the people we represent.

Once he concludes his remarks tonight, then the ball is in our court to follow up on his calls to action, and I hope we will.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for several minutes and then turn the floor over to the Senator from Connecticut, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, and then, thereafter, that we may be permitted to engage in a brief colloquy.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, Senator BLUMENTHAL and I have come to the floor with a shared concern that the raiding parties are circling the Mueller investigation and preparing for an attack on that investigation.

We see this with collateral attacks on individual members of law enforcement. We see this with efforts to discredit the FBI and the Department of Justice in general. We have seen it even with Presidential tweets seeking to discredit folks who might be witnesses before a grand jury, which would, with the right state of mind, actually amount to obstruction of justice itself.

The first thing I want to say is that the Senate is entitled to a full and truthful explanation of why Deputy Director McCabe of the FBI left. We do not know the reason behind his sudden, abrupt departure. But we do know that Sally Yates was fired; we do know that Jim Comey was fired; we do know that Bob Mueller was not fired only because White House Counsel threw himself in front of that decision by President Trump and said: If you do that, I am out.

So firings at the top of our Department of Justice are becoming an unpleasantly frequent thing, and they tend to relate to matters where investigations touch on the White House: Sally Yates and the Flynn investigation; Jim Comey and the obstruction of justice, Russia collusion investigation; and, of course, Bob Mueller leading that investigation. I think we are entitled to answers, and I call for a full and truthful explanation.

The second thing going on is the more general attack on the FBI, the latest episode of which is this so-called Nunes memo, which has been described by Democratic House Members who have seen that memo and the under-

lying documents out of which it was selectively cherry-picked as profoundly misleading. It had the political purpose of spreading a false narrative—the political purpose of spreading a false narrative. This is like the information operations the Kremlin used to run against the free world if they had a political purpose of spreading a false narrative.

They also said it has the purpose of undermining legitimate investigations. Guess which legitimate investigations they mean.

This business of selectively cherry-picking things out of classified information to spread a false narrative has a very unpleasant echo for me because this is what the Bush administration was up to when it was trying to defend the torture program. They selectively declassified, for instance, that Abu Zubaydah had been the subject of what they called their enhanced interrogation techniques program and that he had produced important, actionable intelligence. What they did not declassify was that all the actionable intelligence he gave them had been provided before they started on the torture techniques. Then, once the pros from Dover came down—who didn't know anything about how to interrogate somebody but only knew how to do torture techniques—he clammed up, and that was the last actionable intelligence we got out of him. So deliberately misleading by selectively declassifying is an established technique, and it is one that is both shady and dangerous.

The process by which this so-called Nunes report or memo came out smells. It is the first ever invocation of an obscure House rule allowing for the selective declassification of material. It happened on a purely partisan vote. Trump's own appointees to the Department of Justice have called efforts to release the memo "extraordinarily reckless." Yet, on a purely partisan vote, using this previously never used rule, they are putting the selectively cherry-picked false narrative out into the public debate.

Why are they steaming ahead with a report that Ranking Member ADAM SCHIFF says "contains significant errors of fact, mischaracterizations, and omits critical context and detail"? At the same time, they are pulling one more procedural stunt, which is to stall for at least a week a Democratic report that would rebut and expose the misleading character of the Republicans' document.

The only conceivable purpose is to take the false narrative and give it a headstart of a week so that the poison gets out into our information system. Sure enough, they are pounding away at getting that information out. FOX News is already whipping it up, talking about how it is going to be a bombshell and explosive. The House Freedom Caucus has Trump revved up about the memo, urging him to support its release—against the advice of his own law enforcement and national security officials.

Over at Breitbart, FOX News, and throughout the rightwing echo chamber, hashtag "Release the Memo" became the rallying cry. Not only was it the rallying cry of Breitbart and FOX News—guess what. It was the rallying cry of our friends, the Russians. Hashtag "Release the Memo" remains the most used hashtag by social media accounts associated with Russian influence operations. Even the President's son, Don junior, got involved in the game, tweeting out that "Democrats & deep state govt officials"—I guess by that he means the Trump appointees who said that releasing this report would be extraordinarily reckless—are behind some mischief and therefore, all caps, "RELEASE THE MEMO."

When you see a political steamroller like that happening, when you see bizarre, peculiar, and unprecedented procedures, when you see that it is entirely partisan and against the advice of our national security officials, it is hard to draw a good conclusion about what the heck is going on.

Mr. President, I yield to my distinguished colleague from Connecticut.

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

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, we are here at a historic moment. The President of the United States will come before us for his first State of the Union tonight, at a time when there is a credible case of obstruction of justice against him and an overwhelming case to show that the campaign that elected him was aided and abetted by the Russians. But the immediate threat is even more dire.

Yesterday was a new low for the House Intelligence Committee. The House Republicans, in an act of partisan gutter politics, voted to release a four-page, misleading, deceptive characterization of warrants submitted to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court. This partisan gutter politics brings us to a dark day of character assassination much like the McCarthy days, when Members of this Chamber were counted in history as to whether they stood up and spoke out against this kind of smear campaign.

Not only is there character assassination at work here but also, equally dangerous to our democracy, the potential compromising of sources and methods vital to our national intelligence and our national security. That is the reason President Trump's own appointee at the Department of Justice, Stephen Boyd, stated that the release of this memo would be "extraordinarily reckless."

Those words come from a former staffer for a Republican Congresswoman and then-Senator Jeff Sessions—hardly a Democratic partisan. "Extraordinarily reckless." Why? Because this memo, four pages long, summarizing a warrant that typically is tens or hundreds of pages, will reveal sources and methods vital to the continued operation of our intelligence community.

My colleague, Senator WHITEHOUSE, has very powerfully and eloquently stated why this development is so threatening and so deeply troubling, but my Republican colleagues are apparently averse to listening to this kind of reasonable and sensible need for caution. They are about to ask the President to defy his own Department of Justice and disclose this memo.

Now, let's be very clear. I am one of the leading advocates in this body for transparency and disclosure. In fact, I believe strongly that all of the transcripts of interviews before the Judiciary Committee on the obstruction of justice investigation should be disclosed, and all of those witnesses should be called before us—in open hearings, under oath—to tell their stories so that the American public can understand what happened. I am in favor of challenges to warrants in the FISA Court—the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court—that may be defective or fallible. In fact, I was the leading advocate and drafter of a provision in the law now that provides for challenges to those warrants. It does so within the bounds of confidentiality that are necessary to protect our secrets and our national security.

What the House Intelligence Committee and potentially the President of the United States are about to do is essentially defy the law, an end-run so as to avoid the need for secrecy and confidentiality when it comes to intelligence gathering vital to our national security.

There is a procedure for challenging warrants when they are fallible. The House Republicans are refusing to follow it, and they are also refusing to provide any rebuttal to the distortions and mischaracterizations in that four-page memo.

Here is the reality: The United States was interested in Carter Page, who was viewed by the FBI as a Russian agent well before the 2016 Presidential campaign. In fact, their interest dates back to 2013, well before the Steele dossier, well before the election when Russian operatives sought to recruit him as a spy.

I am going to repeat that. The FBI thought Carter Page, who became a Trump campaign official, was an agent of the Russian Government. That is a stark public truth. That, in and of itself, would have been enough to obtain a FISA warrant to surveil him. Remember, he doesn't have to be convicted. He doesn't have to be proven a spy beyond a reasonable doubt. It is the probable cause standard and sufficient suspicion that he is a Russian spy that provide the opportunity, legally, and indeed the obligation to do surveillance.

We also know that European and other intelligence agencies—including from the UK, Netherlands, Germany, France, Poland, Estonia, and Australia—all discovered interactions between Trump's inner circle and Russian intelligence beginning in 2015. In

fact, the Australian Government told the FBI that George Papadopoulos bragged to an Australian diplomat over drinks at a bar that Russia had “political dirt” on Hillary Clinton while he was working for the Trump campaign. We know also that the Dutch Government informed the FBI of Russian interference in the 2016 Presidential election through hacking. We know that Carter Page openly traveled to Moscow to give a pro-Russian speech, and we know he met with Russian officials just as the Kremlin was working to undermine the 2016 election.

The purpose of releasing this memo is to create, very simply, a false narrative, a distraction, a red herring—call it whatever you wish. Its purpose is to discredit and degrade the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Department of Justice—law enforcement agencies that deserve the American people's support no matter who they are investigating as long as they are doing it objectively and dispassionately, as they are doing here.

Republicans conveniently ignore the facts—not only the facts that I have just recounted, the facts that are declassified, but also facts that they know well, facts that may continue to be classified. A 4-page memo simply cannot accurately summarize what is typically 100 pages or more in a FISA warrant application without cherry-picking facts to suit the Republican author's message.

I want to paraphrase one of our former colleagues, my friend and mentor Senator Patrick Moynihan: Everybody is entitled to their own opinion but not their own facts.

The American people should not be selectively presented with the facts and deceived by a memo that amounts to character assassination, a memo that endangers our national security, compromises the sources and methods of our intelligence community, and has only the purpose of degrading and discrediting the FBI and our Department of Justice as they engage in a valid, necessary investigation, through the special counsel, of Russian collusion in the last campaign, with the campaign itself, electing Donald Trump, and potential obstruction of justice afterward.

The hypocrisy and silence of many of my Republican colleagues in both Houses is deeply disappointing. Now is the time for people of conscience to stand up and speak out in favor of the rule of law and know that the fate and future of our democracy depends on it.

There will be a lot of rhetoric tonight in these Halls, but what matters now is action to defend our democracy. I am grateful to my very distinguished colleague for calling attention to the continued Russian meddling and interference in our democracy. Hashtag “Release the Memo,” which was retweeted 200,000 percent in a span of 48 hours and became the leading hashtag on twitter, was spread by accounts associated with the Russian Government or agents.

House Republicans are playing right into the hands of the Russians. The President of the United States, defying the law, declined to impose sanctions even after an overwhelming number of our colleagues here—98 to 2—voted in favor of those sanctions. Why is it that Donald Trump is so much enthralled with Vladimir Putin and the Russians? Perhaps it is because of the last campaign.

They are continuing with their interference and meddling, and they will do it again in 2018. CIA Director Mike Pompeo said today that they will do it again. And indeed they will unless they are made to pay a price. The absence of sanctions speaks louder than my words.

It is time for us to stand up and speak out.

I thank my colleague from the State of Rhode Island for being here today to join me.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, to follow the words of my distinguished colleague from Connecticut, not only are House Republicans—to use his phrase—playing into the hands of the Russians, they are actually playing by the playbook of the Russians. If you understand the Russian information warfare, the Gerasimov doctrine, the way in which Russians—and before them, Soviets—for years tried to poison the factual environment around them, and then you put that up against this scheme where you start with the selective release of classified material that the public can't get behind because the rest is classified, the false narrative that the ranking member has pointed out that that creates, the partisan and peculiar process for getting there, the ignoring of warnings from their own national security officials about how bad this is, the convenient whipping up of all of this in far-right media at the same time, the amplification of that actually by Russian bots and other sources, and the fact that this is all pointed, not coincidentally, at the agency and officials who are engaged in investigating the Trump White House and the Trump campaign, it is so appallingly obvious what the game is that is being played here.

It is stunning to me, to follow on what Senator BLUMENTHAL said, that we have heard nothing—at least I have heard nothing—perhaps the Senator from Connecticut can illuminate further, but I have heard nothing from our Director of National Intelligence, DNI Coats, and I have heard nothing from CIA Director Pompeo for—how long it has been? Since the very foundation of the FISA Court in the wake of Watergate, it has been an essential defense of our intelligence community that they don't want release of the FISA Court records. Now we have a partisan release that touches back to FISA applications that the Department of Justice has said is reckless. And where are they? It is astonishing that the custodians of those secrets appear to have absolutely no concern about this

partisan and peculiar, selective release of classified information.

I will echo another point Senator BLUMENTHAL made. This just happens to be happening at a time when the sanctions we voted on by massive bipartisan majorities—I can stack the votes together, House and Senate. It was something like 515 to 5. It was an enormous, bipartisan vote to sanction the Russians for what they have been doing, and that just went live. The President could impose those sanctions now. Yet he has not. What is the explanation?

The only people this President seems incapable of being tough on are Russians. It is a very unpleasant set of coincidences. At the same time, here we are with the Republican leadership in the House and the Republican leadership in the Senate and virtually every law enforcement and national security official who has come before us is saying: Hey, yeah, they did attack our last election in 2016, and they are going to attack our next election in 2018.

We are warned that a hostile foreign power is going to attack our 2018 election. Where is the legislation to defend against that? Where is the markup of the legislation? Where is the effort to do what needs to be done to defend our democracy? Here we are just a few months out from the election. We are 9 months out. Do I have the math right? It is 9 months between here and there. Nothing.

Why is it that whenever the Russians come up, it seems that the Republican Party has to go into complete stasis, just roll right over.

I offer those thoughts to the distinguished Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. I want to very quickly and simply emphasize a couple of those very important points, and maybe the overriding one is the need for action.

The Presiding Officer has demonstrated repeatedly his convictions and conscience, and I want to say how much I have admired much of what he has done during his Senate career. My hope is that others in this body will step forward and say: Enough is enough.

The FISA Court—Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court—is a carefully crafted bipartisan institution meant to protect our country against foreign threats that would destroy our democracy—the very kinds of threats that Russia has repeatedly mounted against us. Its function is balanced by a concern about civil rights and civil liberties, which is why it is a court that must approve warrants for surveillance and searches. Its secrecy goes to the core of what it does so that the agents, operatives, and informants who are the sources of intelligence are protected.

The House Intelligence Committee is about to trash that carefully crafted structure. They are about to release a memo that says, in effect: That court—that carefully crafted balance as a re-

sult of bipartisan work over many years, involving many in this Chamber—means nothing. We will use it for the most gross partisan purposes, partisan gutter politics, and character assassination.

It is a reminder of the darkest days of the McCarthy era when similarly there was a contempt for basic fairness which persisted until Senator McCarthy was asked: Have you no sense of decency?

We are at that moment now, but it is a moment that is dark for all of us in this democracy. It is a moment that should elicit our strongest impulses for decency and democracy.

We know that the special counsel is proceeding with his investigation. We know there is a need to protect that special counsel against firing and political interference. We know there is a need for legislation that is bipartisan, and the need is now. This use of the most gross partisan politics and tactics is proof-positive that there is a need for this legislation.

My hope against hope is that the President will, in fact, impose sanctions; that there will be a bipartisan outcry against this defiance of a 517-to-5 vote, and in this body, a 98-to-2 vote; that there should be sanctions when there is this defiance of our interests by the Russian Government; and, rather than simply listing oligarchs from a Forbes magazine account, that there be real action and accountability. Certainly, the President has avoided the finding of significant transactions, which is his duty under the law.

We need people of conscience and conviction now to step forward at this historic moment. In speeches going forward, I hope that, again, the Senator from Rhode Island—my friend and a leader in this body—will come to the floor and talk further about this issue.

For now, my hope is that the President will heed the advice he has received from his Department of Justice. Yet it is not really his; it is the Nation's Department of Justice. It is his appointee who has said that the release of this memo would be extraordinarily reckless, that it would be reckless, reprehensible, irresponsible, and in defiance of the President's duty to uphold the Constitution and the rule of law.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. 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.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for the January 29, 2018, vote on calendar No. 294, motion to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed to S. 2311, the Pain-Capable Un-

born Children Protection Act. I would have voted nay.

Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for the January 29, 2018, vote on Executive Calendar No. 622, motion to invoke cloture on David Ryan Stras, of Minnesota, to be U.S. circuit judge for the Eighth Circuit. I would have voted nay.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, I offer this statement to ensure the record reflects my opposition to the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act, S. 2311, calendar No. 294, as considered by the Senate on Monday, January 29, 2018. Cloture was not invoked on the motion to proceed to S. 2311 by a vote of 51 to 46. Unfortunately, I was unable to be present for the rollcall vote to invoke cloture on this measure due to multiple flight delays traveling from Wisconsin to Washington, DC.

I oppose this divisive legislation and would have voted against it, as I have previously when I voted against cloture on the motion to proceed to this legislation, H.R. 36 when it was considered by the Senate on September 22, 2015. Let me be clear: I believe every American woman deserves access to quality, safe healthcare and the freedom to exercise her individual and constitutional rights to make her own private health decisions with her family and her doctor, without political interference.

Too many States have already enacted record numbers of laws that restrict a woman's access to reproductive health services and the freedom to make her own healthcare decisions. In Wisconsin, numerous measures have been signed into law that impose unreasonable requirements on providers and clinics that often leave families with nowhere to turn and threaten the ability of clinics in my home State to keep their doors open. Like the measure before the Senate, introduced by Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM, Republican politicians in Wisconsin have already enacted a 20-week ban on abortion procedures in our state, which has real and grave consequences for our families. Politicians are doing this because they think they know better than women and their doctors. The fact is they don't. It is not the job of politicians to play doctor and to dictate how these professionals practice medicine, nor is it the job of government to intrude into the private lives and important health decisions of American families.

The threat in Wisconsin and in States across the country is clear: When politicians play doctor, American families suffer. This is why my good friend and colleague Senator RICHARD BLUMENTHAL and I have introduced the Women's Health Protection Act, S. 510, which would put a stop to these attacks on women's freedoms. This measure would prohibit laws, including State and local regulations,

which unduly limit access to abortion services, including laws that single out providers, close down clinics, and impose onerous restrictions that do nothing to further women's health or safety.

I will continue to work for access to comprehensive reproductive care and vote against proposals that threaten a woman's right to make her own health decisions.

TRIBUTE TO LIEUTENANT COLONEL ALBERT J. GOMEZ

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, my colleague Senator JIM RISCH joins me today in honoring LTC Albert J. Gomez on his outstanding career as he retires from serving as the West Point field force State coordinator.

Lieutenant Colonel Gomez—Al—has set a standard of excellence in Idaho leaving a lasting, positive impression in the lives of many. For nearly 20 years, he has been an invaluable asset to our offices. In 2000, the Idaho congressional delegation began to hold annual service academy days. Service academy days are an opportunity to provide information to Idaho's best and brightest young men and women who are interested in attending our Nation's service academies. Al has been instrumental in setting up service academy days from the beginning while juggling deployment and other commitments. He has assisted numerous Idaho students with obtaining an exceptional educational and service opportunities available at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. He is responsible for incorporating the principle method into the delegation's nomination process, which has made a significant difference in the number of Idaho appointees to West Point. In fact, he is considered the "secret weapon" in our delegation responsible for the high success rate of Idaho students receiving appointments to West Point. For Lieutenant Colonel Gomez, his remarkable work has always been about his love for West Point and our country. He is known for his extraordinary mentorship of youth, and candidates are frequently told to listen to Al if they want to be successful.

As a West Point alumni, Al has clear insight into what it takes to succeed at a service academy and what it means to serve our Nation. He earned his regular Army commission in 1979 and started his career in 1980 as a lance missile platoon leader serving in Germany. His assignments took him and his family to Fort Sill, OK, and Neckarsulm, Germany, which included command of a Pershing II missile nuclear capable firing battery. He served in deployments in support of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. He was selected to represent the U.S. Army and provide testimony to the Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces in November 1992. Al continued his military education with a 1994 grad-

uation from the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, KS. He served as a State Inspector General for both the Idaho and Guam National Guard for nearly a decade before his retirement from the U.S. Army in 2006. As a civilian, he worked for the Idaho National Guard as a special security officer for the Supervisor Human Resource Office before his current position, as the State equal employment manager.

His strong work ethic and dedication have not only given him a reputation among the delegation of being a go-to-guy when something needs to be done right and quickly, but also have contributed to him being recognized with many honors for his service to our country. These include the Legion of Merit; Bronze Star Medal; Meritorious Service Medal, 4th Award; Army Commendation Medal, 3rd Award; Army Achievement Medal; National Defense Service Medal, 2nd Award; and many other recognitions.

Lieutenant Colonel Gomez has set an honorable example in how he cares for Idaho service academy candidates and how he has served our Nation. He has created a strong team of West Point liaison officers who will continue his mission of providing Idaho students a chance to obtain a world-class education. We congratulate LTC Albert Gomez on his exemplary career.

Your leadership and friendship will be greatly missed. Thank you for setting such a high standard of outstanding service to our Nation and Idahoans.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL WETHERBEE

• Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, this week I have the honor of recognizing Sheridan School Superintendent Micheal Wetherbee for his commitment to students' success. Mike was recently honored with the 2017 Montana Association of Agricultural Educators' Administrator of the Year award, as well as the 2017 Montana Association of Career and Technical Education's Administrator of the Year award.

Mike came out of retirement to serve as superintendent when he saw there was a need in the community. When STEM and STEAM learning were just getting a foothold in education, Mike wanted to be sure the school would be on the frontlines. With buy-in from the community, Sheridan Schools are becoming well known for putting kids on a path to success through hands-on learning and experiences. In fact, high school students are now teaching fourth graders how to code. In Mike's own words, "We've got it going on academically."

When asked about the awards, Mike is much more interested in talking about what the school is doing to build a great FFA program and thriving

business department. What excites him the most about these programs, which he has been recognized for, are the opportunities they provide students to leave Sheridan High School and become successful in other places. Mike, who grew up in Montana, understands what service to the community means, and he is doing it every day by building up the students in Sheridan schools.

Thanks, Mike, for your continued work to shape Montana kids into the bright leaders of Montana's future.●

STATE OF THE UNION ESSAY CONTEST WINNERS

• Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, since 2010, I have sponsored a State of the Union essay contest for Vermont high school students. This contest gives students in my State the opportunity to articulate what issues they would prioritize if they were President of the United States.

I would like to congratulate the almost 600 students who participated this year. It is truly heartening to see so many young people engaged in finding solutions for the problems that face our country. To my mind, this is what democracy is all about.

A volunteer panel of Vermont teachers reviewed the essays and chose Marjorie "Maggie" Parker as this year's winner. Maggie, a sophomore at Woodstock Union High School, focused on the need to prevent hate crimes, particularly against members of the LGBT community.

Alaura Rich, a senior at St. Johnsbury Academy, was the second place winner. Alaura wrote about the prohibitive cost of a college education at a time when the United States needs to have the best educated workforce in the world.

Oliver Minshall, a junior at Hanover High School, was the third place winner, having written about addressing income inequality and creating a more equitable and sustainable economy.

I am very proud to ask to have printed in the RECORD the essays submitted by Maggie, Alaura, and Oliver. The material follows:

MARJORIE PARKER, WOODSTOCK HIGH SCHOOL
SOPHOMORE, WINNER

In our current day and age, I believe that one major challenge that faces our country is the prevention of hate crimes against minorities. One group I believe needs specific protection, especially with the new administration, are members of the LGBT community. With the recent military ban on transgender Americans, the LGBT community is feeling singled out and at risk. One way to bring a greater feeling of peace to these fellow Americans is by increasing protections instead of taking them away. I believe two major steps forward to help these people would be a law against employment discrimination for LGBT people, and also a repeal of "bathroom bills" which put transgender people at a greater risk of being harassed for their identity.

Firstly, on the topic of employment discrimination, many LGBT Americans face discrimination in the workplace simply for being open about their identities. In 2011, the

Williams Institute on Sexual Orientation Law and Public Policy conducted a series of surveys and found that 43 percent of LGBT Americans said they had faced discrimination in the workplace, and also found that straight coworkers say they had witnessed discrimination based on sexual orientation. One way to solve these struggles would be to put in place a law that prohibits employers discriminating against current and prospective employees on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation. A law such as this could help reduce workplace discrimination and make it easier for LGBT people to find a hold a job.

Second, on the topic of so-called “bathroom bills”, all people should have a safe place to use the restroom, regardless of gender identity. During the Obama presidency, an order was put into place that allowed students in all public schools to use the bathroom that best matched their gender identity. While there was much push-back, this was generally a step forward for young transgender people. However, early in 2017, President Trump reversed this order, effectively taking away much protection for transgender youth. It is important for this order not only to go back into place for schools but also in all places. It is unfair and uncomfortable for transgender Americans, who are living their lives as their true identity, to be forced to use a restroom that does not correspond to that identity. This is not only an embarrassment for them, but can also put them at greater risk of violence in said bathroom.

All in all, I believe that protection for LGBT Americans is one major challenge facing our country. If we truly want to be an example of an accepting country, with protections for minorities, we have to be able to step up and protect our fellow citizens. Through the changes I have outlined above, as well as others, I truly believe that our country can start to be a leader in the civil rights movement across the world.

ALaura Rich, ST. JOHNSBURY ACADEMY SENIOR,
SECOND PLACE

As the country that leads the global economy, the United States needs the best-educated workforce in the world. Our Nation cannot afford to be left behind due to a lack of fair and just educational opportunities. Yet, the educational system in America is failing to provide some of the brightest and most capable young people across the Nation with equal educational opportunities: ones that are affordable for minorities who are of low socioeconomic status or are the first in their family to attend college.

As a member of Upward Bound, one of the federally-funded TRIO programs that supports first-generation, low-income students, I have known for years that the cost of college was going to be a considerable barrier for me. However, it was my understanding that if I worked hard enough, I would find the means to pay for my college education without going deeply into debt. This assurance diminished after receiving my first award letter from a public, in-state university with notice that I would need to borrow \$40,000 over a four year period—\$10,000 above the national borrowing average—just to attend a public school within my own State. Many students like myself across the Nation face these same financial barriers.

Although there are many major issues that our country is struggling to solve, our fractured, inequitable educational system does not fall short of making this list. The appeal of a college education has shifted dramatically from what it began as: rather than a means of developing equal opportunities for young people in pursuit of work-related skills and knowledge, it has become a soci-

etal expectation with a large price tag that can only be easily achieved by those of upper-middle-class status. First-generation, low-income students are left at a significant disadvantage. These students often lack parental support, knowledge of the process, and critical resources. Furthermore, their country is failing to provide them with the financial aid system that they desperately need in order to afford a college education.

It's time to enact change within the American higher education system. We must make public colleges and universities tuition-free, end the Federal Government's ability to make a profit off student loans, substantially cut student loan interest rates, and allow low-income students to use need-based financial aid and work-study programs to make their college debt-free by covering room and board, books, and living expenses. By taking these steps, the opportunity gap in America would see a significant decrease. Minority students would see the same basic right to higher education as their more advantaged peers, and the future economic state of our Nation would be in the hands of the promising young individuals who are currently being underrepresented in colleges nationwide due to a lack of support. The Declaration of Independence birthed the underlying fundamental foundation of our Nation's belief in both opportunity and upward mobility, and it is the responsibility of the United States government to ensure equal educational opportunities for all.

OLIVER MINSHALL, HANOVER HIGH SCHOOL
JUNIOR, THIRD PLACE

Income inequality is our greatest challenge, our most present danger and an existential threat to America. Our society is among the most unequal societies in the world, consistently ranking behind other industrialized nations, like France and Denmark according to the CIA. Leaders are taking notice of this issue, in 2013 President Obama declared that making the economy work for everyone was “the defining challenge of our time.” To improve the state of this great country, we must find a solution to the pernicious scourge of income inequality and create a more just, equitable and sustainable path for our economy.

An analysis by economist Edward Wolf confirmed that the top one percent of income earners own 40 percent of the country's wealth, the highest share in 50 years. At a time when we are among the most prosperous nations in the world, the bottom ninety percent has less wealth than the top one percent. Robert Reich has observed closely as the very building blocks of capitalism have been strategically manipulated by the wealthiest one percent and large corporations for their own benefit. Thomas Piketty discovered that modern markets tend to produce increasing inequality in the long run due to the tendency of capital investments to increase in value at a faster rate than the economy at large. Median income rose to its highest level ever in 2017 according to Business Insider but when adjusted for inflation the real purchasing power for many poor and middle class people is stagnant. While the sources of this inequality are far from certain, the deleterious effect on society is indubitable.

This is not just a moral problem but a threat to the future of American democracy. The political scientist Martin Glens contends that while America enjoys many of the features of political democracy, citizens have so little economic power, and therefore influence, their views do not have any practical effect on policymaking. That is an attack on popular sovereignty, a core principle of our democratic system. Piketty too points out this trend, asserting that while some in-

equality is necessary for the function of efficient markets, excess inequality is detrimental to the long term function of our democratic institutions. Furthermore unequal societies undermine the very markets they are based upon. Inequality causes political and economic turmoil that harms society.

The solution to this issue is a comprehensive strategy to deal with inequality. We need to raise taxes on the top one percent, implement the Harkin-Defazio financial transactions tax, remove the arbitrary and regressive cap on taxable income for Social Security payroll taxes, tax capital gains as earned income and use the revenue to fund new programs like free tuition, a public option in healthcare, and new infrastructure. If we embrace these policies and the shared ideals of economic justice, and political democracy we can transform America into a vibrant and equitable society worthy of the American dream and those who strive every day to realize it.●

PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE

REPORT ON THE STATE OF THE UNION DELIVERED TO A JOINT SESSION OF CONGRESS ON JANUARY 30, 2018—PM 25

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the President of the United States which was ordered to lie on the table:

To the Congress of the United States:

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice President, Members of Congress, the First Lady of the United States, and my fellow Americans:

Less than 1 year has passed since I first stood at this podium, in this majestic chamber, to speak on behalf of the American People—and to address their concerns, their hopes, and their dreams. That night, our new Administration had already taken swift action. A new tide of optimism was already sweeping across our land.

Each day since, we have gone forward with a clear vision and a righteous mission—to make America great again for all Americans.

Over the last year, we have made incredible progress and achieved extraordinary success. We have faced challenges we expected, and others we could never have imagined. We have shared in the heights of victory and the pains of hardship. We endured floods and fires and storms. But through it all, we have seen the beauty of America's soul, and the steel in America's spine.

Each test has forged new American heroes to remind us who we are, and show us what we can be.

We saw the volunteers of the “Cajun Navy,” racing to the rescue with their fishing boats to save people in the aftermath of a devastating hurricane.

We saw strangers shielding strangers from a hail of gunfire on the Las Vegas strip.

We heard tales of Americans like Coast Guard Petty Officer Ashlee Leppert, who is here tonight in the gallery with Melania. Ashlee was aboard

one of the first helicopters on the scene in Houston during Hurricane Harvey. Through 18 hours of wind and rain, Ashlee braved live power lines and deep water, to help save more than 40 lives. Thank you, Ashlee.

We heard about Americans like firefighter David Dahlberg. He is here with us too. David faced down walls of flame to rescue almost 60 children trapped at a California summer camp threatened by wildfires.

To everyone still recovering in Texas, Florida, Louisiana, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, California, and everywhere else—we are with you, we love you, and we will pull through together.

Some trials over the past year touched this chamber very personally. With us tonight is one of the toughest people ever to serve in this House—a guy who took a bullet, almost died, and was back to work three and a half months later: the legend from Louisiana, Congressman STEVE SCALISE.

We are incredibly grateful for the heroic efforts of the Capitol Police Officers, the Alexandria Police, and the doctors, nurses, and paramedics who saved his life, and the lives of many others in this room.

In the aftermath of that terrible shooting, we came together, not as Republicans or Democrats, but as representatives of the people. But it is not enough to come together only in times of tragedy. Tonight, I call upon all of us to set aside our differences, to seek out common ground, and to summon the unity we need to deliver for the people we were elected to serve.

Over the last year, the world has seen what we always knew: that no people on Earth are so fearless, or daring, or determined as Americans. If there is a mountain, we climb it. If there is a frontier, we cross it. If there is a challenge, we tame it. If there is an opportunity, we seize it.

So let us begin tonight by recognizing that the state of our Union is strong because our people are strong.

And together, we are building a safe, strong, and proud America.

Since the election, we have created 2.4 million new jobs, including 200,000 new jobs in manufacturing alone. After years of wage stagnation, we are finally seeing rising wages.

Unemployment claims have hit a 45-year low. African-American unemployment stands at the lowest rate ever recorded, and Hispanic American unemployment has also reached the lowest levels in history.

Small business confidence is at an all-time high. The stock market has smashed one record after another, gaining \$8 trillion in value. That is great news for Americans' 401k, retirement, pension, and college savings accounts.

And just as I promised the American people from this podium 11 months ago, we enacted the biggest tax cuts and reforms in American history.

Our massive tax cuts provide tremendous relief for the middle class and small businesses.

To lower tax rates for hardworking Americans, we nearly doubled the standard deduction for everyone. Now, the first \$24,000 earned by a married couple is completely tax-free. We also doubled the child tax credit.

A typical family of four making \$75,000 will see their tax bill reduced by \$2,000—slashing their tax bill in half.

This April will be the last time you ever file under the old broken system—and millions of Americans will have more take-home pay starting next month.

We eliminated an especially cruel tax that fell mostly on Americans making less than \$50,000 a year—forcing them to pay tremendous penalties simply because they could not afford government-ordered health plans. We repealed the core of disastrous Obamacare—the individual mandate is now gone.

We slashed the business tax rate from 35 percent all the way down to 21 percent, so American companies can compete and win against anyone in the world. These changes alone are estimated to increase average family income by more than \$4,000.

Small businesses have also received a massive tax cut, and can now deduct 20 percent of their business income.

Here tonight are Steve Staub and Sandy Keplinger of Staub Manufacturing—a small business in Ohio. They have just finished the best year in their 20-year history. Because of tax reform, they are handing out raises, hiring an additional 14 people, and expanding into the building next door.

One of Staub's employees, Corey Adams, is also with us tonight. Corey is an all-American worker. He supported himself through high school, lost his job during the 2008 recession, and was later hired by Staub, where he trained to become a welder. Like many hardworking Americans, Corey plans to invest his tax-cut raise into his new home and his two daughters' education. Please join me in congratulating Corey.

Since we passed tax cuts, roughly 3 million workers have already gotten tax cut bonuses—many of them thousands of dollars per worker. Apple has just announced it plans to invest a total of \$350 billion in America, and hire another 20,000 workers.

This is our new American moment. There has never been a better time to start living the American Dream.

So to every citizen watching at home tonight—no matter where you have been, or where you come from, this is your time. If you work hard, if you believe in yourself, if you believe in America, then you can dream anything, you can be anything, and together, we can achieve anything.

Tonight, I want to talk about what kind of future we are going to have, and what kind of Nation we are going to be. All of us, together, as one team, one people, and one American family.

We all share the same home, the same heart, the same destiny, and the same great American flag.

Together, we are rediscovering the American way.

In America, we know that faith and family, not government and bureaucracy, are the center of the American life. Our motto is “in God we trust.”

And we celebrate our police, our military, and our amazing veterans as heroes who deserve our total and unwavering support.

Here tonight is Preston Sharp, a 12-year-old boy from Redding, California, who noticed that veterans' graves were not marked with flags on Veterans Day. He decided to change that, and started a movement that has now placed 40,000 flags at the graves of our great heroes. Preston: a job well done.

Young patriots like Preston teach all of us about our civic duty as Americans. Preston's reverence for those who have served our Nation reminds us why we salute our flag, why we put our hands on our hearts for the pledge of allegiance, and why we proudly stand for the national anthem.

Americans love their country. And they deserve a Government that shows them the same love and loyalty in return.

For the last year we have sought to restore the bonds of trust between our citizens and their Government.

Working with the Senate, we are appointing judges who will interpret the Constitution as written, including a great new Supreme Court Justice, and more circuit court judges than any new administration in the history of our country.

We are defending our Second Amendment, and have taken historic actions to protect religious liberty.

And we are serving our brave veterans, including giving our veterans choice in their healthcare decisions. Last year, the Congress passed, and I signed, the landmark VA Accountability Act. Since its passage, my Administration has already removed more than 1,500 VA employees who failed to give our veterans the care they deserve—and we are hiring talented people who love our vets as much as we do.

I will not stop until our veterans are properly taken care of, which has been my promise to them from the very beginning of this great journey.

All Americans deserve accountability and respect—and that is what we are giving them. So tonight, I call on the Congress to empower every Cabinet Secretary with the authority to reward good workers—and to remove Federal employees who undermine the public trust or fail the American people.

In our drive to make Washington accountable, we have eliminated more regulations in our first year than any administration in history.

We have ended the war on American Energy—and we have ended the war on clean coal. We are now an exporter of energy to the world.

In Detroit, I halted Government mandates that crippled America's autoworkers—so we can get the Motor City revving its engines once again.

Many car companies are now building and expanding plants in the United States—something we have not seen for decades.

Chrysler is moving a major plant from Mexico to Michigan; Toyota and Mazda are opening up a plant in Alabama. Soon, plants will be opening up all over the country. This is all news Americans are unaccustomed to hearing—for many years, companies and jobs were only leaving us. But now they are coming back.

Exciting progress is happening every day.

To speed access to breakthrough cures and affordable generic drugs, last year the FDA approved more new and generic drugs and medical devices than ever before in our history.

We also believe that patients with terminal conditions should have access to experimental treatments that could potentially save their lives.

People who are terminally ill should not have to go from country to country to seek a cure—I want to give them a chance right here at home. It is time for the Congress to give these wonderful Americans the “right to try.”

One of my greatest priorities is to reduce the price of prescription drugs. In many other countries, these drugs cost far less than what we pay in the United States. That is why I have directed my Administration to make fixing the injustice of high drug prices one of our top priorities. Prices will come down.

America has also finally turned the page on decades of unfair trade deals that sacrificed our prosperity and shipped away our companies, our jobs, and our Nation’s wealth.

The era of economic surrender is over.

From now on, we expect trading relationships to be fair and to be reciprocal.

We will work to fix bad trade deals and negotiate new ones.

And we will protect American workers and American intellectual property, through strong enforcement of our trade rules.

As we rebuild our industries, it is also time to rebuild our crumbling infrastructure.

America is a nation of builders. We built the Empire State Building in just 1 year—is it not a disgrace that it can now take 10 years just to get a permit approved for a simple road?

I am asking both parties to come together to give us the safe, fast, reliable, and modern infrastructure our economy needs and our people deserve.

Tonight, I am calling on the Congress to produce a bill that generates at least \$1.5 trillion for the new infrastructure investment we need.

Every Federal dollar should be leveraged by partnering with State and local governments and, where appropriate, tapping into private sector investment—to permanently fix the infrastructure deficit.

Any bill must also streamline the permitting and approval process—get-

ting it down to no more than two years, and perhaps even one.

Together, we can reclaim our building heritage. We will build gleaming new roads, bridges, highways, railways, and waterways across our land. And we will do it with American heart, American hands, and American grit.

We want every American to know the dignity of a hard day’s work. We want every child to be safe in their home at night. And we want every citizen to be proud of this land that we love.

We can lift our citizens from welfare to work, from dependence to independence, and from poverty to prosperity.

As tax cuts create new jobs, let us invest in workforce development and job training. Let us open great vocational schools so our future workers can learn a craft and realize their full potential. And let us support working families by supporting paid family leave.

As America regains its strength, this opportunity must be extended to all citizens. That is why this year we will embark on reforming our prisons to help former inmates who have served their time get a second chance.

Struggling communities, especially immigrant communities, will also be helped by immigration policies that focus on the best interests of American workers and American families.

For decades, open borders have allowed drugs and gangs to pour into our most vulnerable communities. They have allowed millions of low-wage workers to compete for jobs and wages against the poorest Americans. Most tragically, they have caused the loss of many innocent lives.

Here tonight are two fathers and two mothers: Evelyn Rodriguez, Freddy Cuevas, Elizabeth Alvarado, and Robert Mickens. Their two teenage daughters—Kayla Cuevas and Nisa Mickens—were close friends on Long Island. But in September 2016, on the eve of Nisa’s 16th Birthday, neither of them came home. These two precious girls were brutally murdered while walking together in their hometown. Six members of the savage gang MS-13 have been charged with Kayla and Nisa’s murders. Many of these gang members took advantage of glaring loopholes in our laws to enter the country as unaccompanied alien minors—and wound up in Kayla and Nisa’s high school.

Evelyn, Elizabeth, Freddy, and Robert: Tonight, everyone in this chamber is praying for you. Everyone in America is grieving for you. And 320 million hearts are breaking for you. We cannot imagine the depth of your sorrow, but we can make sure that other families never have to endure this pain.

Tonight, I am calling on the Congress to finally close the deadly loopholes that have allowed MS-13, and other criminals, to break into our country. We have proposed new legislation that will fix our immigration laws, and support our ICE and Border Patrol Agents, so that this cannot ever happen again.

The United States is a compassionate nation. We are proud that we do more

than any other country to help the needy, the struggling, and the underprivileged all over the world. But as President of the United States, my highest loyalty, my greatest compassion, and my constant concern is for America’s children, America’s struggling workers, and America’s forgotten communities. I want our youth to grow up to achieve great things. I want our poor to have their chance to rise.

So tonight, I am extending an open hand to work with members of both parties—Democrats and Republicans—to protect our citizens of every background, color, religion, and creed. My duty, and the sacred duty of every elected official in this chamber, is to defend Americans—to protect their safety, their families, their communities, and their right to the American Dream. Because Americans are dreamers too.

Here tonight is one leader in the effort to defend our country: Homeland Security Investigations Special Agent Celestino Martinez—he goes by CJ. CJ served 15 years in the Air Force before becoming an ICE agent and spending the last 15 years fighting gang violence and getting dangerous criminals off our streets. At one point, MS-13 leaders ordered CJ’s murder. But he did not cave to threats or fear. Last May, he commanded an operation to track down gang members on Long Island. His team has arrested nearly 400, including more than 220 from MS-13.

CJ: Great work. Now let us get the Congress to send you some reinforcements.

Over the next few weeks, the House and Senate will be voting on an immigration reform package.

In recent months, my Administration has met extensively with both Democrats and Republicans to craft a bipartisan approach to immigration reform. Based on these discussions, we presented the Congress with a detailed proposal that should be supported by both parties as a fair compromise—one where nobody gets everything they want, but where our country gets the critical reforms it needs.

Here are the four pillars of our plan:

The first pillar of our framework generously offers a path to citizenship for 1.8 million illegal immigrants who were brought here by their parents at a young age—that covers almost three times more people than the previous administration. Under our plan, those who meet education and work requirements, and show good moral character, will be able to become full citizens of the United States.

The second pillar fully secures the border. That means building a wall on the Southern border, and it means hiring more heroes like CJ to keep our communities safe. Crucially, our plan closes the terrible loopholes exploited by criminals and terrorists to enter our country—and it finally ends the dangerous practice of “catch and release.”

The third pillar ends the visa lottery—a program that randomly hands

out green cards without any regard for skill, merit, or the safety of our people. It is time to begin moving towards a merit-based immigration system—one that admits people who are skilled, who want to work, who will contribute to our society, and who will love and respect our country.

The fourth and final pillar protects the nuclear family by ending chain migration. Under the current broken system, a single immigrant can bring in virtually unlimited numbers of distant relatives. Under our plan, we focus on the immediate family by limiting sponsorships to spouses and minor children. This vital reform is necessary, not just for our economy, but for our security, and our future.

In recent weeks, two terrorist attacks in New York were made possible by the visa lottery and chain migration. In the age of terrorism, these programs present risks we can no longer afford.

It is time to reform these outdated immigration rules, and finally bring our immigration system into the 21st century.

These four pillars represent a down-the-middle compromise, and one that will create a safe, modern, and lawful immigration system.

For over 30 years, Washington has tried and failed to solve this problem. This Congress can be the one that finally makes it happen.

Most importantly, these four pillars will produce legislation that fulfills my ironclad pledge to only sign a bill that puts America first. So let us come together, set politics aside, and finally get the job done.

These reforms will also support our response to the terrible crisis of opioid and drug addiction.

In 2016, we lost 64,000 Americans to drug overdoses: 174 deaths per day. Seven per hour. We must get much tougher on drug dealers and pushers if we are going to succeed in stopping this scourge.

My Administration is committed to fighting the drug epidemic and helping get treatment for those in need. The struggle will be long and difficult—but, as Americans always do, we will prevail.

As we have seen tonight, the most difficult challenges bring out the best in America.

We see a vivid expression of this truth in the story of the Holets family of New Mexico. Ryan Holets is 27 years old, and an officer with the Albuquerque Police Department. He is here tonight with his wife Rebecca. Last year, Ryan was on duty when he saw a pregnant, homeless woman preparing to inject heroin. When Ryan told her she was going to harm her unborn child, she began to weep. She told him she did not know where to turn, but badly wanted a safe home for her baby.

In that moment, Ryan said he felt God speak to him: “You will do it—because you can.” He took out a picture of his wife and their four kids. Then, he

went home to tell his wife Rebecca. In an instant, she agreed to adopt. The Holets named their new daughter Hope.

Ryan and Rebecca: You embody the goodness of our Nation. Thank you, and congratulations.

As we rebuild America’s strength and confidence at home, we are also restoring our strength and standing abroad.

Around the world, we face rogue regimes, terrorist groups, and rivals like China and Russia that challenge our interests, our economy, and our values. In confronting these dangers, we know that weakness is the surest path to conflict, and unmatched power is the surest means of our defense.

For this reason, I am asking the Congress to end the dangerous defense sequester and fully fund our great military.

As part of our defense, we must modernize and rebuild our nuclear arsenal, hopefully never having to use it, but making it so strong and powerful that it will deter any acts of aggression. Perhaps someday in the future there will be a magical moment when the countries of the world will get together to eliminate their nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, we are not there yet.

Last year, I also pledged that we would work with our allies to extinguish ISIS from the face of the Earth. One year later, I am proud to report that the coalition to defeat ISIS has liberated almost 100 percent of the territory once held by these killers in Iraq and Syria. But there is much more work to be done. We will continue our fight until ISIS is defeated.

Army Staff Sergeant Justin Peck is here tonight. Near Raqqa last November, Justin and his comrade, Chief Petty Officer Kenton Stacy, were on a mission to clear buildings that ISIS had rigged with explosives so that civilians could return to the city.

Clearing the second floor of a vital hospital, Kenton Stacy was severely wounded by an explosion. Immediately, Justin bounded into the booby-trapped building and found Kenton in bad shape. He applied pressure to the wound and inserted a tube to reopen an airway. He then performed CPR for 20 straight minutes during the ground transport and maintained artificial respiration through 2 hours of emergency surgery.

Kenton Stacy would have died if not for Justin’s selfless love for a fellow warrior. Tonight, Kenton is recovering in Texas. Raqqa is liberated. And Justin is wearing his new Bronze Star, with a “V” for “Valor.” Staff Sergeant Peck: All of America salutes you.

Terrorists who do things like place bombs in civilian hospitals are evil. When possible, we annihilate them. When necessary, we must be able to detain and question them. But we must be clear: Terrorists are not merely criminals. They are unlawful enemy combatants. And when captured overseas, they should be treated like the terrorists they are.

In the past, we have foolishly released hundreds of dangerous terror-

ists, only to meet them again on the battlefield—including the ISIS leader, al-Baghdadi.

So today, I am keeping another promise. I just signed an order directing Secretary Mattis to reexamine our military detention policy and to keep open the detention facilities at Guantanamo Bay.

I am also asking the Congress to ensure that, in the fight against ISIS and al-Qa’ida, we continue to have all necessary power to detain terrorists—wherever we chase them down.

Our warriors in Afghanistan also have new rules of engagement. Along with their heroic Afghan partners, our military is no longer undermined by artificial timelines, and we no longer tell our enemies our plans.

Last month, I also took an action endorsed unanimously by the Senate just months before: I recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

Shortly afterwards, dozens of countries voted in the United Nations General Assembly against America’s sovereign right to make this recognition. American taxpayers generously send those same countries billions of dollars in aid every year.

That is why, tonight, I am asking the Congress to pass legislation to help ensure American foreign-assistance dollars always serve American interests, and only go to America’s friends.

As we strengthen friendships around the world, we are also restoring clarity about our adversaries.

When the people of Iran rose up against the crimes of their corrupt dictatorship, I did not stay silent. America stands with the people of Iran in their courageous struggle for freedom.

I am asking the Congress to address the fundamental flaws in the terrible Iran nuclear deal.

My Administration has also imposed tough sanctions on the communist and socialist dictatorships in Cuba and Venezuela.

But no regime has oppressed its own citizens more totally or brutally than the cruel dictatorship in North Korea.

North Korea’s reckless pursuit of nuclear missiles could very soon threaten our homeland.

We are waging a campaign of maximum pressure to prevent that from happening.

Past experience has taught us that complacency and concessions only invite aggression and provocation. I will not repeat the mistakes of past administrations that got us into this dangerous position.

We need only look at the depraved character of the North Korean regime to understand the nature of the nuclear threat it could pose to America and our allies.

Otto Warmbier was a hardworking student at the University of Virginia. On his way to study abroad in Asia, Otto joined a tour to North Korea. At its conclusion, this wonderful young man was arrested and charged with crimes against the state. After a

shameful trial, the dictatorship sentenced Otto to 15 years of hard labor, before returning him to America last June—horribly injured and on the verge of death. He passed away just days after his return.

Otto's Parents, Fred and Cindy Warmbier, are with us tonight—along with Otto's brother and sister, Austin and Greta. You are powerful witnesses to a menace that threatens our world, and your strength inspires us all. Tonight, we pledge to honor Otto's memory with American resolve.

Finally, we are joined by one more witness to the ominous nature of this regime. His name is Mr. Ji Seong-ho.

In 1996, Seong-ho was a starving boy in North Korea. One day, he tried to steal coal from a railroad car to barter for a few scraps of food. In the process, he passed out on the train tracks, exhausted from hunger. He woke up as a train ran over his limbs. He then endured multiple amputations without anything to dull the pain. His brother and sister gave what little food they had to help him recover and ate dirt themselves—permanently stunting their own growth. Later, he was tortured by North Korean authorities after returning from a brief visit to China. His tormentors wanted to know if he had met any Christians. He had—and he resolved to be free.

Seong-ho traveled thousands of miles on crutches across China and Southeast Asia to freedom. Most of his family followed. His father was caught trying to escape, and was tortured to death.

Today he lives in Seoul, where he rescues other defectors, and broadcasts into North Korea what the regime fears the most—the truth.

Today he has a new leg, but Seong-ho, I understand you still keep those crutches as a reminder of how far you have come. Your great sacrifice is an inspiration to us all.

Seong-ho's story is a testament to the yearning of every human soul to live in freedom.

It was that same yearning for freedom that nearly 250 years ago gave birth to a special place called America. It was a small cluster of colonies caught between a great ocean and a vast wilderness. But it was home to an incredible people with a revolutionary idea: that they could rule themselves. That they could chart their own destiny. And that, together, they could light up the world.

That is what our country has always been about. That is what Americans have always stood for, always strived for, and always done.

Atop the dome of this Capitol stands the Statue of Freedom. She stands tall and dignified among the monuments to our ancestors who fought and lived and died to protect her.

Monuments to Washington and Jefferson—to Lincoln and King.

Memorials to the heroes of Yorktown and Saratoga—to young Americans who shed their blood on the shores of

Normandy, and the fields beyond. And others, who went down in the waters of the Pacific and the skies over Asia.

And freedom stands tall over one more monument: this one. This Capitol. This living monument to the American people.

A people whose heroes live not only in the past, but all around us—defending hope, pride, and the American way.

They work in every trade. They sacrifice to raise a family. They care for our children at home. They defend our flag abroad. They are strong moms and brave kids. They are firefighters, police officers, border agents, medics, and Marines.

But above all else, they are Americans. And this Capitol, this city, and this Nation, belong to them.

Our task is to respect them, to listen to them, to serve them, to protect them, and to always be worthy of them.

Americans fill the world with art and music. They push the bounds of science and discovery. And they forever remind us of what we should never forget: The people dreamed this country. The people built this country. And it is the people who are making America great again.

As long as we are proud of who we are, and what we are fighting for, there is nothing we cannot achieve.

As long as we have confidence in our values, faith in our citizens, and trust in our God, we will not fail.

Our families will thrive.

Our people will prosper.

And our Nation will forever be safe and strong and proud and mighty and free.

Thank you, and God bless America.

DONALD J. TRUMP.

THE WHITE HOUSE, January 30, 2018.

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 10:19 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, with an amendment, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

S. 534. An act to prevent the sexual abuse of minors and amateur athletes by requiring the prompt reporting of sexual abuse to law enforcement authorities, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 1426. An act to amend the Home Owners' Loan Act to allow Federal savings associations to elect to operate as national banks, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1457. An act to establish requirements for use of a driver's license or personal identification card by certain financial institutions for opening an account or obtaining a financial product or service, and for other purposes.

H.R. 2255. An act to clarify that nonprofit organizations may accept donated mortgage appraisals, and for other purposes.

H.R. 4792. An act to amend the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 to expand access to

capital for small businesses affected by hurricanes or other natural disasters, and for other purposes.

The message further announced that the Speaker withdraws the appointment of the following individual to the Congressional Award Board on January 25, 2018: Mr. Steve Hart of Washington, DC.

At 3:40 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has agreed to the amendment of the Senate to the title of the bill (H.R. 695) to amend the National Child Protection Act of 1993 to establish a national criminal history background check system and criminal history review program for certain individuals who, related to their employment, have access to children, the elderly, or individuals with disabilities, and for other purposes, and further, that the House has agreed to the amendment of the Senate to the text of the aforementioned bill, with an amendment, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate.

MEASURES REFERRED

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

H.R. 1426. An act to amend the Home Owners' Loan Act to allow Federal savings associations to elect to operate as national banks, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

H.R. 1457. An act to establish requirements for use of a driver's license or personal identification card by certain financial institutions for opening an account or obtaining a financial product or service, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

H.R. 2255. An act to clarify that nonprofit organizations may accept donated mortgage appraisals, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

H.R. 4792. An act to amend the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 to expand access to capital for small businesses affected by hurricanes or other natural disasters, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. JOHNSON, from the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute:

S. 1847. A bill to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to ensure that the needs of children are considered in homeland security, trafficking, and disaster recovery planning, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 115-202).

EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following executive reports of nominations were submitted:

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

*John H. Gibson II, of Texas, to be Chief Management Officer of the Department of Defense.

By Ms. MURKOWSKI for the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Anne Marie White, of Michigan, to be an Assistant Secretary of Energy (Environmental Management).

*Melissa F. Burnison, of Kentucky, to be an Assistant Secretary of Energy (Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs).

*Susan Combs, of Texas, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior.

*Ryan Douglas Nelson, of Idaho, to be Solicitor of the Department of the Interior.

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

(Nominations without an asterisk were reported with the recommendation that they be confirmed.)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

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

By Mr. UDALL (for himself, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. HEINRICH, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. SCHATZ, Ms. HARRIS, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Ms. SMITH, Mr. BENNET, and Mr. LEAHY):

S. 2354. A bill to provide for the administration of certain national monuments, to establish a National Monument Enhancement Fund, and to establish certain wilderness areas in the States of New Mexico and Nevada; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Ms. WARREN (for herself and Mr. MARKEY):

S. 2355. A bill to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 25 New Chardon Street Lobby in Boston, Massachusetts, as the "John Fitzgerald Kennedy Post Office"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. TESTER (for himself, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. SANDERS, and Mr. MANCHIN):

S. 2356. A bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to address staffing and other issues at facilities, including underserved facilities, of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. TESTER (for himself, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, and Mr. MANCHIN):

S. 2357. A bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to review the processes and requirements of the Department of Veterans Affairs for scheduling appointments for health care and conducting consultations under the laws administered by the Secretary, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. RUBIO (for himself and Mrs. FEINSTEIN):

S. 2358. A bill to require a study on women and lung cancer, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mrs. MCCASKILL:

S. 2359. A bill to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to establish a Joint Re-

quirements Council in the Department of Homeland Security; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Ms. HEITKAMP (for herself, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. BROWN, Mr. KING, and Mr. MARKEY):

S. 2360. A bill to provide for the minimum size of crews of freight trains, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Ms. DUCKWORTH (for herself, Mr. JOHNSON, and Mr. SCOTT):

S. 2361. A bill to amend the Federal Home Loan Bank Act to allow a captive insurance company that was a member of a Federal Home Loan Bank before January 19, 2016 to continue or restore the membership of the captive insurance company in the Federal Home Loan Bank, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. REED:

S. 2362. A bill to amend the Fair Credit Reporting Act to require that a consumer authorize the release of certain information; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Ms. DUCKWORTH (for herself and Mr. DURBIN):

S. 2363. A bill to establish the Creating American Investment, Redevelopment, and Opportunity Task Force; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. BOOZMAN (for himself, Mr. BOOKER, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, and Mr. INHOFE):

S. 2364. A bill to amend the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act of 2014 to provide to State infrastructure financing authorities additional opportunities to receive loans under that Act to support drinking water and clean water State revolving funds to deliver water infrastructure to communities across the United States, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. RUBIO (for himself, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. NELSON, and Mr. CORNYN):

S. 2365. A bill to impose additional sanctions with respect to serious human rights abuses by the Government of Iran, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

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

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

S. Res. 386. A resolution urging the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to fulfill its agreement to hold credible elections, comply with constitutional limits on presidential terms, and fulfill its constitutional mandate for a democratic transition of power by taking concrete and measurable steps towards holding elections not later than December 2018 as outlined in the existing election calendar, and allowing for freedom of expression and association; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Ms. HIRONO (for herself, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. COONS, and Mrs. FEINSTEIN):

S. Res. 387. A resolution recognizing January 30, 2018, as "Fred Korematsu Day of Civil Liberties and the Constitution"; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. BLUMENTHAL (for himself, Mr. BOOKER, Ms. CANTWELL, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. MARKEY,

Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. BROWN, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. SCHATZ, and Mrs. MURRAY):

S. Res. 388. A resolution recognizing January 27, 2018, as the anniversary of the first refugee and Muslim ban, and urging the President to demonstrate true leadership on refugee resettlement; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mrs. FISCHER (for herself and Mr. SASSE):

S. Res. 389. A resolution commemorating the commissioning of the USS Omaha; considered and agreed to.

By Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. CRAPO, and Ms. HIRONO):

S. Res. 390. A resolution raising awareness and encouraging the prevention of stalking by designating January 2018 as "National Stalking Awareness Month"; considered and agreed to.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 116

At the request of Mr. HELLER, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 116, a bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to permit veterans who have a service-connected, permanent disability rated as total to travel on military aircraft in the same manner and to the same extent as retired members of the Armed Forces entitled to such travel.

S. 292

At the request of Mr. REED, the names of the Senator from Utah (Mr. HATCH) and the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) were added as cosponsors of S. 292, a bill to maximize discovery, and accelerate development and availability, of promising childhood cancer treatments, and for other purposes.

S. 363

At the request of Ms. KLOBUCHAR, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. SMITH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 363, a bill to revise the authorized route of the North Country National Scenic Trail in northeastern Minnesota and to extend the trail into Vermont to connect with the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, and for other purposes.

S. 534

At the request of Mrs. FEINSTEIN, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 534, a bill to prevent the sexual abuse of minors and amateur athletes by requiring the prompt reporting of sexual abuse to law enforcement authorities, and for other purposes.

S. 660

At the request of Mr. GARDNER, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. SMITH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 660, a bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 in order to fulfill the Federal mandate to provide higher educational opportunities for Native American Indians.

S. 819

At the request of Mrs. MURRAY, the name of the Senator from Alabama (Mr. JONES) was added as a cosponsor of S. 819, a bill to amend the Fair

Labor Standards Act of 1938 to provide more effective remedies to victims of discrimination in the payment of wages on the basis of sex, and for other purposes.

S. 842

At the request of Mr. BOOKER, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 842, a bill to prohibit Federal agencies and Federal contractors from requesting that an applicant for employment disclose criminal history record information before the applicant has received a conditional offer, and for other purposes.

S. 982

At the request of Mr. CASEY, the name of the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) was added as a cosponsor of S. 982, a bill to amend the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act to require mandatory reporting of incidents of child abuse or neglect, and for other purposes.

S. 1152

At the request of Mr. MERKLEY, the name of the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1152, a bill to create protections for depository institutions that provide financial services to cannabis-related businesses, and for other purposes.

S. 1158

At the request of Mr. NELSON, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. 1158, a bill to help prevent acts of genocide and other atrocity crimes, which threaten national and international security, by enhancing United States Government capacities to prevent, mitigate, and respond to such crises.

S. 1257

At the request of Mr. YOUNG, the name of the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1257, a bill to amend title IV of the Social Security Act to require States to adopt an electronic system to help expedite the placement of children in foster care or guardianship, or for adoption, across State lines, and to provide funding to aid States in developing such a system, and for other purposes.

S. 1509

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1509, a bill to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to authorize an extension of exclusivity periods for certain drugs that are approved for a new indication for a rare disease or condition, and for other purposes.

S. 1754

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the name of the Senator from Alabama (Mr. JONES) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1754, a bill to reauthorize section 340H of the Public Health Service Act to continue to encourage the expansion, maintenance, and establishment of approved graduate medical residency programs at qualified teaching health centers, and for other purposes.

S. 1759

At the request of Ms. HIRONO, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1759, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to extend authorities relating to homeless veterans, and for other purposes.

S. 1909

At the request of Mr. CASEY, the name of the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1909, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to establish a system to educate individuals approaching Medicare eligibility, to simplify and modernize the eligibility enrollment process, and for other purposes.

S. 1947

At the request of Mr. BROWN, the name of the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1947, a bill to improve food safety, to encourage greater production of agricultural commodities for use in the locality of production, to reauthorize and expand Department of Agriculture support of those efforts, and for other purposes.

S. 2107

At the request of Mr. HELLER, the name of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2107, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to require the Under Secretary of Health to report major adverse personnel actions involving certain health care employees to the National Practitioner Data Bank and to applicable State licensing boards, and for other purposes.

S. 2147

At the request of Mr. BROWN, the names of the Senator from Alabama (Mr. JONES) and the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) were added as cosponsors of S. 2147, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to create a Pension Rehabilitation Trust Fund to establish a Pension Rehabilitation Administration within the Department of the Treasury to make loans to multiemployer defined benefit plans, and for other purposes.

S. 2227

At the request of Mr. PORTMAN, the name of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2227, a bill to reauthorize the Money Follows the Person Demonstration Program.

S. 2269

At the request of Mr. CASEY, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2269, a bill to reauthorize the Global Food Security Act of 2016 for 5 additional years.

S. 2278

At the request of Ms. HEITKAMP, the names of the Senator from Alabama (Mr. JONES) and the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING) were added as cosponsors of S. 2278, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide grants to improve health care in rural areas.

At the request of Mr. ROBERTS, the name of the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. SCOTT) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2278, *supra*.

S. 2335

At the request of Mr. ROUNDS, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2335, a bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to issue permits for recreation services on lands managed by Federal agencies, and for other purposes.

S. 2340

At the request of Mr. SCHATZ, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2340, a bill to establish the Federal Labor-Management Partnership Council.

S. 2345

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2345, a bill to amend the DNA Analysis Backlog Elimination Act of 2000 to provide additional resources to State and local prosecutors, and for other purposes.

S. RES. 377

At the request of Ms. WARREN, the name of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 377, a resolution recognizing the importance of paying tribute to those individuals who have faithfully served and retired from the Armed Forces of the United States, designating April 18, 2018, as "Military Retiree Appreciation Day", and encouraging the people of the United States to honor the past and continued service of military retirees to their local communities and the United States.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. REED:

S. 2362. A bill to amend the Fair Credit Reporting Act to require that a consumer authorize the release of certain information; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

Mr. REED. Today, I am introducing the Control Your Personal Credit Information Act, which seeks to give consumers greater control over when and how their consumer reports are shared by consumer reporting agencies.

Under existing law, the current consumer reporting system is backwards. Consumer reporting agencies collect vast amounts of personal information on consumers, often without our knowledge, in order to compile consumer reports. These reports are then shared with financial institutions and others without our consent in all cases.

In the wake of Equifax's failure to secure troves of valuable personally identifiable information it collected on over 145 million Americans, it is clear that this system must change. Indeed, the National Consumer Law Center's

Chi Chi Wu stated in her October 2017 testimony before the House Financial Services Committee that the Equifax breach “means half of the US population and nearly three-quarters of the consumers with active credit reports are now at risk of identity theft due to one of the worst—if not the worst—breaches of consumer data in American history. These Americans are at risk of having false new credit accounts, phony tax returns, and even spurious medical bills incurred in their good names.” To make matters worse, the risks of identity fraud may not dissipate over time because as Ed Mierzwinski, U.S. PIRG’s Federal Consumer Program Director, points out “unlike credit card numbers, your Social Security number and Date of Birth don’t change and may even grow more valuable over time, like gold in a bank vault. Much worse, they are the keys to ‘new account identity theft.’”

My legislation attempts to address these concerns and fix the current upside down system by giving consumers greater control, at no cost to the consumer, over when and how their consumer reports are released when applying for new credit, a loan, or insurance. Under my legislation, consumer reporting agencies must confirm a consumer’s identity and obtain their written authorization before releasing consumer reports in the instances that are especially vulnerable to identity theft and fraud. In addition, my bill requires every consumer reporting agency to take appropriate steps to prevent unauthorized access to the consumer reports and personal information they maintain. These steps are designed to make it tougher for criminals to fraudulently open new credit or insurance accounts in other people’s names.

I urge my colleagues to cosponsor this commonsense legislative effort, and I thank the National Consumer Law Center (on behalf of its low-income clients), U.S. PIRG, Americans for Financial Reform, Public Citizen, Consumer Federation of America, and Consumers Union for their support.

By Mr. BOOZMAN (for himself,
Mr. BOOKER, Mrs. FEINSTEIN,
and Mr. INHOFE):

S. 2364. A bill to amend the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act of 2014 to provide to State infrastructure financing authorities additional opportunities to receive loans under that Act to support drinking water and clean water State revolving funds to deliver water infrastructure to communities across the United States, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, tonight in the State of the Union Address, President Trump will discuss the importance of infrastructure investment. This is an important conversation for the administration to lead because our Nation’s infrastructure is in need of an overhaul. Having the sup-

port of the administration provides us tremendous opportunity to revamp the way we prioritize and fund our Nation’s infrastructure.

As a member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, I understand the importance of infrastructure investment. Since I came to Congress, I have been a constant advocate for increased investment, particularly for our Nation’s water resources. Last Congress, I supported the passage of the Water Infrastructure Improvement for the Nation Act, as well as a comprehensive highway bill, the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act. Passing these pieces of legislation was a major step forward, but only a step in the process. There is still more to be done, and I am looking forward to the opportunity to make critical infrastructure investments this Congress.

Like many Americans, I am encouraged by the President’s commitment to improving our Nation’s crumbling infrastructure. Looking at the example set by President Dwight Eisenhower and the establishment of the Interstate Highway System, it is clear that infrastructure investment boosts our economy, creates immediate jobs, and produces decades of economic prosperity and opportunity.

Unfortunately, since President Eisenhower signed the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956, we have relied on a fix-as-fail approach to our Nation’s infrastructure. Not only is this approach more expensive, increasingly causing delays to commerce, but it also poses a risk to public safety. By ensuring that our roads, bridges, and water systems meet an American standard for excellence, we can save many lives. In water infrastructure funding alone, the United States faces a shortfall of over \$500 billion, which includes drinking water, wastewater, storm water, and water supply projects. This funding shortage is reflected in the American Society of Civil Engineers’ overall grade for America’s infrastructure, which is a D-plus. This is not a rural issue or a big city issue. It is not a red State problem or a blue State problem. This is a national emergency, one where we can find bipartisan support.

We can, and must, work together to provide all Americans with safe and reliable drinking water and effective wastewater and storm water treatment. Access to safe and clean water is critical to the livelihood of every American.

Senator BOOKER and I am introducing commonsense legislation that will revolutionize the way we invest in needed water infrastructure. The Securing Required Funding for Water Infrastructure Now—or SRF WIN—Act takes the best of State revolving funds, SRFs, and combines them with the best of the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act, better known as WIFIA.

The SRF WIN Act creates a significant pot of money within the WIFIA Program that is available only to SRFs. Further, the bill allows State

SRFs to bundle their priority drinking water and wastewater projects together and make a single loan request. This dramatically increases the availability of SRF funding to communities across the Nation while substantially reducing the time and related costs for completing projects.

Because all 50 State SRFs have a triple A bond rating, they have a very low risk of default, less than one-half of 1 percent. This, combined with the leveraging power of WIFIA, has given the SRF WIN Act the leveraging capacity of an incredible 100 to 1, according to technical assistance provided by the EPA’s Office of Water.

Simply put, the SRF WIN Act is a critical component to future water infrastructure financing. With a \$1 billion investment, the U.S. Government will create over \$50 billion in project money.

This is not a handout; this is a loan from the Federal Government to the States that will be paid back over 35 years. The SRF WIN Act gives communities the tools they need to help themselves. Instead of waiting decades for funding, communities will be able to invest in their crumbling water infrastructure now. With 35 years to pay back their loan, ratepayers will avoid harm and not see massive rate spikes.

What the SRF WIN Act does is simple. It combines the efficiency and trust associated with the SRF with the leveraging power of WIFIA. This legislation makes the process easier and more affordable for States and communities to access Federal water infrastructure funding. I encourage my colleagues who support the SRF, WIFIA, and more funding for water infrastructure projects in rural communities and big cities alike to cosponsor the SRF WIN Act.

This has been a monumental effort of bipartisan work. Senator BOOKER and I have been working for months to meet with everyone in the water industry to ensure that our bill helps people all over the country, in communities both big and small. This bill is the result of months of negotiations, taking the best ideas available to ensure this commonsense, bipartisan legislation will work effectively and efficiently, providing billions in project dollars to communities that have traditionally not had access to these types of funds.

I would like to specifically thank the EPA Office of Water, the Council of Infrastructure Financing Authorities, the American Water Works Association, the Water Environment Federation, and the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies for providing us technical assistance to ensure that we preserve the WIFIA and SRF Programs.

The fact is, communities need every possible funding tool at their disposal, and this bill is another great tool that will work with the WIFIA and SRF Programs.

The SRF WIN Act has strong support from rural and municipal water and

wastewater organizations. This landmark legislation also has the support of our Nation's leading construction, engineering, labor, and manufacturing organizations, including the National Rural Water Association, the Council of Infrastructure Financing Authorities, the American Society of Civil Engineers, the Associated General Contractors of America, the American Council of Engineering Companies, the National Association of Clean Water Agencies, Ducks Unlimited, the American Public Works Association, the Rural Community Assistance Partnership, the Water Systems Council, the International Union of Operating Engineers, the Vinyl Institute, the Hydraulic Institute, and the California Association of Sanitation Agencies.

Congress needs to do a better job of providing basic public services, such as safe roads, bridges, and an up-to-date water infrastructure system. This is the time to act to make water infrastructure investment a priority.

With innovative financing and private sector investment, not only will we be providing Americans with basic water infrastructure, but we will also be creating jobs, keeping commodity and utility prices low, and remaining competitive on the global stage.

We can no longer kick the can down the road and ignore our infrastructure problems. It is time for the United States to be realistic about its water problems and start investing in water infrastructure today.

I ask my colleagues to join Senator BOOKER and me in supporting significant new investment in our Nation's water infrastructure and to cosponsor the SRF WIN Act today.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 386—URGING THE GOVERNMENT OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO TO FULFILL ITS AGREEMENT TO HOLD CREDIBLE ELECTIONS, COMPLY WITH CONSTITUTIONAL LIMITS ON PRESIDENTIAL TERMS, AND FULFILL ITS CONSTITUTIONAL MANDATE FOR A DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION OF POWER BY TAKING CONCRETE AND MEASURABLE STEPS TOWARDS HOLDING ELECTIONS NOT LATER THAN DECEMBER 2018 AS OUTLINED IN THE EXISTING ELECTION CALENDAR, AND ALLOWING FOR FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSOCIATION

Mr. FLAKE (for himself and Mr. BOOKER) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 386

Whereas the United States people have a strong relationship with the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and a strong commitment to the principles of democracy and adherence to the rule of law;

Whereas, in 2006, the Government of the DRC adopted a new constitution that limited

the President to two consecutive five-year terms, which for President Joseph Kabila expired on December 19, 2016.

Whereas President Kabila swore to uphold the constitution of the DRC as part of his oath of office;

Whereas the constitutionally required elections have not yet taken place;

Whereas citizens of the Democratic Republic of Congo have repeatedly demanded that their constitutional right to elect a new President after two terms be upheld and that President Kabila must therefore step down;

Whereas, on December 31, 2016, the National Episcopal Conference of Congolese Bishops mediated a political agreement between the ruling coalition and main opposition parties under which President Kabila is prohibited from running for a third term, constitutional changes which would extend the president's time in office are prohibited, and elections were to be held before the end of 2017;

Whereas, on March 31, 2017, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2348, which called for a "swift implementation" of the December 2016 political agreement, including "peaceful, credible, inclusive and timely elections no later than December 2017, leading to a peaceful transition of power";

Whereas, on June 21, 2017, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2360, which stressed "the importance of the DRC and its national partners taking all necessary steps to accelerate preparations for the elections without further delays";

Whereas, on November 5, 2017, the Congolese electoral commission released a calendar that would delay elections until at least December 23, 2018, while noting numerous "constraints" that could impact respect of this calendar;

Whereas the failure to hold constitutionally required elections has increased political uncertainty, violence, and instability inside the DRC, and the United Nations Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator said that amid the political stalemate, "conflict is rapidly spreading across the country and in appalling ways, even in a country blighted by violence and insecurity for decades";

Whereas political space in the DRC continues to be heavily restricted, as evidenced by arrests and detention of members of the political opposition, democratic activists, and journalists, and by restrictions on fundamental freedoms such as speech and assembly; and

Whereas opposition have been targeted, arrested, harassed, and violently attacked by security forces: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) expresses concern that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo failed to hold elections in 2016 as required by the Constitution and later failed to fulfill its political commitment to hold elections in 2017;

(2) expresses concern that the growing security, humanitarian, and human rights crisis in the DRC is exacerbated by the lack of a duly elected leadership;

(3) recognizes that impunity and lack of effective rule of law undermine democracy, and that the arrest and detention of civil society activists and the harassment of political opponents close political space and repress peaceful dissent;

(4) calls on the Government of the DRC to complete concrete steps towards holding elections, including—

(A) issuance of district-level voter registration figures;

(B) completion of any legislation to enable redistricting;

(C) fulfillment of the constitutionally-required step of "calling the electorate";

(D) publication of the final list of presidential and parliamentary candidates; and

(E) holding presidential, parliamentary, and provincial elections by December 23, 2018;

(5) calls on the opposition to take all steps possible within the DRC to support and promote immediate free, fair, and inclusive elections; and

(6) urges the President of the United States, in close coordination with regional and international partners, to—

(A) use appropriate means to provide appropriate electoral assistance to support the organization of credible elections as soon as possible; and

(B) use appropriate means to deter further electoral calendar slippage and abuses against the Congolese people, including consideration of targeted sanctions against high-level DRC officials, including close associates of President Kabila responsible for further delay or impediment to elections or otherwise maintaining President Kabila's rule beyond the constitution's two-term limit should any of the election benchmarks fail to be met.

SENATE RESOLUTION 387—RECOGNIZING JANUARY 30, 2018, AS "FRED KOREMATSU DAY OF CIVIL LIBERTIES AND THE CONSTITUTION"

Ms. HIRONO (for herself, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. COONS, and Mrs. FEINSTEIN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 387

Whereas, on January 30, 1919, Fred Toyosaburo Korematsu was born in Oakland, California, to Japanese immigrants;

Whereas Fred Korematsu graduated from Castlemont High School in 1937 and attempted to enlist in the military twice but was unable to do so because his selective service classification was changed to enemy alien, even though Fred Korematsu was a United States citizen;

Whereas Fred Korematsu trained as a welder and worked as a foreman at the docks in Oakland until the date on which he and all Japanese Americans were fired;

Whereas, on December 7, 1941, Japan attacked the military base in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, causing the United States to declare war against Japan;

Whereas, on February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 (7 Fed. Reg. 1407 (February 25, 1942)), which authorized the Secretary of War to prescribe military areas—

(1) from which any or all people could be excluded; and

(2) with respect to which, the right of any person to enter, remain in, or leave would be subject to any restriction the Military Commander imposed in his discretion;

Whereas, on May 3, 1942, the Lieutenant General of the Western Command of the Army issued Civilian Exclusion Order 34 (May 3, 1942) (referred to in this preamble as the "Civilian Exclusion Order") directing that all people of Japanese ancestry be removed from designated areas of the West Coast after May 9, 1942, because people of Japanese ancestry in the designated areas were considered to pose a threat to national security;

Whereas Fred Korematsu refused to comply with the Civilian Exclusion Order and was arrested on May 30, 1942;

Whereas, after his arrest, Fred Korematsu—

(1) was held for 2½ months in the Presidio stockade in San Francisco, California;

(2) was convicted on September 8, 1942, of violating the Civilian Exclusion Order and sentenced to 5 years of probation; and

(3) was detained at Tanforan Assembly Center, a former horse racetrack used as a holding facility for Japanese Americans before he was exiled with his family to the Topaz incarceration camp in the State of Utah;

Whereas more than 120,000 Japanese Americans were similarly detained, with no charges brought and without due process, in 10 permanent War Relocation Authority camps located in isolated desert areas of the States of Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Idaho, Utah, and Wyoming;

Whereas the people of the United States subject to the Civilian Exclusion Order lost their homes, livelihoods, and the freedoms inherent to all people of the United States;

Whereas Fred Korematsu unsuccessfully challenged the Civilian Exclusion Order as it applied to him and appealed the decision of the United States District Court to the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, which sustained his conviction;

Whereas Fred Korematsu was subsequently confined with his family in the incarceration camp in Topaz, Utah, for 2 years, and during that time, Fred Korematsu appealed his conviction to the Supreme Court of the United States;

Whereas, on December 18, 1944, the Supreme Court of the United States issued *Korematsu v. United States*, 323 U.S. 214 (1944), which—

(1) upheld the conviction of Fred Korematsu by a vote of 6 to 3; and

(2) concluded that Fred Korematsu was removed from his home not based on hostility toward him or other Japanese Americans but because the United States was at war with Japan and the military feared a Japanese invasion of the West Coast;

Whereas, in his dissenting opinion in *Korematsu v. United States*, 323 U.S. 214 (1944), Justice Frank Murphy called the Civilian Exclusion Order the “legalization of racism”;

Whereas Fred Korematsu continued to maintain his innocence for decades following World War II, and his conviction hampered his ability to gain employment;

Whereas, in 1982, legal historian Peter Irons and researcher Aiko Yoshinaga-Herzig gained access to Government documents under section 552 of title 5, United States Code (commonly known as the “Freedom of Information Act”), that indicate that while the case of Fred Korematsu was before the Supreme Court of the United States, the Federal Government misled the Supreme Court of the United States and suppressed findings that Japanese Americans on the West Coast were not security threats;

Whereas, in light of the newly discovered information, Fred Korematsu filed a writ of error coram nobis with the United States District Court for the Northern District of California, and on November 10, 1983, United States District Judge Marilyn Hall Patel issued her decision in *Korematsu v. United States*, 584 F. Supp. 1406 (N.D. Cal. 1984), that—

(1) overturned the conviction of Fred Korematsu;

(2) concluded that, at the time that senior Government officials presented their case before the Supreme Court of the United States in 1944, the senior Government officials knew there was no factual basis for the claim of military necessity for the Civil Exclusion Order; and

(3) stated that although the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States in

Korematsu v. United States, 323 U.S. 214 (1944), remains on the pages of United States legal and political history, “[a]s historical precedent it stands as a constant caution that in times of war or declared military necessity our institutions must be vigilant in protecting constitutional guarantees”;

Whereas the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, authorized by Congress in 1980 to review the facts and circumstances surrounding the relocation and incarceration of Japanese Americans under Executive Order 9066 (7 Fed. Reg. 1407 (February 25, 1942)), concluded that—

(1) the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States in *Korematsu v. United States*, 323 U.S. 214 (1944), is overruled by the court of history;

(2) a grave personal injustice was done to the United States citizens and resident aliens of Japanese ancestry who, without individual review or any probative evidence against them, were excluded, removed, and detained by the United States during World War II; and

(3) the exclusion, removal, and detention of United States citizens and resident aliens of Japanese ancestry was motivated largely by “racial prejudice, wartime hysteria, and a failure of political leadership”;

Whereas the overturning of the conviction of Fred Korematsu and the findings of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians influenced the decision by Congress to pass the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 (50 U.S.C. 4211 et seq.) to request a Presidential apology and the symbolic payment of compensation to people of Japanese ancestry who lost liberty or property due to discriminatory actions of the Federal Government;

Whereas, on August 10, 1988, President Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 (50 U.S.C. 4211 et seq.), stating, “[H]ere we admit a wrong; here we reaffirm our commitment as a nation to equal justice under the law.”;

Whereas, on January 15, 1998, President Clinton awarded the Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian award of the United States, to Fred Korematsu, stating, “[i]n the long history of our country’s constant search for justice, some names of ordinary citizens stand for millions of souls: Plessy, Brown, Parks. To that distinguished list, today we add the name of Fred Korematsu.”;

Whereas Fred Korematsu remained a tireless advocate for civil liberties and justice throughout his life by—

(1) speaking out against racial discrimination and violence; and

(2) cautioning the Federal Government against repeating mistakes of the past that singled out individuals for heightened scrutiny on the basis of race, ethnicity, nationality, or religion;

Whereas, on March 30, 2005, Fred Korematsu died at the age of 86 in Marin County, California; and

Whereas Fred Korematsu is a role model for all people of the United States who love the United States and the promises contained in the Constitution of the United States, and the strength and perseverance of Fred Korematsu serve as an inspiration for all people who strive for equality and justice: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) honors Fred Toyosaburo Korematsu for his—

(A) loyalty and patriotism to the United States;

(B) work to advance the civil rights and civil liberties of all people of the United States; and

(C) dedication to justice and equality;

(2) recognizes January 30, 2018, as “Fred Korematsu Day of Civil Liberties and the Constitution”;

(3) denounces any effort to discriminate against any individual based on the national origin or religion of the individual.

SENATE RESOLUTION 388—RECOGNIZING JANUARY 27, 2018, AS THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST REFUGEE AND MUSLIM BAN, AND URGING THE PRESIDENT TO DEMONSTRATE TRUE LEADERSHIP ON REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

Mr. BLUMENTHAL (for himself, Mr. BOOKER, Ms. CANTWELL, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. BROWN, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. SCHATZ, and Mrs. MURRAY) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 388

Whereas the world is in the midst of the worst global displacement crisis in history, with more than 22,500,000 refugees worldwide, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates;

Whereas, in fiscal year 2017, UNHCR projected that more than 1,200,000 refugees were in need of resettlement to a third country, and this projection continues to grow in 2018;

Whereas the United States resettlement program is a life-saving solution critical to global humanitarian efforts, which serves to strengthen global security, leverage United States foreign policy goals, and support regional host countries while serving individuals and families in need;

Whereas, for over 40 years, the United States has resettled up to 200,000 refugees per year, with an average ceiling of 95,000 refugees per year, and on average actually resettled 80,000 refugees per year;

Whereas refugees are the most vetted travelers to enter the United States and are subject to extensive screening checks, including in person interviews, biometric data checks, and multiple interagency checks;

Whereas, it would be an abdication of United States leadership to resettle fewer than 75,000 refugees next fiscal year;

Whereas the United States refugee resettlement system emphasizes early self-sufficiency through employment, and most adult refugees are employed within their first six months of arriving to the United States;

Whereas refugees contribute to their communities by starting businesses, paying taxes, sharing their cultural traditions, and being involved in their neighborhoods, and reports have found that refugees contribute more than they consume in state-funded services – including for schooling and health care;

Whereas, on January 27, 2017, President Donald J. Trump released an executive order banning individuals from seven Muslim-majority countries and all refugees from entering the country;

Whereas, since that time, the President has taken further executive action to ban people from Muslim-majority countries and has taken steps to dismantle the United States refugee program;

Whereas, in September 2017, President Trump announced a Presidential Determination of 45,000 for fiscal year 2018, the lowest refugee admissions ceiling ever set;

Whereas, during the first three months of fiscal year 2018, the United States welcomed a total of 5,323 refugees, in spite of the fact that to meet the 45,000 ceiling, 11,250 individuals should have arrived during this time period;

Whereas, at this pace, the United States may only admit between 15,000-20,000 refugees this year; and

Whereas, United States structures and funding constrictions have resulted in lowered capacity and loss of institutional memory and experience in the successful United States Refugee Admissions Program: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) reaffirms our country's proud history of refugee resettlement;

(2) recognizes January 27, 2018, as the anniversary of the first refugee and Muslim ban;

(3) reaffirms the strong bipartisan commitment of the United States to promote the safety, health, and well-being of the millions of refugees;

(4) underscores the importance of the United States Refugee Resettlement Program as a critical tool for United States global leadership;

(5) recognizes the profound consequences faced by refugees and their families who have been stranded, separated, and scarred by current United States policies, leaving many mid-process and more with little hope of anticipated United States entry; and

(6) calls upon the United States Government—

(A) to resettle 45,000 refugees in fiscal year 2018;

(B) to resettle at least 75,000 refugees in fiscal year 2019;

(C) to uphold its international leadership role in responding to displacement crises with humanitarian assistance and protection of the most vulnerable populations; and

(D) to recommit to offering freedom from oppression and resettling the most vulnerable refugees regardless of their country of origin or religious beliefs.

SENATE RESOLUTION 389—COMMEMORATING THE COMMISSIONING OF THE USS “OMAHA”

Mrs. FISCHER (for herself and Mr. SASSE) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 389

Whereas the great city of Omaha, Nebraska, was founded on July 4, 1854;

Whereas the Lone Tree Ferry bringing pioneers across the Missouri River into Omaha caused Omaha to become known as the “Gateway to the West”; and

Whereas Nebraska is the only triply landlocked State in the Union;

Whereas the first USS *Omaha* was a screw sloop launched in 1869, 2 years after Nebraska became a State on March 1, 1867;

Whereas the second USS *Omaha* (CL-4) was an *Omaha* class light cruiser commissioned on February 24, 1923;

Whereas the USS *Omaha* (CL-4) served in both the Pacific and Atlantic theaters and captured a German blockade runner a month before World War II officially began;

Whereas the Nebraska Admirals Association, formed in 1931, has had thousands of Admirals commissioned in the Nebraska Navy to promote “The Good Life”; and

Whereas the Big Red Sub Club—

(1) was formed to support the crews of the USS *Nebraska* (SSBN-739); and

(2) is the most active State organization supporting the submarine fleet of the United States;

Whereas the Navy League of the United States, Nebraska Council, strongly supports a strong United States Navy for national security;

Whereas on June 11, 2012, Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus announced that an *Inde-*

pendence class littoral combat ship would be named the United States Ship *Omaha*;

Whereas on November 20, 2015, the United States Navy launched the USS *Omaha*;

Whereas on December 19, 2015, the USS *Omaha* was christened in Mobile, Alabama, sponsored by Omaha philanthropist Susie Buffett; and

Whereas on February 3, 2018, the USS *Omaha* will be commissioned: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate commemorates—

(1) the commissioning of the United States Ship *Omaha* (LCS-12); and

(2) the mission of the USS *Omaha* as a networked, agile, stealthy surface combatant capable of defeating antiaccess and asymmetric threats in the littorals.

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I rise this evening to call up and pass a resolution recognizing the commissioning of the USS *Omaha*.

This weekend, the USS *Omaha* is scheduled to be commissioned in the United States Navy as one of our newest *Independence* Class Littoral Combat Ships.

As the only triply landlocked State in the union, you may not think of Nebraska when you think about the world's oceans.

And while we are proud of our heartland heritage, we are equally proud of the ships that have carried the name “USS *Omaha*” to the far corners of the globe.

Just two years after Nebraska became a State, the USS *Omaha*, a screw sloop, was launched in 1869, helping to grow our young Nation's navy.

The second USS *Omaha*, launched in 1923, served with distinction in World War II, capturing a German blockade runner a month before the war officially began.

And now this upcoming weekend, we welcome the newest USS *Omaha*, LCS-12, which carries the distinction of being among our Nation's newest Littoral Combat Ships.

She will enter the navy as an agile surface combatant, and one which I know will prove to be a capable tool in our Nation's naval arsenal.

Though Nebraska may be far from open water that has not stopped countless men and women from our State from answering the call to serve in the United States Navy.

Their service and sacrifice, both in times of war and peace, have helped ensure that the United States continues to enjoy freedom of navigation around the world.

For that reason, I am honored to know that now we will once again have another USS *Omaha* carrying on this proud tradition, and urge my colleagues to join me in recognizing this momentous occasion.

To the crew of the USS *Omaha*, I wish you well in your mission and all the years of distinguished service to come.

May you enjoy fair winds and following seas, and know that you have the best wishes of the State of Nebraska behind you.

Thank you Mr. President. I yield the floor.

SENATE RESOLUTION 390—RAISING AWARENESS AND ENCOURAGING THE PREVENTION OF STALKING BY DESIGNATING JANUARY 2018 AS “NATIONAL STALKING AWARENESS MONTH”

Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. CRAPO, and Ms. HIRONO) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 390

Whereas approximately 16 percent of women in the United States, at some point during their lifetimes, have experienced stalking victimization, during which the women felt very fearful or believed that they or someone close to them would be harmed or killed;

Whereas, during a 1-year period, an estimated 7,300,000 individuals in the United States reported that they had been victims of stalking;

Whereas more than 80 percent of victims of stalking reported that they had been stalked by someone they knew;

Whereas nearly 70 percent of stalking victims were threatened with physical harm by stalkers;

Whereas 11 percent of victims of stalking reported having been stalked for more than 5 years;

Whereas two-thirds of stalkers pursue their victims at least once a week;

Whereas many victims of stalking are forced to take drastic measures to protect themselves, including changing their identities, relocating, changing jobs, or obtaining protection orders;

Whereas the prevalence of anxiety, insomnia, social dysfunction, and severe depression is much higher among victims of stalking than the general population;

Whereas many victims of stalking do not report stalking to the police or contact a victim service provider, shelter, or hotline;

Whereas stalking is a crime under Federal law and the laws of all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the territories of the United States;

Whereas stalking affects victims of every race, age, culture, gender, sexual orientation, physical and mental ability, and economic status;

Whereas national organizations, local victim service organizations, campuses, prosecutor's offices, and police departments stand ready to assist victims of stalking and are working diligently to develop effective and innovative responses to stalking;

Whereas there is a need to improve the response of the criminal justice system to stalking through more aggressive investigation and prosecution;

Whereas there is a need for an increase in the availability of victim services across the United States, and the services must include programs tailored to meet the needs of victims of stalking;

Whereas individuals 18 to 24 years old experience the highest rates of stalking victimization, and rates of stalking among college students exceed rates of stalking among the general population;

Whereas up to 75 percent of women in college who experience behavior relating to stalking experience other forms of victimization, including sexual or physical victimization;

Whereas there is a need for an effective response to stalking on each campus; and

Whereas the Senate finds that “National Stalking Awareness Month” provides an opportunity to educate the people of the United States about stalking: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates January 2018 as “National Stalking Awareness Month”;

(2) applauds the efforts of service providers for victims of stalking, police, prosecutors, national and community organizations, campuses, and private sector supporters to promote awareness of stalking;

(3) encourages policymakers, criminal justice officials, victim service and human service agencies, institutions of higher education, and nonprofit organizations to increase awareness of stalking and the availability of services for victims of stalking; and

(4) urges national and community organizations, businesses in the private sector, and the media to promote awareness of the crime of stalking through “National Stalking Awareness Month”.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I have 11 requests for committees to meet during today’s session of the Senate. They have the approval of the Majority and Minority leaders.

Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committees are authorized to meet during today’s session of the Senate:

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The Committee on Armed Services is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, January 30, 2018, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing entitled “Korean Peninsula and United States strategy in the Indo-Pacific region.”

COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING AND URBAN AFFAIRS

The Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, January 30, 2018, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing entitled “The Financial Stability Oversight Council annual report to Congress.”

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

The Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, January 30, 2018, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing entitled “Growing the Future: Opportunities to Support domestic Seafood Through Aquaculture.”

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

The Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, January 30, 2018, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing entitled “One Year Later: The American Innovation and Competitiveness Act.”

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, January 30, 2018, at 10 a.m. to conduct a hearing on subcommittee assignments and the following nominations: Melissa F. Burnison, of Ken-

tucky, to be an Assistant Secretary of Energy (Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs), Susan Combs, of Texas, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior, Ryan Douglas Nelson, of Idaho, to be Solicitor of the Department of the Interior, and Anne Marie White, of Michigan, to be an Assistant Secretary of Energy (Environmental Management).

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, January 30, 2018, at 10 a.m. to conduct a hearing entitled “The role of the Geological Survey and the Forest Service in preparing for and responding to natural hazard events, as well as the current status of mapping and monitoring systems.

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, January 30, 2018, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing entitled “Oversight Hearing to Receive Testimony from the Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt.”

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Committee on Foreign Relations is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, January 30, 2018, at 2:30 p.m. to conduct a hearing entitled “The Economic Relationship between the United States, Canada, and Mexico.”

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

The Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, January 30, 2018, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing entitled “Reauthorizing the Higher Education Act: Access and Innovation.”

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

The Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, January 30, 2018, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a hearing entitled “Roundtable on Small Business Health Plans.”

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

The Select Committee on Intelligence is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, January 30, 2018, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a closed hearing.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at 5 p.m. on Monday, February 5, the Senate proceed to executive session for the consideration of the following nomination: Executive Calendar No. 570. I ask consent that there then be 30 minutes of debate, equally divided in the usual form, and that following the use or

yielding back of time, the Senate vote on the nomination with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate’s action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nomination be printed in the RECORD.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session for the consideration of the following nomination: Executive Calendar No. 297.

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

The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Matthew Bassett, of Tennessee, to be an Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nomination.

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

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

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

The nomination was confirmed.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of Executive Calendar Nos. 649 through 660 and all nominations placed on the Secretary’s desk, and that the nominations be confirmed, 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; 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.

The nominations considered and confirmed are as follows:

IN THE ARMY

The following named officer 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., section 601:

To be lieutenant general

Maj. Gen. Scott D. Berrier

IN THE AIR FORCE

The following named officer for appointment as the Deputy Judge Advocate General of the Air Force and appointment in the United States Air Force to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 8037:

To be major general

Brig. Gen. Charles L. Plummer

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Air Force to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 8081:

To be brigadier general

Col. Sharon R. Bannister

The following named officer for appointment as the Judge Advocate General, United States Air Force and for appointment in the United States Air Force to the grade indicated while serving as the Judge Advocate General under title 10, U.S.C., sections 601 and 8037:

To be lieutenant general

Maj. Gen. Jeffery A. Rockwell

IN THE ARMY

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

Col. Anthony R. Hale

Col. Garrick M. Harmon

The following named officer 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., section 601:

To be lieutenant general

Maj. Gen. Eric J. Wesley

The following named officer 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., section 601:

To be lieutenant general

Maj. Gen. Theodore D. Martin

The following named officer for appointment in the Reserve of the Army to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 12203:

To be brigadier general

Col. Susie S. Kuilan

The following named officer 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., section 601:

To be lieutenant general

Maj. Gen. Leslie C. Smith

IN THE NAVY

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Navy to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be vice admiral

Rear Adm. (lh) Johnny R. Wolfe, Jr.

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Navy to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 624:

To be rear admiral (lower half)

Capt. John C. Ring

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Navy to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 624:

To be rear admiral

Rear Adm. (lh) Scott D. Conn

NOMINATIONS PLACED ON THE SECRETARY'S DESK

IN THE AIR FORCE

PN1233 AIR FORCE nominations (35) beginning SARAH E. ABEL, and ending

MICHELLE E. WYCHE, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 14, 2017.

PN1321 AIR FORCE nominations (2) beginning BRETT L. HEDGEPEETH, and ending RYAN M. YI, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of December 11, 2017.

PN1322 AIR FORCE nominations (2) beginning JOANNA K. KOWALIK, and ending MAHASIN M. HANGALAY, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of December 11, 2017.

PN1427 AIR FORCE nominations (19) beginning TRISH M. ARNO, and ending CHRISTOPHER N. WHITE, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 8, 2018.

PN1460 AIR FORCE nominations (8) beginning JIN HWA LEE FRAZIER, and ending JACK DAVID SPENCER, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 18, 2018.

PN1461 AIR FORCE nominations (12) beginning COREY L. ANDERSON, and ending ROBERT K. TALTON, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 18, 2018.

PN1462 AIR FORCE nomination of Michael C. Maine, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 18, 2018.

PN1463 AIR FORCE nominations (4) beginning MELISSA A. DAY, and ending ROBERTA J. STEMEM, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 18, 2018.

PN1464 AIR FORCE nominations (8) beginning MATTHEW M. BIRD, and ending PAUL KELLEY STROUD, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 18, 2018.

PN1465 AIR FORCE nominations (4) beginning HOLLY L. BREWER, and ending MARIO TOMMASI, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 18, 2018.

PN1466 AIR FORCE nominations (119) beginning JOHN G. ANDRADE, and ending LAWRENCE P. WOOD, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 18, 2018.

PN1467 AIR FORCE nomination of Joshua M. Kovich, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 18, 2018.

PN1468 AIR FORCE nominations (4) beginning DAVID M. DERSCH, JR., and ending PATRICK J. TRAVERS, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 18, 2018.

PN1469 AIR FORCE nominations (5) beginning LANCE J. KIM, and ending SONIA W. S. TAOYI, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 18, 2018.

PN1470 AIR FORCE nomination of David L. Wells, II, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 18, 2018.

IN THE ARMY

PN1323 ARMY nomination of Aleksandr Gutman, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of December 11, 2017.

PN1428 ARMY nomination of Robert L. Ozburn, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 8, 2018.

PN1471 ARMY nomination of Jocelyn A. Leventhal, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 18, 2018.

PN1472 ARMY nominations (14) beginning ALYSSA S. ADAMS, and ending BRADLEY

O. WOOD, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 18, 2018.

PN1473 ARMY nominations (2) beginning KENNETH S. KATROSH, and ending DOLLY R. LIVINGSTON, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 18, 2018.

PN1474 ARMY nominations (2) beginning JOSEPH KLOIBER, and ending PAUL NAVAS, III, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 18, 2018.

PN1475 ARMY nomination of Erick C. Crews, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 18, 2018.

PN1476 ARMY nominations (3) beginning MICHAEL C. BRADWICK, and ending DOUGLAS S. YOON, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 18, 2018.

PN1477 ARMY nominations (5) beginning ZACHARY T. BUSENBARK, and ending JAIME A. SANJUAN RUBIO, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 18, 2018.

PN1478 ARMY nominations (2) beginning GABBY V. CANCERAN, and ending JOHN P. CROSS, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 18, 2018.

PN1479 ARMY nomination of Adam T. Soto, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 18, 2018.

PN1480 ARMY nomination of Philip J. Dacunto, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 18, 2018.

PN1481 ARMY nomination of Lyle A. Ourada, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 18, 2018.

PN1482 ARMY nomination of Sherry M. Kwon, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 18, 2018.

IN THE FOREIGN SERVICE

PN1433 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (6) beginning Marc Clayton Gilkey, and ending Mark A. Myers, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 8, 2018.

PN1434 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (90) beginning Alyce S. Ahn, and ending Michele D. Woonacott, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 8, 2018.

PN1435 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (118) beginning Priya U. Amin, and ending Erik Z. Zahnen, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 8, 2018.

PN1436 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (93) beginning Angela P. Aggeler, and ending Mari Jain Womack, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 8, 2018.

IN THE MARINE CORPS

PN1431 MARINE CORPS nomination of Christopher N. Earley, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 8, 2018.

PN1487 MARINE CORPS nominations (4) beginning WILLIAM DOCTOR, JR., and ending SCOTT E. VASQUEZ, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 18, 2018.

PN1490 MARINE CORPS nominations (2) beginning PAULO T. ALVES, and ending PATRICK J. TOAL, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 18, 2018.

PN1492 MARINE CORPS nomination of Henry W. Soukup, which was received by the

Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 18, 2018.

PN1493 MARINE CORPS nomination of William W. Inns, III, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 18, 2018.

PN1496 MARINE CORPS nomination of Craig A. Elliott, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 18, 2018.

PN1497 MARINE CORPS nominations (3) beginning BILL W. BROOKS, JR., and ending KYLE L. HOLLIS, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 18, 2018.

PN1498 MARINE CORPS nominations (734) beginning EDWARD J. ABMA, and ending JOSEPH A. ZIMMERMAN, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 18, 2018.

PN1499 MARINE CORPS nominations (23) beginning JUSTIN R. ANDERSON, and ending MICHAEL D. WILCOX, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 18, 2018.

PN1500 MARINE CORPS nomination of Steven P. Hulse, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 18, 2018.

IN THE NAVY

PN1244 NAVY nominations (2) beginning PAUL F. MAGOULICK, and ending LI SUNG, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 14, 2017.

PN1303 NAVY nomination of Nicholas H. Steging, Jr., which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of December 1, 2017.

PN1304 NAVY nomination of Jonathan S. Durham, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of December 1, 2017.

PN1324 NAVY nominations (3) beginning LAURA C. GILSTRAP, and ending DIANA TRANYU, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of December 11, 2017.

PN1429 NAVY nomination of Todd D. Husty, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 8, 2018.

PN1430 NAVY nomination of Dawn M. Stankus, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 8, 2018.

PN1485 NAVY nomination of Paul I. Ahn, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 18, 2018.

PN1486 NAVY nomination of Allen G. Gunn, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 18, 2018.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now resume legislative session.

PROTECTING YOUNG VICTIMS FROM SEXUAL ABUSE AND SAFE SPORT AUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2017

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask the Chair to lay before the Senate the message to accompany S. 534.

The Presiding Officer laid before the Senate the following message from the House of Representatives:

Resolved, That the bill from the Senate (S. 534) entitled "An Act to prevent the sexual

abuse of minors and amateur athletes by requiring the prompt reporting of sexual abuse to law enforcement authorities, and for other purposes," do pass with an amendment.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, nearly a year ago, I met with six gymnasts. All of these young women were world-class athletes. All of them had put their faith in USA Gymnastics. And all of them were sexually abused by an adult who had earned their trust.

It was one of the most difficult meetings I have held as a Senator. Listening to their stories of abuse and how the system let them down left me with equal parts sadness and rage.

These young women weren't telling me their stories to get legislation passed, but that afternoon, I promised them I would do all I could to make sure no one else ever experienced the agony that they had.

I am proud that the Senate will come together and pass the Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act in order to send it to the President's desk.

This bill is intended to protect young athletes who participate in amateur sports from the sexual abuse that these gymnasts had to suffer.

In the House, Representative SUSAN BROOKS from Indiana and Representative LOIS FRANKEL from Florida, who cochair the Women's Caucus, partnered with us on this bill. They have been strong champions in protecting young women from abuse.

This bill wouldn't have been possible without the courageous survivors who shared their stories.

Some of the same women who I spoke with in February came back to Washington in March to speak about the bill. It was a very powerful hearing that touched many of us.

One of those brave women was Jamie Dantzscher, who won a bronze medal in 2000.

Jamie told the Judiciary Committee in moving testimony that she fell in love with gymnastics at a very young age. Her parents had to beg her to leave the gym after practice because gymnastics brought her such joy.

While she competed with the national team led by USA Gymnastics, team doctor Larry Nassar was assigned to provide her with medical treatment.

As any young woman would, Jamie put her faith in Nassar, who was employed by USA Gymnastics, but her faith was turned on its head in horrifying ways. In Jamie's words: "What I have only recently come to understand is that the medical treatment he performed for my back pain and other injuries was sexual assault. Dr. Nassar abused me at the USA National Training Center in Texas. He abused me in California and at meets all over the world. Many times the abuse took place in my own room, in my own bed. Worse, he abused me in my hotel room in Sydney at the Olympic Games."

Jamie went on: "When I first spoke out about my abuse at the hands of Dr.

Nassar, I thought I was the only one. I was disbelieved and even criticized by some in the gymnastics community for bringing this disturbing issue to light."

It is impossible to imagine the horror that Jamie felt, but what we do know is that Jamie wasn't the only victim.

Jessica Howard was a 15-year-old rhythmic gymnast when Nassar began abusing her. She testified that her first few years of training were "pure bliss." Eventually, she was sent to Nassar for hip problems. Nassar told her she shouldn't wear underwear for her treatments.

Jessica was confused, but she was fearful to say anything to anyone. She believed she would be prevented from pursuing her dreams if she said anything. This is how so much of this abuse was conducted, under a shroud of fear that the athletes' dreams would be quashed.

Later in her life, Jessica served on USA Gymnastics' board of directors. In Jessica's words: "As an adult, I spent years serving on the USA Gymnastics Board of Directors with a mission of protecting children in my sport from the psychological abuse that I endured. But the meetings seemed to revolve around two things: money and medals. When a sexual abuse case came up during my time on the board, the concern was about the reputation of the coach, not the accusation of the athlete. As I have attempted to come to terms with what happened to me as a teenager, it has become glaringly obvious that USA Gymnastics has not done nearly enough to protect athletes from any form of abuse."

Jessica and others like her were silenced by a culture of complicity where those in power refused to promote a safe environment and survivors could report abuse. That is what the bill we will pass aims to change.

Finally, I would like to talk about another gymnast we heard from more recently. Aly Raisman, one of the most decorated Olympic gymnasts ever, revealed that she, too, was sexually abused by Larry Nassar, starting when she was 15 years old.

As Aly said, "I didn't know anything differently. We were told he is the best doctor."

As a result, Nassar used this trust to manipulate hundreds of victims so they couldn't fully understand that they were being abused.

When telling her story, Aly asked, "Why are we looking at why didn't the girls speak up? Why not look at what about the culture? What did USA Gymnastics do, and Larry Nassar do, to manipulate these girls so much that they are so afraid to speak up? I am angry."

I think we should all be angry by what we have heard from these brave young women. When I heard these stories, I found a common theme: The very institutions tasked with protecting these athletes allowed this egregious conduct to occur.

In my view, these governing bodies were, at best, complicit in the devastation wrought on these young children

and their families. They did far too little to prevent abuse from happening in the first place, and when they saw signs of abuse, they did little to stop it.

In fact, USA Gymnastics, which oversees more than 3,000 gymnasiums nationwide, had bylaws that actually made it more difficult for survivors to report abuse.

For example, the only way for a member athlete to “effectively” make a complaint about a coach was through a signed, written complaint. Not only is this an ineffective way to prevent sexual abuse, it actually serves to protect the abusers by making it harder for child victims to come forward.

USA Gymnastics didn’t even require that sexual abuse be reported to law enforcement when it was discovered. It was a disgusting abuse of power, to say the least.

After we introduced our legislation, USA Gymnastics hired former Federal prosecutor Deborah Daniels to conduct an independent review of USA Gymnastics’ policies and procedures. Needless to say, they were found to be woefully ineffective and insufficient. After reviewing documents and interviewing nearly 160 individuals, Daniels recommended nearly 70 policy changes, including a recommendation that USA Gymnastics “undergo a complete cultural change, permeating the entire organization and communicated to the field in all its actions.”

In one damning finding, Daniels stated, “The overall impression received externally is that the athlete protection function is, at best, secondary to the primary focus: winning medals.” That is completely unacceptable.

The legislation we will soon pass does three main things to help protect sex abuse victims and reform institutions like USA Gymnastics.

First, the bill makes it mandatory for anyone affiliated with USA Gymnastics, or any other national governing body or amateur sports organization that crosses State lines, to immediately report sexual abuse to local and Federal law enforcement or social services agencies. This requirement would apply to USA Gymnastics and each of the other 47 national governing bodies that oversee a variety of Olympic sports, including USA Taekwondo, USA Speed Skating, USA Swimming, and USA Cycling. It is absolutely imperative that a firm line be drawn for everyone working with national governing bodies and amateur sports organizations. Once there is suspicion of abuse, a report must be made as soon as possible to law enforcement. This bill mandates that.

Second, the bill strengthens the law that allows victims of sex abuse to file suits against those who abused them to commit crimes such as sex trafficking, sexual exploitation, and child pornography. It clarifies, for example, that victims of child sex crimes are entitled to statutory damages of \$150,000, as well as punitive damages, due to the heinous nature of the crimes.

The bill also extends the statute of limitations so that victims can sue their abusers 10 years after they become aware of their abuse. This is important because, tragically, survivors often do not fully become aware of their abuse until later in life. The statute of limitations extension is part of legislation that Senator CORNYN and I have worked on over the past couple of years, called the Extending Justice for Sex Crime Victims Act.

Third, the bill makes reforms to the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act, which establishes “national governing bodies” like USA Gymnastics. When I first contacted USA Gymnastics about its poor handling of sexual abuse allegations, the group cited the Stevens Act as a shield, saying that it prevented them from doing more to protect athletes from sexual abuse. The bill we are passing is a direct response to that claim.

It requires the newly created U.S. Center for Safe Sport—championed by Commerce Committee Chairman JOHN THUNE and Ranking Member BILL NELSON—to establish strict policies and procedures for handling abuse allegations, as well as oversight procedures to make sure these policies are adhered to by every national governing body.

The reforms in the bill ensure that national governing bodies and amateur sports organizations will adopt five baseline policy prescriptions.

First, specific policies and procedures for mandatory reporting of sex abuse to law enforcement. Second, policies and procedures to keep track of coaches who leave one gym only to repeat the cycle of abuse at another gym. Third, policies to avoid circumstances where minors and adults are in one-on-one situations. Fourth, policies to facilitate reporting of sex abuse allegations to national governing bodies and other authorities. And fifth, stronger oversight and enforcement policies so that complaints are dealt with uniformly and with fairness and due process.

These new provisions give national governing bodies like USA Gymnastics no excuse not to prevent abuse or to report it when it occurs.

All over the country, survivors of sexual abuse are coming forward to tell their stories of abuse and exploitation. Multiple survivors from around the country have contacted my office and described with great courage their pain and anguish. Each of these stories represents an untold amount of pain and suffering that has generational ripple effects. It is absolutely devastating.

This is why I am so encouraged that my colleagues in this body will soon pass this important legislation to protect abuse victims.

I would also like to acknowledge the list of 270 organizations and individuals who have contributed to and supported this bill. Their names are listed on our website.

I would also like to recognize my staff who have worked on this bill, in-

cluding Peter Hyun, Ashley Schapitl, Sarah Chang, Matthew Halek, Jennifer Duck, and Tom Mentzer.

I would also like to thank Peter Feldman and Ashok Pinto from Senator THUNE’s staff, Christian Fjeld and Ioana Gorecki from Senator NELSON’s staff, Evelyn Fortier and Kyle McCollum from Senator GRASSLEY’s staff, Rob Hicks from Representative SUSAN BROOKS’ staff, Meg Barr from House Judiciary Chairman BOB GOODLATTE’s office, and Yana Mayayeva from Representative LOIS FRANKEL’s staff.

Finally, I would like to recognize two individuals who recently passed away. Both were fierce advocates on behalf of survivors of abuse.

Barbara Blaine, who founded SNAP, the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, passed away in Utah, and Kristine Ward, the cofounder of National Survivor Advocates Coalition, passed away in Ohio. Both of these extraordinary women spent much of their lives giving a powerful voice to those who have been sexually abused.

This bill attempts to do what both women so powerfully advocated for throughout their lives: speak for the voiceless and demand the change necessary to protect our children, our most precious resource.

Thank you very much.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I want to take a moment to discuss the Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse Act. This legislation, which Senator FEINSTEIN sponsored and I cosponsored, would promote mandatory reporting of suspected abuse of young athletes and give survivors new tools to hold perpetrators accountable.

As Senate Judiciary chairman, I last year convened a hearing on this legislation, which helped build momentum for its committee approval and passage. I am proud to have helped shepherd this bill through our committee and the Senate, and I am delighted that we are about to send this bill to the President for his signature.

Our congressional hearing illustrated just how bad the problem of sexual abuse in youth sports has become, how long it went on, how many athletes were affected, and, in some cases, how slow the response was from those charged with ensuring these young athletes’ safety. To say that I was alarmed by what we learned at that March 28 hearing would be a huge understatement.

Abuse that occurs by someone in a position of trust, in what should be a safe environment, such as youth athletics programs, is simply outrageous. Sadly, however, sports officials adopted policies that may have allowed predators to victimize children long after they had good reason to suspect sexual abuse.

Recently, we have heard reports that gymnastics officials took as long as 5 weeks to report suspected abuse to the FBI. We have also heard allegations that gymnasts were pressured to remain silent after they brought the

abuse to gymnastics officials' attention. It is imperative that we uncover whatever systemic failures that allowed a predator to singlehandedly target hundreds of girls and young women for so long.

Sexual abuse is a heinous crime, so we must continue to seek justice for these victims. We also need to understand why allegations of sexual abuse so often remain hidden, instead of being immediately reported to law enforcement. The average perpetrator strikes multiple times before being caught, which is why it is so important that these crimes be promptly reported and investigated. I intend to continue to do oversight in this area and champion policies to protect the innocent from sexual abuse.

I thank each of the athletes who came forward to report abuse. Their courage helped make passage of this bill possible.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I move to concur in the House amendment, and I know of no further debate on the motion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

If not, the question is on agreeing to the motion to concur.

The motion was agreed to.

Mr. MCCONNELL. 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.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY BLUE CAMPAIGN AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 4708, which was received from the House.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4708) to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to require the Secretary of Homeland Security to issue Department of Homeland Security-wide guidance and develop training programs as part of the Department of Homeland Security Blue Campaign, 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 considered read a third time.

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

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. I know of no further debate on the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

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

The bill (H.R. 4708) was passed.

Mr. MCCONNELL. 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.

COMMEMORATING THE COMMISSIONING OF THE USS "OMAHA"

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 389, submitted earlier today.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 389) commemorating the commissioning of the USS *Omaha*.

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

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

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

The resolution (S. Res. 389) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

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

NATIONAL STALKING AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. Res. 390, submitted earlier today.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 390) raising awareness and encouraging the prevention of stalking by designating January 2018 as "National Stalking Awareness Month."

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

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

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

The resolution (S. Res. 390) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

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

ORDER FOR RECESS AND ORDERS FOR FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2018, AND MONDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2018

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Sen-

ate recess until 8:25 p.m. tonight and, upon reconvening, proceed as a body to the Hall of the House of Representatives for the joint session of Congress provided under the provisions of H. Con. Res. 101; that upon dissolution of the joint session, the Senate adjourn to then convene for a pro forma session only, with no business being conducted, on Friday, February 2, at 11 a.m.; that following the pro forma session, the Senate adjourn until Monday, February 5, at 3 p.m.; 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; finally, that following leader remarks, the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 8:25 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 4:33 p.m., recessed until 8:25 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. TILLIS).

JOINT SESSION OF THE TWO HOUSES—ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed as a body to the Hall of the House of Representatives to receive a message from the President of the United States.

Thereupon, the Senate, preceded by the Deputy Sergeant at Arms, James Morhard; the Secretary of the Senate, Julie E. Adams; and the Vice President of the United States, Michael R. Pence, proceeded to the Hall of the House of Representatives to hear the address by the President of the United States, Donald J. Trump.

(The address delivered by the President of the United States to the joint session of the two Houses of Congress is printed in the proceedings of the House of Representatives in today's RECORD.)

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2018, AT 11 A.M.

At the conclusion of the joint session of the two Houses, and in accordance with the order previously entered, at 10:38 p.m., the Senate adjourned until Friday, February 2, 2018, at 11 a.m.

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate January 30, 2018:

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
MATTHEW BASSETT, OF TENNESSEE, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES.

THE JUDICIARY

DAVID RYAN STRAS, OF MINNESOTA, TO BE UNITED STATES CIRCUIT JUDGE FOR THE EIGHTH CIRCUIT.

IN THE ARMY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER 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., SECTION 601:

To be lieutenant general

MAJ. GEN. SCOTT D. BERRIER

IN THE AIR FORCE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT AS THE DEPUTY JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL OF THE AIR FORCE AND APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 8037:

To be major general

BRIG. GEN. CHARLES L. PLUMMER

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 8081:

To be brigadier general

COL. SHARON R. BANNISTER

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT AS THE JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE AND FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE SERVING AS THE JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 601 AND 8037:

To be lieutenant general

MAJ. GEN. JEFFERY A. ROCKWELL

IN THE ARMY

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

COL. ANTHONY R. HALE

COL. GARRICK M. HARMON

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER 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., SECTION 601:

To be lieutenant general

MAJ. GEN. ERIC J. WESLEY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER 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., SECTION 601:

To be lieutenant general

MAJ. GEN. THEODORE D. MARTIN

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE RESERVE OF THE ARMY TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be brigadier general

COL. SUSIE S. KUILAN

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER 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., SECTION 601:

To be lieutenant general

MAJ. GEN. LESLIE C. SMITH

IN THE NAVY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 601:

To be vice admiral

REAR ADM. (LH) JOHNNY R. WOLFE, JR.

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be rear admiral (lower half)

CAPT. JOHN C. RING

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be rear admiral

REAR ADM. (LH) SCOTT D. CONN

IN THE AIR FORCE

AIR FORCE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH SARAH E. ABEL AND ENDING WITH MICHELLE E. WYCHE, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON NOVEMBER 14, 2017.

AIR FORCE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH BRETT L. HEDGEPEETH AND ENDING WITH RYAN M. YI, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON DECEMBER 11, 2017.

AIR FORCE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH JOANNA K. KOWALIK AND ENDING WITH MAHASIN M. HANGALAY, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON DECEMBER 11, 2017.

AIR FORCE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH TRISH M. ARNO AND ENDING WITH CHRISTOPHER N. WHITE, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON JANUARY 8, 2018.

AIR FORCE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH JIN HWA LEE FRAZIER AND ENDING WITH JACK DAVID SPENCER, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON JANUARY 18, 2018.

AIR FORCE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH COREY L. ANDERSON AND ENDING WITH ROBERT K. TALTON, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON JANUARY 18, 2018.

AIR FORCE NOMINATION OF MICHAEL C. MAINE, TO BE COLONEL.

AIR FORCE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH MELISSA A. DAY AND ENDING WITH ROBERTA J. STEMEM, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON JANUARY 18, 2018.

AIR FORCE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH MATTHEW M. BIRD AND ENDING WITH PAUL KELLEY STROUD, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON JANUARY 18, 2018.

AIR FORCE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH HOLLY L. BREWER AND ENDING WITH MARIO TOMMASI, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON JANUARY 18, 2018.

AIR FORCE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH JOHN G. ANDRADE AND ENDING WITH LAWRENCE P. WOOD, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON JANUARY 18, 2018.

AIR FORCE NOMINATION OF JOSHUA M. KOVICH, TO BE COLONEL.

AIR FORCE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH DAVID M. DERSCH, JR. AND ENDING WITH PATRICK J. TRAVERS, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON JANUARY 18, 2018.

AIR FORCE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH LANCE J. KIM AND ENDING WITH SONIA W. S. TAQVI, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON JANUARY 18, 2018.

AIR FORCE NOMINATION OF DAVID L. WELLS II, TO BE COLONEL.

IN THE ARMY

ARMY NOMINATION OF ALEKSANDR GUTMAN, TO BE MAJOR.

ARMY NOMINATION OF ROBERT L. OZBURN, TO BE MAJOR.

ARMY NOMINATION OF JOCELYN A. LEVENTHAL, TO BE COLONEL.

ARMY NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH ALYSSA S. ADAMS AND ENDING WITH BRADLEY O. WOOD, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON JANUARY 18, 2018.

ARMY NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH KENNETH S. KATROSH AND ENDING WITH DOLLY R. LIVINGSTON, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON JANUARY 18, 2018.

ARMY NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH JOSEPH KLOIBER AND ENDING WITH PAUL NAVAS III, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON JANUARY 18, 2018.

ARMY NOMINATION OF ERICK C. CREWS, TO BE COLONEL.

ARMY NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH MICHAEL C. BRADWICK AND ENDING WITH DOUGLAS S. YOON, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON JANUARY 18, 2018.

ARMY NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH ZACHARY T. BUSENBARK AND ENDING WITH JAIME A. SANJUAN RUBIO, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE

SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON JANUARY 18, 2018.

ARMY NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH GABBY V. CANCELAN AND ENDING WITH JOHN P. CROSS, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON JANUARY 18, 2018.

ARMY NOMINATION OF ADAM T. SOTO, TO BE LIEUTENANT COLONEL.

ARMY NOMINATION OF PHILIP J. DACUNTO, TO BE COLONEL.

ARMY NOMINATION OF LYLE A. OURADA, TO BE COLONEL.

ARMY NOMINATION OF SHERRY M. KWON, TO BE MAJOR.

IN THE MARINE CORPS

MARINE CORPS NOMINATION OF CHRISTOPHER N. BARLEY, TO BE MAJOR.

MARINE CORPS NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH WILLIAM DOCTOR, JR. AND ENDING WITH SCOTT E. VASQUEZ, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON JANUARY 18, 2018.

MARINE CORPS NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH PAULO T. ALVES AND ENDING WITH PATRICK J. TOAL, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON JANUARY 18, 2018.

MARINE CORPS NOMINATION OF HENRY W. SOUKUP, TO BE LIEUTENANT COLONEL.

MARINE CORPS NOMINATION OF WILLIAM W. INNS III, TO BE LIEUTENANT COLONEL.

MARINE CORPS NOMINATION OF CRAIG A. ELLIOTT, TO BE LIEUTENANT COLONEL.

MARINE CORPS NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH BILL W. BROOKS, JR. AND ENDING WITH KYLE L. HOLLIS, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON JANUARY 18, 2018.

MARINE CORPS NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH EDWARD J. ABMA AND ENDING WITH JOSEPH A. ZIMMERMANN, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON JANUARY 18, 2018.

MARINE CORPS NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH JUSTIN R. ANDERSON AND ENDING WITH MICHAEL D. WILCOX, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON JANUARY 18, 2018.

MARINE CORPS NOMINATION OF STEVEN P. HULSE, TO BE LIEUTENANT COLONEL.

IN THE NAVY

NAVY NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH PAUL F. MAGOULICK AND ENDING WITH LI SUNG, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON NOVEMBER 14, 2017.

NAVY NOMINATION OF NICHOLAS H. STEGING, JR., TO BE LIEUTENANT COMMANDER.

NAVY NOMINATION OF JONATHAN S. DURHAM, TO BE LIEUTENANT COMMANDER.

NAVY NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH LAURA C. GILSTRAP AND ENDING WITH DIANA TRANYU, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON DECEMBER 11, 2017.

NAVY NOMINATION OF TODD D. HUSTY, TO BE LIEUTENANT COMMANDER.

NAVY NOMINATION OF DAWN M. STANKUS, TO BE LIEUTENANT COMMANDER.

NAVY NOMINATION OF PAUL I. AHN, TO BE LIEUTENANT COMMANDER.

NAVY NOMINATION OF ALLEN G. GUNN, TO BE LIEUTENANT COMMANDER.

FOREIGN SERVICE

FOREIGN SERVICE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH MARC CLAYTON GILKEY AND ENDING WITH MARK A. MYERS, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON JANUARY 8, 2018.

FOREIGN SERVICE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH ALYCE S. AHN AND ENDING WITH MICHELE D. WOONACOTT, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON JANUARY 8, 2018.

FOREIGN SERVICE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH PRIYA U. AMIN AND ENDING WITH ERIK Z. ZAHNEN, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON JANUARY 8, 2018.

FOREIGN SERVICE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH ANGELA P. AGGELER AND ENDING WITH MARI JAIN WOMACK, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON JANUARY 8, 2018.