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Senate

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

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

O Lord, in whose hands is the life of every living thing, we depend upon Your strength and might.

Manifest Yourself to our Senators, directing their steps and bringing them to Your chosen destination. Without Your leading, they will be like ships without rudders, but with You directing, they cannot fail to fulfill Your purposes. Take them in the direction that will enable them to positively affect the lives of the heavy laden, the sorrowful, and the suffering.

Fill their hearts with the deep compassion needed to enable Your Kingdom to come and Your will to be done on Earth as it is in Heaven. Lord, use them to hasten the coming of Your Kingdom of justice and truth.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

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

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 7, 2017.

To the Senate:

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

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

REPEALING AND REPLACING OBAMACARE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, last night, the committees of jurisdiction in the House released a proposal to repeal ObamaCare and begin the process of replacing it with commonsense reforms to preserve access and lower costs. The plan builds upon the 2015 repeal bill, which was vetoed by President Obama. I am happy to hear the committees will begin consideration this week. I encourage every Member to review it because I hope to call it up when we receive it from the House.

It is clear to just about everyone that ObamaCare is failing. Costs are soaring. Choices are diminishing. Insurance markets are teetering.

It would be easy to sit back and watch this partisan law collapse under its own weight. Pass the buck to the next guy. That seems to be the Democrats' strategy.

Republicans think the middle class actually deserves better. In election after election, Americans have called for relief. In election after election, Americans have called for an end to this partisan law. We promised to do both things. We are.

The legislation the House introduced last night represents the next step along that path. It is the result of a long conversation with many voices, and it is supported by the one person who can actually sign a bill into law—the President of the United States.

I want to recognize everyone for their contributions and hard work. Given last night's announcement, I especially want to commend our colleagues in the House. The policy conversation that led to what we saw last night continues. The policy process moves forward today.

We have come a long way. We have a lot further to go, but we are making significant progress. Working arm in arm with the House and the new administration, we are going to keep our promise to the American people because ObamaCare is a direct attack on the middle class. We all know it. We all get letters and phone calls. We hear the heartbreak and the frustration nearly every day.

Consider this letter from one of my constituents in Goshen, who wrote about the ObamaCare plan available to his family:

> I am extremely displeased with the limited choices available. While 16 plans are listed for me at the Healthcare.gov website, they are all inferior to my 2016 plan. Neither our primary care physician nor my rheumatologist is in network of any offered 2017 plan.
>
> The cost is another problem. The 2017 plan that I will probably choose will have a 20% higher premium than my 2016 plan with a lower level of benefits.

Pay more; pay more for less. That is ObamaCare for you right there. Look, in so many different ways, we have seen the evidence for years that ObamaCare simply isn't working. This isn't a law that can be fixed. This isn't a law that can be saved. It has to be repealed and replaced. We promised the American people we would do that. We are going to keep our promise.

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

CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW ACT RESOLUTIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter, for the past 8 years, Americans felt left behind by an economy that failed to live up to its potential, a job market that left too many behind, and a future that didn't seem to be as bright as it once had.

For too long, the previous administration pursued an agenda that put Washington's interests above the peoples' interests and regulations that too often followed ideology rather than facts. In fact, as we recently saw cited in a national paper, one study ''estimates that the costs of complying with federal rules and regulations totaled nearly $1.9 trillion in 2015.''

Let me say that again. The costs of complying with regulations in America totaled nearly $1.9 trillion in 2015, equal to about half the Federal budget.

Yet another study ''estimates that regulation has shaved 0.8 percent off the U.S. annual growth rate''—a growth rate that was already too low to begin with.

You can see the effect that heavy-handed regulations can have on our Nation's economy. There is no question that some regulations are necessary and even beneficial to our country, but Washington should assess the real impact regulations will have before implementing them.

Undoing the damage of the past several years is going to take some time, but fortunately there are meaningful steps we have already begun taking to bring relief. Just last night we took another step by blocking a sweeping labor regulation that would have threatened American businesses, workers, and taxpayers at large.

Today we will keep working to dial back even more harmful regulations, like the one before us now—the so-called BLM planning 2.0 rule. Don't let the name fool you. This regulation has little to do with improving current policy. Instead, it really represents another power grab pushed through by the Obama administration on its way out the door.

Like several other regulations we are working to address, this one adopts a top-down, one-size-fits-all approach. It shifts power away from State and local governments toward Washington bureaucrats, and it targets Western States specifically, jeopardizing their ability to manage the lands and resources that their local economies count on.

As Senator MURKOWSKI, chair of the Energy Committee, has pointed out, this regulation could negatively impact a range of activities like grazing, timber, energy, and mineral development and other important uses of public land that States like hers rely on. And, perhaps even more troubling, it would also limit input from local stakeholders who are the most familiar with these issues. That is why Senator MURKOWSKI has been fighting the BLM 2.0 regulation from the start and has introduced legislation under the Congressional Review Act to overturn it.

Later today, we will have the opportunity to vote on a similar resolution, which has already passed the House. It is another important step in our efforts to return power to the States and knock down barriers that keep our economy from growing.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

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

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

CALLING FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF A SPECIAL PROSECUTOR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, this morning the Judiciary Committee will have a hearing on the nomination of Mr. Rod Rosenstein to serve as the Deputy Attorney General. During the hearing, Mr. Rosenstein should commit to naming a special prosecutor to look into the Trump campaign's ties to Russia.

There is a strong legal rationale for a special prosecutor. A special prosecutor, by the Department of Justice rules, would be free of day-to-day supervision by anyone at the Department of Justice, would be free to follow the investigation where it leads, and would be subject to an increased level of congressional oversight. Moreover, it is the right thing to do to ensure that this investigation remains impartial, nonpartisan, and truly gets to the bottom of the matter. The bottom line is very simple. The special prosecutor can only be fired for cause, but a line person in the Justice Department could be fired at will. We saw that happen when President Trump didn't like what Sally Yates said about his Executive order. He simply fired her.

Mr. Rosenstein is a very fine man, an excellent, longtime prosecutor in the Justice Department, but this is when we call for a special prosecutor. It is not an aspersion against him in any way. We are worried the White House will not let an investigation within the Justice Department, without the insulation of a special prosecutor, go forward.

So if Mr. Rosenstein is unwilling to commit to naming a special prosecutor or says he needs to be confirmed, and in his position he can make an assessment, that is insufficient. The need for a special prosecutor is clear enough today to make that call.

Of course, we don't need to wait for Mr. Rosenstein. Mr. Boente, the Acting Deputy Attorney General, can make the call today, but if neither will commit to a special prosecutor, Congress will have to consider bringing back a narrower independent counsel law to see that this investigation is conducted properly.

TRUMPCARE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on another matter, last night we saw the House Republicans plan to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act. After 70 years of talking about the same thing over and over again, you would think the Republicans would have been able to come up with a better plan than this. This plan is a mess.

First, it will cost average Americans more money for their healthcare, while providing fewer benefits; second, it will cut taxes for the very wealthy, making average Americans pay more for their healthcare; third, it will raise premiums and costs for older Americans; and, fourth, it will remove the guarantee that ensures Americans with pre-existing conditions can get coverage.

TrumpCare will make health insurance in America measurably worse in just about every way and leave more Americans uninsured. It does, however, greatly benefit the very wealthy and special interests. Let's quickly look at each of the items I just mentioned.

First, TrumpCare will cost more and you will get less. By eliminating minimum coverage for healthcare plans and decreasing the availability of tax credits, the cost for average Americans will increase by at least $1,000 annually. That is a huge increase, like a tax increase for average Americans who need healthcare. It cuts and caps Medicaid, which has expanded health insurance to over 20 million Americans, and affects poor people, as well as many elderly who are in nursing homes, as well as their children who might have to pay for their care with the kinds of cuts we are seeing.

The bill would greatly decrease coverage for maternity care, preventive screenings, mental health, opioid treatment, and more. With respect to women, TrumpCare would send us back to the Dark Ages. Gone are the protections for maternity care, mammograms, and more. Gone is all the funding next year for Planned Parenthood, where 2.5 million women a year get healthcare. The ACA finally made it

the case that you no longer had to pay more for coverage just because you are a woman. TrumpCare rips that away, undoes the progress we made just a few years ago.

Second, TrumpCare would be a boon to the wealthy, while making working Americans pay more. The bill is a winning lottery ticket for wealthy Americans. It removes an investment tax and a surcharge on the wealthiest Americans, folks with incomes of above $250,000 a year, saving them an average of $200,000 a year, and it allows a tax break for insurance executives making over $500,000 a year.

Third, TrumpCare will raise premiums and costs for older Americans. It would repeal the Affordable Care Act's premium subsidies and replace them with refundable tax credits that could be worth thousands of dollars less than what was provided under the ACA. Under this plan, a senior without Medicare might receive only $4,000 a year in tax credits, an inadequate sum for someone of that age. One illness or a bad break, and the value of their tax credit would evaporate. It also allows insurers to charge older Americans more simply because of their age.

Finally, TrumpCare would remove the guarantee of coverage for Americans with preexisting conditions. TrumpCare is breathtakingly irresponsible. It shifts the costs and the burdens from the rich to the poor and middle class, from the government to the people, and raises premiums on older Americans. It seems designed to cover fewer Americans and make that coverage less affordable and less generous. It seems designed to make America sick again.

We don't even know how large a negative impact this bill will have because Republicans are irresponsibly rushing forward before this bill even receives a score from the Congressional Budget Office.

After years of howling at the Moon, at Democrats for rushing through the Affordable Care Act, the mantra they said over and over again on the floor here and in the House was ''read the bill.'' Republicans are having committee votes 2 days after the bill is released.

No wonder they don't want anyone to know what is in the bill. They are rushing it through because it is very hard to defend what they have done, and the longer it is out there, the harder it is going to be for their colleagues, Republicans, to vote for it. Lawmakers will be voting blind, without a final analysis of how this bill will affect overall coverage and affordability. I know this affects a lot of my colleagues on the other side.

We have no knowledge of how this affects the deficit. It is removing a lot of the revenues for healthcare without replacing them. In all likelihood—we will see what CBO says—the deficit is going to go way up.

The President is already throwing his arms around this plan, and ultimately he and his party will bear the responsibility for its passage and implementation. At this time, I would like to remind President Trump that he said repeatedly in the campaign that he would expand treatment for Americans suffering from opioid addiction, but this mess of a replacement bill would rip treatment away from hundreds of thousands of Americans dealing with opioid addiction. President Trump said he would ensure Americans with preexisting conditions would continue to have access to coverage, but this bill makes that harder in several ways. President Trump, in his campaign, said:

> Everybody's got to be covered. . . . I am going to take care of everybody. I don't care if it's going to cost me votes or not. Everybody's going to be taken care of, much better than they're being taken care of now. . . . They can have their doctors. They can have their plans, they can have everything.

''They can have everything.''

Well, if you read the bill the way it reduces funding for Medicaid and replaces the Affordable Care Act subsidies with much smaller tax credits, there is just no way this bill meets the President's standard.

Was the Affordable Care Act perfect? No. It could use some improvements, but Democrats spent a long time thinking about it and crafting the policy to achieve two very real and specific goals, expand coverage, lower costs.

TrumpCare will do the very opposite. If it has any one coherent positive goal, it is to limit the tax burdens on the very wealthy, and in the process it will badly hurt millions of Americans and throw our healthcare system back into chaos.

If the final product out of the House looks anything like this draft, the Senate should consider it a moral duty to reject it.

I yield the floor.

DISAPPROVING A RULE SUBMITTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.J. Res. 44, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

> A joint resolution (H.J. Res. 44) disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of the Interior relating to Bureau of Land Management regulations that establish the procedures used to prepare, revise, or amend land use plans pursuant to the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be 8 hours of debate equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from Alaska.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I am pleased the Senate is at the point we are this morning. Last night, we agreed to proceed to consideration of H.J. Res. 44, which will overturn the Bureau of Land Management's Planning 2.0 Rule. The House has considered this already. They passed this resolution on a strong bipartisan basis. It was a 48-vote margin. They did this just before the February recess, and so it is now in front of the Senate.

As the sponsor of the Senate version, I have come to the floor now to explain to colleagues why this BLM Planning 2.0 Rule is such a bad rule and to urge its nullification.

There are probably a lot of folks that are asking the question: BLM Planning 2.0, what is it? It is not just folks that are listening, it is colleagues here. What exactly is Planning 2.0 and what exactly does Planning 2.0 do? A lot of people are saying: I never heard of this one. Where did it come from? Based on that, I think a lot of context is in order as we begin this debate.

The Bureau of Land Management is a Federal agency that manages 245 million acres of land in 12 Western States, along with 700 million acres of Federal and non-Federal subsurface estate.

Congress has directed the BLM to manage those lands according to the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. That is too long to say. So we just refer to it as FLPMA. It serves as the agency's organic act. It mandates a multiple-use mission for BLM lands. I think it is important to always remember that. BLM is required to manage under the concept of multiple use. It lays out a planning process for its mission. It establishes a special status relationship between the Federal Government and the States and the local governments that are affected by the agency's resource management plans.

I think it is important, as we are focusing on the BLM right now, that we remember that BLM lands are not national parks or wildlife refuges. They are not wild and scenic rivers or wilderness. BLM lands are working lands. They are valuable—not because they might contain a Mount Denali, like up north, or the Grand Canyon—but rather because these lands contain energy and minerals and they can be used. Again, this is the multiple-use concept. They can be used for grazing. They can be used for recreation and many other purposes.

They are valuable in this way and as such are a leading source of good jobs for families and communities all across the West. BLM's management of western lands has never been without controversy. That is part of the reason that the last administration decided to overhaul the regulations that guide the planning process. The stated goals from the administration were to create a better process that would increase transparency, increase public involvement, and reduce the amount of time it takes to develop a resource management plan.

So those clearly all sound like good ideas, good goals. Unfortunately, the reason we are here today seeking to overturn this planning 2.0 rule is that

the BLM absolutely failed to achieve any of those three goals. Instead of greater transparency, BLM delivered a new process that ensures less transparency. Instead of expanding public participation, Western States are looking at fewer and weaker opportunities to influence the management of local lands.

Planning 2.0 also turns the relationship between federal, state, and the local governments on its head. It just really turns it upside down. What actually happens then is that it has effectively subverted FLPMA, shattering the special status arrangement that the West is supposed to have under the Federal law.

As a Senator for the State of Alaska when this rule came out, I looked critically at it and I have problems with many aspects of the rule. I know I am joined by nearly all of my western colleagues and many who are not from the West but who have taken the time to understand how our land management laws are supposed to work and who have looked critically at this rule.

The more my staff and I have unpacked the Planning 2.0 Rule, the less we like it and the greater is our conviction that this rule should be overturned through the Congressional Review Act. That is why we are here. I could go on for quite some time, but for purposes of this statement, I will list this morning my four main criticisms, all of which compound each other and show why this rule must be repealed.

First of all, Planning 2.0 seeks to transition to a landscape-level approach for land management planning. It is not a bad concept on its own, really. I don't have any problem with BLM determining, for instance, where our solar resources are located, but to make that a defining measure and to make that a defining feature of a resource management plan is a bad idea.

It all but assures that new and revised plans will not have the level of detail or specificity that is needed to properly manage our local resources. It allows for planning areas to cross State lines without regard to the competing priorities of neighboring Governors. It does not ensure that existing State and local plans will be consistent. It is very obvious that BLM will deploy it as a mechanism to reduce or perhaps to eliminate many reasonable uses of Federal land that provide jobs and support communities all across the West.

The second criticism I have is that Planning 2.0 allows BLM officials to remove the decisionmaking authority from our field offices and our State directors, and it tends to centralize that power at BLM headquarters. So for those of us in the West, we are looking at a situation where effectively the management decisions of our land are being taken from those who are on the ground, people who really understand the conditions and are those who are most impacted by it. It shifts it back East to be decided by those who don't have that same local understanding, who might not really have any understanding as to the areas and why this is so important.

So centralizing power at BLM headquarters, in my view, is never the right direction. I am not suggesting that this is going to happen every time with every decision. However it could happen at any time, whenever a future administration decides that a decision needs to be made at the headquarters level rather than locally. So now, at a moment's notice—perhaps without even any notice at all—decisionmaking authority can be taken away from a Western State with expertise and effectively siloed here in Washington, DC. That is not the direction to be taken.

The third area of concern I have is that Planning 2.0 reduces the ability of western stakeholders to provide input into the land management process, as well as their stature within it. So, again, it compounds the fact that you are shifting decisionmaking authority back here to the East. By further limiting stakeholders' input, that is very problematic.

Now, the agency has talked a good game about public participation. But if you read the rule, what it effectively does is just kind of front-load public input while cutting later opportunities for feedback. If left in place, Planning 2.0 would ensure BLM would be able to maximize its decisionmaking power while at the same time effectively sidelining input from Western States.

We previously were in a situation where western stakeholders had a seat on the stage before this rule, but under it they are really demoted. They are effectively demoted to a middle row in the mezzanine as part of a bigger crowd, but with no special status. I think it is important to keep that in context.

The fourth area of concern is that BLM 2.0 weakens and eliminates the requirements in FLPMA that require BLM to coordinate planning and resource uses with our States and local governments. Under this rule, BLM shifts the burden for making sure that resource management plans are consistent with State and local governments plans away from itself and onto the States and onto the local governments. That is not right.

The agency is also limiting the opportunities that those government have to identify and remedy deficiencies within and across plans wherever they may be found.

So here are a couple of examples this morning for the Senate, just to illustrate why so many of us are concerned about this and are opposed to Planning 2.0. You have to ask yourself: Is it fair and is it really what Congress intended, for a western stakeholder to have the same voice and influence over the management of their local lands as any other member of the general public from anywhere else, with no connection, no relationship to these areas?

To be more specific, should a small placer miner in Chicken, Alaska, or a cattle grazer in Nevada be relegated to the same status as a lawyer in, say, Vermont who has never visited either Chicken, Alaska, or rural Nevada? My answer to this is pretty easy. It is a simple no. But that is what awaits us under Planning 2.0.

So here is a real world example of what Planning 2.0 will mean on the ground. Last year, the BLM finalized a resource management plan for 6.5 million acres of eastern Interior Alaska. Much of that plan was developed in accordance with the principles of Planning 2.0. So what does it actually look like for us up there in Alaska, in the eastern Interior area?

The plan closes nearly three-quarters of the 40-mile district, where the only economic activity, really, is placer mining—small placer mining. They closed it to mineral entry. More than 1 million acres are withdrawn into what they call ''areas of critical environmental concern''. This is a land management tool that BLM has used more and more in recent years to sidestep Congress's sole authority to designate Federal wilderness.

So the agency sought public comment, but it was limited public comment. Then it effectively ignored the comments that it did receive. Ultimately, very few Alaskans were able to participate in the development of the plan, and even fewer Alaskans are happy with the final outcome of the plan. As we expected and as we feared, the Planning 2.0 process was used to shut down a reasonable use of Federal land that the last administration just did not like. This was done even though it enjoys overwhelming support among local residents who really depend on it for their livelihood.

The Planning 2.0 process was also used to close off Federal lands to the public in violation of the ''no more'' clauses within ANILCA, or the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, even though there was no imminent threat or reason to do so. So, as colleagues are considering how they will cast their vote on this resolution of disapproval, I am sure, again, that many had not really focused on this Planning 2.0 before. Most of them would never be able to find Chicken, Alaska, on a map, and they are thinking: This is not going to impact me. I am not from the West.

But for those of us in the West, if you live in one of the 12 Western States that have BLM land, believe me, you are impacted. I would suggest that what we are seeing, starting in Alaska, is something that simply won't stay up there. If this rule is allowed to remain in place, you will see that move through all of our Western States.

BLM maintains and periodically revises dozens of resource management plans in its 12 Western states. So if Planning 2.0 stays on the books, I think what it will do is it will harm our Nation's energy producers. I think it will harm our mineral developers. I think it will harm those who rely on

Federal lands for grazing. It will most certainly cost us jobs. It will cost us economic opportunity, and it will hurt the communities and the people of our Western States.

I would ask that you don't just take my word for this. Six counties from six different States have challenged this rule as impairing the informational and coordination rights of local governments. They believe that it violates FLPMA and that BLM has failed to properly evaluate the impact that it will have. I think they have a very strong case. This is a fatally flawed rule. Our best option is to overturn it while we have the ability to do so under the Congressional Review Act and to hold BLM accountable to the underlying statute and its multiple-use mission. If we can agree to do that today, we can then work with our new Secretary of the Interior, Ryan Zinke, to make genuine improvements to the BLM land management planning process. I know that Secretary Zinke cares about our public lands. He understands these issues, and I think he is dedicated to ensuring that we get this right.

I would like to close by thanking the roughly 80 stakeholder groups that are supporting our disapproval resolution. I also thank the 17 Senators who are cosponsoring the Senate version of it. I thank the new administration, which has released a statement of policy in support of it. I also acknowledge and thank Representative CHENEY and Chairman BISHOP in the House, who led the resolution through the House with good bipartisan support a couple of weeks back.

It is now the Senate's turn to act on this. It is our turn to recognize why this rule deserves to be overturned. For the good of our Western States, let's send this disapproval resolution to the President's desk.

With that, I again urge the Senate to support House Joint Resolution 44.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. MURKOWSKI). The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. Madam President, I come to the floor to speak in opposition to this resolution. Many of my colleagues know that we have had discussions in the Senate on several Congressional Review Act resolutions. In principle, Congressional Review Act resolutions—besides repealing these existing Executive regulations—also have the unfortunate aspect to them that they negate an agency's ability to make new rules anytime soon in the same area. For example, if you like some of this rule but not all of it, by using the CRA, you are literally preventing the agency from moving forward on any improvements to the rule.

I always believe in the legislative process. Working with my colleague from Alaska or working with my colleagues from other areas, I think we have proved that we can resolve key issues. But passing this Congressional Review Act resolution on an issue so important as our public lands and negating the hard work that the executive branch did over a long period of time is something that my colleagues and I just have to say no to.

When it comes to public lands, we want transparency; we want sunshine. We want a bottom-up approach when it comes to land management, and we certainly want collaboration.

As was said earlier, the Bureau of Land Management manages about 245 million acres of public land. That is about 10 percent of the Nation and 30 percent of our Nation's minerals. So when it comes to this management, it is very important that they continue to follow a very good bottom-up process for land management.

I will read now from the actual requirements from the law that oversees them, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. They have to use and observe the principles of multiple use and sustained yield; consider present and potential uses of the public lands; weigh long-term benefits to the public against short-term benefits; consider the relative scarcity of the values; give priority to areas of critical environmental concern; provide for compliance with applicable pollution control laws, including State and Federal air, water, noise, or other pollution standards or implementation plans; and coordinate with Federal Departments and Agencies, State and local governments, and Indian Tribes.

So all of these things are part of what is already in existing law. The concept here is to make sure that we continue to have a transparent and open process that is bottom-up. And I certainly believe in a bottom-up process because our public lands must not be territories owned and operated, for example, for the sole benefit of the oil, gas, and mining industries, and we can't have polluters polluting in these areas and not have input from the various communities about their concerns on those issues.

For example, in 2001, the Bush administration proposed revisions to six land use plans in eastern Utah, and these plans were finalized in 2008 at the end of the Bush administration, with only limited opportunity for public involvement. All six plans were challenged in Federal court by several motorized recreation and conservation organizations.

It is now 2017, and these plans still remain tied up in litigation. That is why those in the off-road vehicle industry did not feel as though they had input at the very beginning stages of the process. In January the Obama administration negotiated a settlement, which is still pending in court, but this shows how, if there isn't meaningful public involvement, we are just going to hit a logjam. This is why I think it is so important for us to update this rule.

It has been a long time since the agency updated this rule; I think since 1983. That was the last time—over 30 years ago. I guarantee you, in those 30 years, we can come up with a better process for input from our constituents on important land use issues.

I know the new Interior Secretary likes to talk about Teddy Roosevelt, who once said: ''The Nation behaves well if it treats the natural resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased, and not impaired, in value.''

Ensuring we are preserving and increasing the value of our public lands is exactly what is meant by this planning rule that the Bureau of Land Management put out. This rule wants to make sure that we have input from the local community.

I think it is important to note that this is not a rule that regulates any specific use on public lands. It does not restrict any particular activity. It simply updates the current law in saying that it is better to have input from local officials and to use that input from local officials to update the process in an earlier way.

I said to my staff: It is like us huddling and saying that we should write legislation and then me not coming back for 7 years and then letting them know I am on my way to the Senate floor to drop a bill. We would never do that, and the land plans in these communities shouldn't be done that way either.

Once a local Bureau of Land Management official starts to discuss a plan, there should be transparency. The local community should know exactly what that plan looks like before it is going to be finalized. It needs to encourage collaboration of the stakeholders or else—as the example I just gave in Utah—you are going to end up in litigation or an elongated process before such management plans can take place.

It seems to me that these are pretty reasonable goals: Have a bottom-up process that encourages discussion throughout the plan so that local communities are not caught off guard, and continue to emphasize the roles of State, local, and Tribal governments and cooperating agencies so that they can have input in the process as well.

Finally, I know that there are some who would like to claim that the BLM State director oversees the planning process in their specific State and that somehow that might change, but that is not the case.

Many organizations understand that there will continue to be a bottom-up process under the new rule. That is why so many sportsmen and outdoors groups—like the Outdoor Industry Association, the National Wildlife Federation, Trout Unlimited, the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, the Nature Conservancy, the Wilderness Society, and the National Parks Conservation Association—all say: Do not overturn the rule that was implemented. These groups know that 30 years is too long of a period of time to have to wait to encourage public involvement and collaboration, that

these issues are too important to try to turn back the clock and to try to exclude sportsmen and various interests of public access from the planning and use of our public lands.

I hope my colleagues will turn down this override of a very important project that has guaranteed public access, transparency, and sunshine in planning for our public lands.

MEDICAID

Madam President, I would like to come to the floor to discuss the proposed Medicaid changes that are part of what the House is proposing to the Affordable Care Act. This is so important because, as many people know, Medicaid has been a bedrock of how individuals get access to healthcare in our country. And in many parts of our States—at least the State of Washington—Medicaid has been a lifeline in both rural communities and in urban areas and we have heard much from various people that it is actually helping to stabilize healthcare costs, so costs are not rising as fast and giving people access to care in the most serious situations where we are trying to fight opioids or are trying to find more efficiency in our healthcare system.

First of all, I think the House bill is literally a war on Medicaid. I say that because it is a capitation of healthcare costs.

The federal government, according to one budget analyst at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, would shift the cost to the States by more than $500 billion over the next 10 years. That would mean that millions of people would lose coverage and be affected by this kind of repeal.

Now, many people have talked about how they might block-grant Medicaid. I also thought that was a horrible idea because, really, it just becomes nothing but a budget mechanism to reduce the Federal partnership that exists between the Federal Government and the States on Medicaid. But the House chose not to do exactly block-granting. They said, instead, that we are just going to have a budget cap at the Federal level on how much money they are going to spend on Medicaid and then work toward the repeal of Medicaid expansion. This is a very bad idea.

The actual per capita cut—I know my colleagues like to come out here and talk about a patient-centered relationship, which is exactly what getting off fee-for-service and going to managed care does. But a per capita cost is nothing but a budget mechanism to cap the Federal responsibility to Medicaid and cut costs and basically shift the pain onto the States.

I have been on various meeting tours in the State of Washington, talking to my constituents about this. In Seattle, Spokane, and Olympia. I met with hospitals, community clinics, women's health groups, local and State government officials, civic leaders, civil rights organizations, and I heard many things.

I basically heard hospitals say there is evidence that Medicaid is actually lowering the commercial insurance premiums because of less uncompensated care. And I heard a safety net hospital in Spokane tell me that the population is already 70 percent Medicaid and Medicare and that there is no way they can absorb this kind of a cut to the Medicaid program and it would just mean healthcare costs would rise in the future. I heard a hospital in Seattle tell me that this kind of attempt is nothing but a budget trigger. It is not a reform of the system. It is simply a way to cut the budget.

What we believe is that Medicaid is a key part of our healthcare delivery system. The expansion has worked well and we should continue to move to ways to innovate Medicaid as a way to save costs.

Unfortunately, right now, many people misunderstand how important Medicaid is in the mental health and addiction area. Basically, when you take what we have tried to do to address the opioid epidemic, those individuals who are working through the bills that we just recently passed to try to help patients in the emergency room or who are in psychiatric care or who are trying to deal with this grave problem we have in the United States, getting rid of Medicaid for those individuals, you might as well roll back all the assistance we just provided as part of the CURES and other legislation. Why? Because these individuals will not be able to access the type of care they need without the support.

I do believe that what we need to do is innovate instead. There are many examples of innovation in our healthcare delivery system. One example, as I have mentioned on the floor several times, is going from nursing home care to community-based care.

Medicaid is going to equal long-term care. So many Americans are not going to be ready to deal with their long-term healthcare issues, and when they are not, they are going to use Medicaid for their long-term care.

We showed in the State of Washington over more than a decade's period of time that we could save $2.7 billion by shifting our Medicaid population to community-based care instead of nursing home care. If we would do that same kind of innovation at the Federal level, we could achieve substantial savings instead of saving money by cutting.

The issue here is that innovation in our delivery system—innovation, not a budget cap—is what is going to help us with our healthcare needs for the future when it comes to the Medicaid population.

So I urge my colleagues to speak loudly against this proposal to try to cap Medicaid, to try to shift the burden to States and local providers, to county governments, to jails, to all of those individuals who are going to see that population when and if they don't have Medicaid coverage and instead work together on expanding the innovation in Medicaid and coming up with savings we need to take care of and to provide health insurance coverage to so many Americans.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NUCLEAR ENERGY INNOVATION AND MODERNIZATION ACT

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about bipartisan legislation designed to strengthen our Nation's nuclear energy capacity. It is called the Nuclear Energy Innovation and Modernization Act. I am a strong supporter of American nuclear energy. It is a vital component of our ''all of the above'' American energy plan. My home State of Wyoming plays a key role in American nuclear energy supply. In Wyoming, we produce more uranium than any other State.

Nuclear energy is clean, safe, reliable, and affordable. It also provides a major boost to the economy. American nuclear plants provide thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in benefits to local communities. U.S. nuclear powerplants have run safely for decades, and many of them will serve our country for years and decades to come. But after decades of reliable power from our traditional nuclear powerplants, these nuclear powerplants are experiencing innovation with opportunities that are now taking shape in the nuclear industry. Increased private investment is occurring in nuclear energy, and it has led to improvements in safety, security, and in cost.

This is no longer a traditional nuclear industry. There are nuclear startups which are being backed by American entrepreneurs. Research and work are being done by Bill Gates, of all people. These folks envision fundamentally transforming nuclear energy technology. I believe the advances are exciting. The biggest challenges these innovators face, however, are the costs and delays from regulatory red-tape. Many of these delays come from trying to navigate a regulatory system that was developed around one specific technology, which is water-cooled reactors. The traditional water-cooled reactors have powered our Navy and our electricity grid and have done it successfully for decades, but today's entrepreneurs are pursuing very different designs. They are using high-temperature gases, molten salts, and other high-tech materials to advance the safety, efficiency, and reliability of nuclear energy.

The nuclear regulatory system needs to be updated to enable this innovation. That is why I join with my colleagues in introducing the Nuclear Energy Innovation and Modernization

Act. Cosponsors include Senators WHITEHOUSE, INHOFE, BOOKER, FISCHER, CAPITO, and MANCHIN. We come together having introduced S. 512. Our bipartisan bill seeks to modernize the Nuclear Regulatory Commission by providing a flexible regulatory framework for licensing advanced nuclear reactors. The NRC needs a modern regulatory framework that is predictable and efficient. Reactor operators for both traditional and advanced reactors need timely decisionmaking from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. At the same time, the Commission needs to maintain its ability to assess a variety of technologies and meet its mission of administering safety and security to the American people. Additionally, our legislation will update the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's fee recovery rules.

This measure is going to bring increased transparency and accountability to the NRC, while also improving the Commission's efficiency and timeliness.

This bill will also help to preserve the uranium producers who are essential to powering the technology. The Energy Information Administration reports that uranium production in 2016 was at its lowest level since way back in 2005. It is crucial that we restore our American uranium sector and preserve these important jobs.

Our bipartisan legislation is going to enable the development of innovative reactors with bold, new technologies. As a nation, we can either lead this technology revolution or we can defer to our competitors. China and Russia are already developing advanced technologies regardless of what we do here in the United States. America needs to be a leader of nuclear development. We need to create an environment where entrepreneurs can flourish. This is the way to create jobs here at home and revitalize our nuclear energy sector at the same time.

One way to enable innovation for advanced reactors is to provide a regulatory framework that is predictable and cost-effective and that maintains the NRC's safety and security mission. The bill we haved introduced, the Nuclear Energy Innovation and Modernization Act, does all of this.

This broadly bipartisan bill will strengthen American energy independence and foster innovation and job creation. I thank Senators WHITEHOUSE, INHOFE, BOOKER, CRAPO, FISCHER, CAPITO, and MANCHIN for cosponsoring this legislation, and I urge its support.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I know the Presiding Officer is a fellow westerner, from a State that is impacted by decisions made by our public lands management agencies, whether that is the Bureau of Land Management or the Forest Service. Both Colorado and Arizona, as well as Wyoming and Utah—all of our Western States—are greatly affected by decisions that are made in Washington, DC. In a conversation I had with the Presiding Officer from Arizona, we discussed the fact that 85 percent of the State of Arizona is managed by the Federal Government. Whether it is the State or a Tribal entity or the Federal Government, about 47 percent is being federally managed. In the State of Colorado, about half of our State is managed by a public entity. Whether that is the State or a Tribal entity or the Forest Service, BLM land, the Department of the Interior, roughly half of the State is managed by the Federal Government, the State government or others. In other words, it is not in private landownership. So that means that the decisions made by these public land management agencies have a significantly outsized impact on our States than it does on States say east of the Mississippi.

So today I come to the floor to talk about one of those decisions made by the Bureau of Land Management's planning 2.0 rule. The discussion we are having today is about whether we should approve a resolution of disapproval under the Congressional Review Act to stop the BLM 2.0 rule from going forward.

The Bureau of Land Management has over 245 million acres of public land. Almost all of those acres are west of the Mississippi River, predominantly in 12 States. The final BLM 2.0 rule is an example of how little Washington bureaucrats understand about the West and how little they understand about how the Federal Government and how Federal policymaking doesn't work when you try to take something they think of in Washington and put it on the people of the West.

It is the promulgation of this rule that actually led to my call for relocating the headquarters of the Bureau of Land Management out of Washington, DC, and to put it in a place like Grand Junction, CO, because I believe it is important that we have public land managers and decisions about our public lands being made by those who are directly affected by that public land being in their backyard. If you live in the State of Colorado or if you are a county commissioner on the Western Slope, some of those counties have over 90 percent of their county managed by the Federal Government. A decision made by that public land agency directly impacts them, not in a couple of weeks or months or next year but that very same day. To have somebody from Washington, DC, deciding a one-size-fits-all approach that is going to apply to a Western Slope county commissioner is just absurd. So moving the BLM headquarters to a place like Colorado or Arizona would absolutely result in better policies that work on the ground for our Governors, landowners, county commissioners, farmers, ranchers, cattlemen, energy producers, sportsmen, and recreationalists because they would be nearest to the lands that the decisions being made are affecting.

I hope we can move this country away from this ''Washington knows best'' mentality. That is why this resolution of disapproval is so important, because that is exactly what it would do, which is to remove ''Washington knows best'' by stopping the BLM planning 2.0 rule.

As it stands, I don't believe this rule should move forward. I have committed to Coloradans, to county commissioners, and to the people of my State that I will always have the goal to put more Colorado in Washington and less Washington in Colorado. A county commissioner in western Colorado, from Dolores, Garfield, Grand, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Jackson, Mesa, Moffat, Montezuma, Montrose, or Rio Blanco County should have more say in decisions that are impacting their backyard on BLM lands than someone sitting behind a desk in New York City. They tell me that their ability to have an impact on their backyard lessens as a result of the BLM planning 2.0 rule. They believe they actually have less say under the new rule than somebody who doesn't live anywhere near their land or their State or their county or those BLM lands.

I believe that Colorado State and local leaders and local users should have a strong voice on local land management decisions. It is their backyard. Yes, it is public land, but the fact is they are the ones trying to make a living, trying to govern, trying to make decisions that are best for their constituents, and they should have a voice in those decisions.

I also firmly believe in managing our public lands under the multiple-use philosophy, which promotes recreation, grazing, and energy development with a balanced approach.

If the Congressional Review Act's resolution of disapproval on the BLM planning 2.0 rule is approved and signed into law, there will still be an opportunity to improve management and update policies at the Bureau of Land Management.

I think that is one of the areas of misinformation that we see about resolutions of disapproval. There are some who support the BLM planning 2.0 rule, and there are some who have supported other rules that this Chamber has voted to disapprove through the Congressional Review Act. Those people who support it sometimes get their facts wrong when they say things like: Well, if you repeal this rule, if you approve the resolution of disapproval, then there is no way that you can actually rule in this area again or make a

regulation that impacts this area of law again. That is simply not true. The truth is, when you use a resolution of disapproval, it simply says that we think this is the wrong rule that went forward through the executive branch agencies and we ought to use Congress—those people who understand the needs of their States better than a rulemaker in Washington, DC—to go forward with a new piece of legislation, a new authorization for a different rule. If we do that, then, we are going to have better policies because we have been able to account for every voice in the process, instead of leaving voices like those county commissioners, whom I talked about, out to dry.

I have told many recreationalists and sportsmen in Colorado that I am working with our Democratic colleagues and Secretary Zinke at the Department of the Interior on how we can move forward with the land management decisions and land use plans that take into account some of their concerns with this resolution of disapproval. There are updates and modifications that can be achieved, but they should all have stakeholder input. I don't believe that this planning rule 2.0 actually took into account all of the different stakeholders' views.

Working with some landowners cannot be at the expense of others. Right now, our cattlemen, farmers, ranchers, and county commissioners have severe concerns with BLM planning 2.0, and they feel as though they did not have a voice in the development of this rule.

I believe we can do better as elected officials and that we can give these local users' and landowners' interests a stronger voice in moving forward and that we can move forward together. So let's approve this resolution of disapproval that would claw back the BLM 2.0 rule. Let's make sure that local voices are given a place at the table. Let's make sure that county commissioners have influence over their area that is greater than somebody in New York City who doesn't live there. Let's make sure that we can protect the multiple-use philosophy of our public lands. Whether it is energy, recreation, or renewable energy, we have incredible opportunities on our public lands. But we can do better by working with Congress and taking into account every voice and making sure that we have a rule that is broadly supported instead of narrowly supported.

That is why I intend to support the Congressional Review Act resolution of disapproval today, and I hope that my colleagues will do the same, as we truly find a bipartisan solution to give the people of our States a greater say over policies that affect their own backyard.

Mr. President, thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRUZ). The Senator from Washington.

TRUMPCARE

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I come to the floor to take a few minutes to address the deeply harmful bill House Republicans announced yesterday to be put in place, TrumpCare. Since the election, I have had constituent after constituent come up to me with tears in their eyes wondering what the future holds for their healthcare. They are worried about losing coverage, wondering how they are going to make ends meet if their premiums spike, and they are worried that without protections laid out in the Affordable Care Act, insurance companies will once again have more power to decide what kinds of care are and are not covered.

My constituents and people across the country were listening when President Trump said he would provide ''insurance for everybody'' that would be higher quality and lower cost. They heard Senate Republicans say it is important any new healthcare plan ''do no harm.'' They even saw House Republicans reassure them that they wouldn't ''pull the rug out'' from under anyone on ObamaCare.

This legislation that has now been rolled out represents a broken promise to patients and families. It will leave them sicker, more vulnerable to the chaos Republicans are creating within our healthcare system, and less financially secure. Millions of people who only just gained Medicaid coverage will lose it. Premiums could increase as much as 30 percent for people who lose coverage because they are too sick to work or become unemployed. People struggling with mental illness and substance abuse disorders, including opioid addiction, which is ravaging States nationwide, may find their insurance no longer has to cover the treatment they need. Key public health programs that families across the country rely on would be slashed.

TrumpCare would be a disaster for our workers and our families, but let's be clear about whom it does work for: those at the top. TrumpCare not only harms the same workers and families Republicans promised to help, it does so in order to reduce the tax burden for the wealthiest and for the insurance companies. In fact, this bill even includes a payout for insurance company executives. This is the definition of taking our healthcare system backward.

I also want to make it clear what TrumpCare will mean specifically for women. As someone who has fought time after time to protect women's ability to make their own healthcare decisions, I can tell you, this bill is a wish list by and for the extreme politicians who insist on telling women what to do with their own bodies. It will defund Planned Parenthood. It will undermine key protections for women's healthcare that were included in the Affordable Care Act. By slashing Medicaid, this bill will take coverage away from low-income women and women of color who disproportionately rely on Medicaid to get the care they need.

I cannot oppose this bill more strongly, and I am going to be doing everything I can to fight back against it. I know Senate Democrats are ready to do so as well, and I urge any Republican who is truly concerned about their constituent's health, their well-being, and their financial security, rather than just partisan politics, to do the right thing and join us.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

REPEALING AND REPLACING OBAMACARE

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, yesterday the House of Representatives released a way forward to dismantle and replace ObamaCare, which will be to deliver on one of our biggest campaign promises made to the American people, not just in 2016 but in essentially every election since 2010.

We know ObamaCare has been an unmitigated disaster. Premiums on the ObamaCare exchanges are up by 25 percent. Millions of Americans have been kicked off their healthcare plans, and the economy has been saddled with billions of dollars in new regulations.

The fact is, ObamaCare has been one broken promise after another. President Obama and advocates of this law said if you wanted to keep your plan, you could keep it, but that didn't pan out. They said if you liked your doctor, you didn't have to find another one. That didn't turn out to be true either. They promised people across the country would have more coverage, more options, and better healthcare, all at a more affordable price. Well, that ended up not being true either.

The truth is, ObamaCare hasn't made healthcare more affordable for a lot of Americans. In fact, in Texas, if you have a gross income of $24,000, you can end up spending up to 30 percent of your gross income just on healthcare costs. That is not affordable healthcare. That is unaffordable healthcare.

Clearly, ObamaCare is no gold standard. It is a failed piece of legislation, one that is full of empty promises and one we have to scrap and start over again. Now we have an opportunity to do better for the people we represent, who are counting on us to deliver, to repeal ObamaCare and replace it with options that work.

I believe the plan released last night is a major step in the right direction. Patients need better tools like health savings accounts. That way they have more control over their healthcare decisions, and we can keep the bureaucracy out of it. We need to break down the barriers that restrict choice and keep Americans choosing an insurance plan that works for them and their families, and we need to empower employers, particularly small business owners, to provide their employees with the kind of affordable coverage that meets their needs.

To sum it up, we need to move healthcare decisions out of Washington and send them back to the States and back to patients and families and their doctors. That will only happen once we

repeal ObamaCare and replace it with options that work for more affordable healthcare coverage that patients choose, not that the government mandates and punishes you if you don't buy it but freedom of choice at a better cost and meeting the needs of individual patients.

I am glad our colleagues in the House and our friends in the White House fully understand why this is such a priority and why we need to keep the promise we made. As soon as we can do that and deliver on that major promise to the American people—the sooner we do that, a whole lot of American families across the country will feel relief.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. President, this morning, the Senate Judiciary Committee considered the nominations of Rod Rosenstein and Rachel Brand as Deputy Attorney General and Associate Attorney General, respectively. Both of them are longtime, well-respected public servants. Mr. Rosenstein has spent his career serving the Justice Department and Presidents of both political parties. In fact, Mr. Rosenstein started in the George H.W. Bush Justice Department back in 1990, and he served every President since that time. He is a career public servant who has served in a bipartisan manner and has also been confirmed by the Senate. President Bush appointed him to be U.S. attorney and so did President Obama.

When the Obama administration needed a prosecutor of the utmost integrity to investigate national security leaks that looked highly political, they turned—you guessed it—to Rod Rosenstein. Put another way, if Rod Rosenstein is not an acceptable nominee, who is?

This morning in the Senate Judiciary Committee, I heard some of our colleagues suggest that Mr. Rosenstein needed to make a pledge to appoint a special counsel if he was confirmed as Deputy Attorney General. We had two of our Maryland colleagues extoll his credentials, and rightly so, and call him a person of the utmost integrity and professionalism. Yet they, in essence, wanted him to fire himself once he became Deputy Attorney General and appoint a special counsel to do the job he would be confirmed and nominated to do. He wisely declined to make that judgment, certainly before he has had access to the facts and the information needed.

I believe he will make a formidable Deputy Attorney General, but instead of actually vetting the candidates on the merits of their impressive backgrounds and strong credentials, some used the hearing as an opportunity to air their various grievances on the current Attorney General, our former colleague Jeff Sessions. Over the weekend, some went so far as to threaten to block Mr. Rosenstein's nomination if he wouldn't agree to appoint a special counsel.

I hope my colleagues in this Chamber don't stonewall his nomination or use it as a platform to disparage Attorney General Sessions. The Attorney General made a decision to recuse himself from a further official role in looking into the allegations of Russian involvement in our election in 2016. I respect his decision. The fact is, we don't need another commission to study Russian involvement in the last election because we have a bipartisan Senate Intelligence Committee, chaired by Senator RICHARD BURR and the Vice Chair is MARK WARNER—a bipartisan Senate Select Committee that is doing a deep dive into the allegations, including gaining access to classified information which would be important to consider in reaching a conclusion.

Yesterday I was out at CIA Headquarters and saw four large binders' worth of classified material, which obviously I am not going to discuss, but it demonstrates that this investigation is already well underway. Members of the committee and our staff are already working with the intelligence community to get the information we need in order to reach an impartial and bipartisan conclusion.

The fact is, our Democratic friends have a short memory when it comes to the Obama Justice Department, one of the most politicalized Justice Departments in American history. Loretta Lynch, who privately met with President Bill Clinton while her Department was investigating his wife's email scandal, never recused herself from the matter.

Then there was Attorney General Holder. To my knowledge, he was the first Attorney General ever held in contempt of Congress because he refused to cooperate with our legitimate oversight responsibilities when it came to Operation Fast and Furious. Well, he never recused himself and never appointed a special counsel, even though I believe he should have. Compare Attorney General Sessions, who did what he believed was the right thing to do. He recused himself when there was even a suggestion he might not be able to be impartial. He made that commitment from the beginning, well before he was confirmed. He stood by that promise last week. Attorney General Sessions' integrity is intact, and he did the right thing, but Loretta Lynch didn't. Eric Holder didn't.

For our colleagues now to suggest that Attorney General Sessions not only should recuse himself but he should resign is beyond outrageous. To suggest that the incoming Deputy Attorney General, Rod Rosenstein, should somehow abdicate the role he has been nominated for, and to which he will be confirmed, is to ask him to prejudge the case before he has even had a chance to look at the evidence.

All I am asking for is our colleagues to have a little perspective. These nominees are the right caliber of people with the exact expertise we need to make sure our Justice Department runs effectively and impartially follows the law of the land. These are the types of leaders you want to handle the big issues facing the Department of Justice.

I hope soon our colleagues on the other side of the aisle will turn their attention to doing what the American people sent them to do; that is, to consider legislation rather than dragging their feet and blocking the Trump administration from getting the team he has chosen to work with in various Cabinet positions and sub-Cabinet positions.

Hopefully, soon they will decide not to obstruct progress and grind this Chamber's business to a halt but rather will be partners with us, working together to try to build consensus where we can and move the country forward.

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. 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.

The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, the Bureau of Land Management has a mission set by Congress; that is, to manage the Nation's public lands under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield, which means that public land should be open to everything, from hunting and grazing to energy development and other reasonable uses.

The BLM currently manages more than 246 million acres of land and 700 million acres of Federal and non-Federal subsurface estate. Much of these lands are in the West, where Federal acres coexist with private and State-owned land. In order to manage its resources effectively, BLM is required to provide resource management plans. This planning has typically been led by BLM's field offices, in coordination with State, local, and Tribal governments that provide local input on how best to manage the land and its unique resources. However, in the final months of the last administration, the BLM sought to apply a top-down approach, essentially a one-size-fits-all, top-down approach to this resource management process. They termed it the planning 2.0 final rule.

The rule which was finalized in December changed how this planning is done and undermined the well-established process by limiting the ability of local input, public comment, and meaningful State consultation.

The final rule also pulled decision-making away from the regional BLM field offices and centralized it at BLM's headquarters in Washington, under the concept of ''landscape-level planning,'' which lets Washington define new

areas covering multiple States. The rule takes important decision-making away from local officials who know the land and understand the needs of their communities.

The BLM rule sought to ignore the multiple-use requirements established by Congress and diminishes the importance of energy development. The rule tilts the balance in favor of conservation and non-development and away from responsible energy development, as well as other uses, like grazing.

In a State like North Dakota, with a distinctive patchwork of underground Federal minerals and private or State surface ownership, this creates more uncertainty for energy producers and more difficulty for our ranchers. By repealing this rule, we are preserving our longstanding tradition of allowing multiple uses on Federal lands, while protecting the livelihoods of our ranchers, energy producers, and many others. That is why this resolution is supported by the North Dakota Stockmen's Association, along with the National Association of Counties, the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, the Farm Bureau, the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, the Public Lands Council, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, just to name a few.

I am proud to be an original cosponsor of the CRA on the BLM planning 2.0 rule. I thank Chairman MURKOWSKI, the chairman of our Energy Committee, for her leadership on this important issue.

The House passed this CRA on February 7 in a bipartisan manner. I am hopeful the Senate will do so as well and send this bill to the President's desk this week.

Today's CRA ensures that State, local, and Tribal input and expertise should guide the management of our public lands. Let's stop the BLM's planning 2.0 rule and give the people who live and work in these communities a say on what happens in their hometowns. We can do that by voting for this CRA. I urge my colleagues to do so.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, the people spoke loudly last fall. For too long, the Obama administration ignored the common sense of those who managed the lands and our natural resources. Now is the time for that power to be put back into the hands of the folks who know it best; that is, the people of Montana, not Washington, DC. And the Bureau of Land Management's Planning 2.0 rule is no different.

The resolution we are debating today, H.J. Res. 44, would block the implementation of a rule that would fundamentally change the land planning process at the BLM. It would be for the worst.

During the Obama administration's final days in office, they put through many midnight rules costing a total of $157 billion, including this rule shift which was issued on December 12, 2016, which fundamentally changes the land planning process. The rule shifts the planning and decisionmaking away from those who know the land best, away from BLM regional field offices, and back to BLM Headquarters in Washington, DC. That is the exact opposite direction that land management should be going, and that is why this rule must go also.

This rule limits the voice of our local and State governments, and it strengthens the voice of folks who are living far away from the lands that are impacted.

Montana farmers, Montana ranchers, Montana miners, the Montana electric co-ops, Montana conservation districts, and Montana county commissioners have all expressed a concern for this rule and have urged congressional action. And there can't be a more commonsense list of Montanans than that list I just mentioned. In fact, even the western Governors are concerned. As recently as February 10, 2017, our own Governor of Montana, Steve Bullock, and Governor Daugaard from South Dakota urged Congress to direct BLM to reexamine the rule. ''Governors are concerned that BLM's emphasis on landscape-scale planning may lead to a resulting emphasis on national objectives over state and local objectives.'' ''Collectively, these changes severely limit the deference Governors were previously afforded with respect to RMP development.'' That is what our Governors are saying. I am quoting our Governors from the West.

There needs to be more balance in Federal land management. For the last 8 years, we have been out of balance. Oil and natural gas development on Federal lands dropped significantly under President Obama. In fact, for natural gas, we have seen an 18-percent decrease, while oil production on private and State lands doubled, versus the same on Federal land.

Montana has nearly 2 million acres of public land that are inaccessible to the public. Our farmers and ranchers in Montana need a more balanced partnership with the Federal land managers. They deserve more input in the development of land management policies, not less. By the way, our Federal forests in Montana are in dire need of more active management.

So where do we go next? There is no disagreement that revisions need to be made. Let's take this rule back to the drawing board and do it right. Let's work with our new Secretary of the Department of the Interior, RYAN ZINKE, a Montanan, and President Trump to restore more western commonsense to land management.

I urge my colleagues to support H.J. Res. 44.

RECESS

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate recess until 2:15 p.m. and that the time during the recess be charged equally to both sides on the joint resolution.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 12:35 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. FLAKE).

DISAPPROVING A RULE SUBMITTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PORTMAN). The Senator from Utah, the President pro tempore.

COMMEMORATING RARE DISEASE DAY

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to engage Senator KLOBUCHAR in a colloquy to commemorate Rare Disease Day in order to discuss issues facing patients and the families of those who have been diagnosed with these types of conditions.

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

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, as cochairs of the Rare Disease Caucus, Senator KLOBUCHAR and I have worked hard to bring more hope to patients and their families who are coping with rare diseases on a daily basis.

Today 1 in 20 individuals worldwide is living with one or more of the more than 7,000 rare diseases, 95 percent of which do not have an effective treatment. While the incentives provided by the Orphan Drug Act, first championed by me in 1983, has led to the approval of nearly 600 orphan drugs, much more needs to be done.

Many patients living with rare diseases rely on the FDA to evaluate and approve treatment options for their conditions. That is why it is so important for the FDA to use its authority to accelerate the evaluation and approval of drugs for treating rare diseases and for Congress to ensure that proper incentives exist for research to discover and make affordable treatments and cures available for this community.

To address this issue, Congress passed the FDA Safety and Innovation Act of 2012, which refined and strengthened the tools available to FDA to accelerate the evaluation and approval of new drugs targeting unmet medical needs for rare conditions. I have been paying close attention to how this new authority translates into advances for patients suffering from conditions such as Duchenne muscular dystrophy, atypical hemolytic uremic syndrome, Bertrand-N-glycanase deficiency, and other rare diseases.

In light of these changes over the past few years, I ask my friend from Minnesota whether the current approval process is achieving its goals of safety and efficacy without hampering the development of new therapies.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. I thank Senator HATCH for beginning this colloquy. I am so proud to be a cochair of the Rare Disease Caucus with him, and I share my colleague's concerns. I think there must be improvements that are made. I

continue to be inspired by the families across my State, your State, and our country who work so hard to make it easier for kids to have access to drugs to treat their illnesses. Unfortunately, we haven't yet achieved all we can do for these families, and I have heard time and again about the emotional roller coaster that many of them have experienced when they interact with the Federal Government on new approaches for these rare disease conditions. Too often they are unaware when drugs are under review or confused about why experts or patients are not even consulted. The individuals suffering from these conditions and their families need greater clarity about the process for evaluating and approving these drugs, and they ought to be included and informed every step of the way.

It is critical that treatments that do exist for those with rare conditions be accessible and affordable. We must continue to protect the individuals from discrimination in insurance coverage and work to bring down costs. We have to ensure that incentives designed to spur the development and accessibility of treatments that the rare disease community desperately needs are not abused.

I ask Senator HATCH, as one with longstanding leadership on the bill that you passed that has helped so many people and saved lives, how can we focus on sharing this message with our colleagues and our constituents?

Mr. HATCH. I appreciate that question.

We must continue to urge the FDA to fully implement its relatively new authority. Every one of us in this body represents constituents who are battling rare diseases, and I urge the FDA to consider this flexibility as applied in reviewing all candidates' therapies.

I will continue to work closely with my Senate colleagues to ensure that the FDA uses the tools, authorities, and resources required to provide patients and physicians with new treatment options. I have also contacted the FDA frequently during the past year to encourage the agency to listen to the voices of patients during the agency's evaluation process.

When the Senate considers the nominee for FDA Commissioner, I will continue to stress the importance of incorporating a balanced and flexible approach when weighing risks, benefits, and outcomes, especially when dealing with small patient populations with such rapidly progressing prognoses.

Patients with limited or no treatment options are depending on FDA to utilize the flexibility outlined in FDASIA. This law, which provides full and fair review of new drug therapies in a timely manner, gives hope to patients suffering from life threatening diseases and, of course, their families as well.

I ask Senator KLOBUCHAR, how can we move forward into the next user fee agreement?

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Well, that is going to be very important and really an opportunity to make sure that this works for patients with rare diseases and their families. We know that affordability and accessibility remain paramount. We should also think about the burden that these conditions play and the critical role of the voice of the patient.

As you stated, Senator HATCH, more than 7,000 rare diseases exist, and the vast majority have no treatment. This is an extraordinary burden borne every day by Americans in every single State across the country. As we seek to continue making progress, including monitoring implementation of the advances in the bipartisan 21st Century Cures Act, we must ensure that rare disease treatments receive sufficient attention.

We also must encourage Federal agencies to better incorporate the patient's voice in their decisionmaking process. As I mentioned earlier, all too often as we rightly focus on evidence-based medicine, we can lose sight of the human experience of these and different therapies. What may seem simple in a lab may be overwhelming or difficult when applied to patients in real life situations—all the more so when children are involved. The FDA and all agencies should ensure that they have appropriate processes to seek and incorporate this vital input. The user fee agreement will be an opportunity for us to make this case.

I would like to thank Senator HATCH again for his time to discuss these issues that are very important to both of us. We look forward to engaging with our colleagues on these issues as we move forward to the implementation of the Cures Act, as well as the work on the Orphan Drugs Act, and as well as the user fee agreement.

Mr. HATCH. I thank my dear friend, the senior Senator from Minnesota, for her time with me today. It is very meaningful to me and, I think, to everybody who is concerned about this rare disease situation in our country.

This is just the start of our conversation for this Congress. There is so much left for us to do, and I am certain we will succeed as long as we stay together and work in a bipartisan way. So I thank my dear colleague for her words and support and the good leadership she provides in the Senate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

REPUBLICAN HEALTHCARE BILL

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I want to speak about the healthcare bill that has been laid out in the House now—introduced in the House of Representatives. I have great concern about the proposal as it relates to the people of Michigan, whom I represent, as well as to the people across the country. This proposal—or whatever passes—will be judged based on whether or not people pay more for their coverage, if they can find it, and whether they are going to be able to get the healthcare they need.

Healthcare is very personal. Despite the politics here in Congress and in the White House, healthcare is not political; it is very personal. Can you go to a doctor? Can you take your child to a doctor? Can your parents or grandparents get the nursing home care they need? Are you going to be able to find insurance after you have had a heart attack or cancer or if your child has juvenile diabetes and, therefore, has a preexisting condition?

I am deeply concerned after the initial look I have had, and we will continue to look at more and more of the details as they come out. This proposal is going to create chaos in the healthcare system. Frankly, I would say this is a mess. It is going to create a big mess as it relates to the families whom I represent and whom we all represent in our home States.

This was written in secret. We have all seen the stories of the Senator from the other side of the aisle who was running around trying to get a copy of what was going on. Everything was done in secret, and now that it is out, we find out that there is no cost attached to it. We do not know what the overall cost will be to taxpayers. We also do not know how many people are going to be able to get healthcare, who is going to be able to be covered.

What I have seen really falls in the category of creating a mess for families—higher costs for middle-class families, higher costs for poor families, but less coverage—such a deal. This is not the kind of deal that the people of Michigan want to have for themselves and their families.

To add insult to injury, it cuts taxes for the wealthiest Americans, while it makes most Americans pay more. It makes seniors pay more, and we have heard people calling it the ''age tax'' or the ''senior tax.'' The reality is, in a number of different ways, in how we rate, which is based on age and other costs, seniors will pay more. It is my understanding that, in the middle of this, there is actually a sweetheart deal for the CEOs of big insurance companies that will give them pay raises. This whole thing is stunning to me, which is being put forward with a straight face.

On top of everything else, it removes the guarantee for preexisting conditions. It is very unclear what will happen to someone who has had a heart attack. I have a new, little, baby grandniece who has had two heart surgeries already, and there is another one that she will have to have in another year. While she is doing great—and my niece and nephew deserve incredible admiration for taking care of little Leighton—she is going to have a preexisting condition her whole life. She is going to have a reconstructed heart that is going to cause her various challenges. Without the current guarantees that we have that she gets with her insurance, her folks are going to have a hard

time, and little Leighton is going to have a hard time her whole life.

When we look a little bit more into the details of all of this, we see, in fact, that this bill provides tax increases for millions of families. It repeals the tax credits in 2020 that help working families afford insurance. By the way, even though things do not happen immediately, in their knowing it is coming, the insurance companies are certainly going to find themselves making different kinds of decisions, and, certainly, families will make different kinds of decisions. I would expect the insurance system to be destabilized immediately. We are already seeing problems with insurance companies pulling out just based on the debate about repealing healthcare.

When we look at the tax credits—or help—for buying healthcare, it goes from helping those from low-, moderate-, and middle-income families being able to afford insurance to changing the whole thing. It is based on your age and your income. So the higher the age and the higher the income, the more taxpayer dollars you get, which makes no sense. A 55-year-old with a higher income will get more taxpayer funding than will a 30-year-old who is working a minimum wage job and has the toughest time in trying to find insurance that he can afford. This is not the set of values or perspectives that make sense for people in Michigan, as well as for people across the country.

While that 30-year-old who is working a minimum wage job is going to be paying more and hoping that he does not have a preexisting condition because he may not be able to find insurance at all, we see that there is a $300 billion—with a ''b''—tax cut for the wealthiest Americans. Picture this: Somebody in a minimum wage job who could very well see his health insurance go completely away will have that happen, while someone who makes more than $3.7 million a year will save over $200,000 a year. So $200,000 a year is what he will get back now in the form of a tax cut, which is more than what most people make. Certainly, the majority of people in Michigan make less. They work very, very hard, but they make less than $200,000.

Just to underscore, this is the first bill out of the gate here in which we are talking about any kind of tax cuts. We are already seeing Republicans cutting taxes for the wealthy while raising taxes on the middle class and raising their healthcare costs if they can find healthcare. These tax cuts are just the start. Wait until we get to tax reform, when we are going to see this whole debate happen again. My guess is that middle-income people are going to end up paying the bill—paying more—and the wealthy people are going to get another round of tax cuts.

To add insult to injury again, there are the sweetheart deals so that the CEOs of the biggest insurance companies can get pay raises—can get more money—while people will pay more if they work or are poor or middle class. There are tax cuts for prescription drug companies of $30 billion, but the bill does nothing to lower the cost of prescription drugs. This, certainly, is not healthcare for the majority of Americans. This, certainly, is not healthcare for those who need to have access to affordable healthcare.

Then it is back to our seniors, who will pay more because of the changes in how healthcare costs will be rated. We will, essentially, see older people having twice the tax credit but five times more the cost. I am not sure exactly how it is being proposed for preexisting conditions. We are still working through that. I do know that the bill has a penalty. If you have health insurance and, for some reason, there is a crisis in your family and, for some reason, you cannot continue it and you drop that insurance and then you reenroll again, there is a 30-percent late enrollment surcharge. You will be paying 30 percent more for your health insurance if you have a preexisting condition.

There are just two other items that are very important. I know that the distinguished Presiding Officer shares the concern about this as well, which is the fact that we have been able to create more access to healthcare by expanding Medicaid, which is critically important.

One of the great success stories in Michigan today is that 97 percent of our children in Michigan can now see a doctor—97 percent. We do not want to go backward. Every child should have the ability to see a doctor—every mom, every dad, every grandpa, every grandma. Right now, in Michigan, 97 percent of children can see a doctor because of the work that we did on the Affordable Care Act, including in the expansion of Medicaid. This goes away. It takes a couple of years, but that goes away.

Instead, what is proposed, essentially, is a voucher, but it has been called a lot of names. There used to be folks talking about a block grant to the States. Now they call it ''per capita.'' Yet it is really simple. Just like there have been proposals by Republicans for years to have a voucher for Medicare, now this is, essentially, a voucher for Medicaid of X number of dollars. If you need more for your nursing home care, then you are on your own. There are X number of dollars for your child, for a family. If you have something happen and you get sick and you need surgery or if you have cancer and it goes above that voucher, you are on your own.

It completely changes Medicaid from an insurance system to a system of, essentially, a voucher. Millions and millions and millions of children, of families, of seniors—the majority of seniors in nursing homes get their coverage through Medicaid—and our moms, dads, grandpas, and grandmas, who right now get quality nursing home care because of Medicaid, will be severely impacted by this voucher that caps how much care they will be able to receive.

Finally, for over half of the population—for those of us who are women—we will see a return, essentially, to a woman being a preexisting condition. Essential services for women—maternity care, which I was at the front of the line in fighting for, and prenatal care—are not available in the majority of private plans a woman tries to buy without her paying more. You can get maternity care, but it is not viewed as basic. It may be basic to you, as a woman, but insurance companies say: Sure, we will cover maternity care, but you have to pay more. Forever, women have been paying more for their basic healthcare. Under the Affordable Care Act, that changed when we said: Do you know what? As a woman, you should not have to pay more for the basic care you need.

Now all of that goes away under the House proposal. Just to make sure that we see women's healthcare taken away, Planned Parenthood is defunded. Yet 97 percent of what they do is basic care—mammograms, getting to see your doctor, OB/GYN, prenatal care, and all of the things you need for annual visits and so on. That is completely defunded.

I congratulate everyone who has been involved in the effort to make sure that birth control is affordable for women, and under the Affordable Care Act, we have done that. This is an economic issue; this is not a frill for women or for men or for families or for those who have worked hard to make sure we can lower unintended pregnancies in this country.

The good news is that we are at a 30-year low in unintended pregnancies, a historic low in teen pregnancies, and at the lowest rate of abortions since 1973—1973. Why is that? That is because women have been able to get the healthcare they need. They have been able to get affordable birth control to be able to manage their healthcare, as well as seeing the economy improve. But we are seeing more and more where more information is being made available, costs for basic preventive care is down, and women having access to what they need in healthcare allows them to be in a situation where we are seeing these historic lows on unintended pregnancies, teen pregnancies, and abortions.

I know in Michigan we have a number of counties across Michigan, particularly in rural communities, where the Planned Parenthood clinic is the only provider of basic healthcare. It is the only provider for family planning and for cancer screenings and basic healthcare for women and for many men. It may be the only provider in the community. More than half of Planned Parenthood health centers are in rural and underserved communities. About one-third of all of the women living in those communities where Planned Parenthood is available find that this is the only healthcare provider available to them.

So support for women, preventive healthcare, and Planned Parenthood funding are cut completely in this bill. Access to maternity care, prenatal care, and other basic essential services is eliminated. If you want that, you can pay more as a woman.

On top of that, we are seeing essential services like mental health and substance abuse services and other basic comprehensive services that we said for the last several years should be available—healthcare above the neck as well as healthcare below the neck should be viewed as essential services for people across America. All of that goes away with this proposal.

So, in my judgment, this is a mess. It is going to create a mess, with more costs, less service, shifting taxpayer dollars to the wealthy, while asking the middle-class and low-income families to pay more. This is simply not a good deal.

I would welcome the opportunity to work with colleagues on something that makes sense. Let's put aside this whole effort of repeal. Let's focus on how we can bring costs down, including prescription drugs, and continue to move forward, but let's not go back. When 97 percent of the children in my State can see a doctor today, that is worth keeping. That represents the best of our values. We can't go backward. The proposal we are seeing in the House would take us back to a place that would hurt the majority of Americans, and I strongly oppose it.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, irrespective of how the Presidential election came out last November, we would be having a conversation about how to fix ObamaCare. There are many reasons for that, but most importantly is that it has just skyrocketed costs for people in this country. Premiums have gone through the roof, deductibles have increased, copays have increased, and out-of-pocket costs have become so extensive for people that even if they have coverage, they can't use their plans in many cases. So when our colleagues across the aisle talk about the recently rolled out proposal coming from the House—which they will be discussing and we eventually will be discussing—to try to drive down the costs for people in this country, that is what this debate is really all about.

You can say what you want, but the fact is that this year, 2017, premium increases are 25 percent in the exchanges—25 percent. In six States, the premium increases were 50 percent in the exchanges. I don't know how anybody—any family in this country—can keep up with those kinds of skyrocketing premiums. If you are buying your insurance on the individual market, the roof is blown off.

I talk to people in my State of South Dakota all the time who share with me the excessive amount that it now costs for them to cover themselves and their families. I talked to a lady in Sioux Falls recently, and she told me they are now paying $22,000 a year for health insurance. That is not working. That is why what we had was an abysmal failure.

In terms of choices, the whole idea was that people were going to have options out there. In a third of the counties in America today—one-third of the counties in America today—people have one option, one insurer. It is pretty hard to get a competitive rate when you only have one option. There is a virtual monopoly in a third of the counties in America today.

So we have markets collapsing, insurers pulling out, and we saw that last fall Blue Cross Blue Shield pulled out of the individual market in South Dakota and left 8,000 people wondering how they are going to continue to cover themselves with health insurance. The markets are collapsing, choices are dwindling, and costs are skyrocketing.

The Senator from Michigan was just on the floor talking about how terrible things are going to be under the proposal that is being considered and discussed in the House of Representatives, but the fact is, things are terrible today, and that is why we are having this conversation. Eight in ten Americans think ObamaCare either ought to be repealed entirely or dramatically changed, significantly changed. By any estimation, by any objective measurement or metric, it has been a failure, and that is why we are having this conversation, and that conversation would have occurred irrespective of what happened in the Presidential election last fall.

So let's be clear about why we are here and why we are having this conversation and why we are coming up with a better solution for the American people that will drive down their costs, give them more choices, create more competition in the marketplace, and give them a higher and better quality of care because it restores the doctor-patient relationship, which is so important, not having the government intervening and being in the middle of all of that.

THE ECONOMY AND REGULATORY REFORM

Mr. President, we have a recovery that technically began almost 8 years ago, but for too many Americans, it still feels as if we are in a recession. Americans basically have not had a pay raise in 8 years. Since the recovery began in 2009, wage growth has averaged a paltry 0.25 percent a year—one quarter of 1 percent increase in pay per year since 2009. Well, imagine if you are a family and you are looking at everything that is going up in your lives, whether it is healthcare, which I just talked about, or the cost of education or the cost of energy or the cost of food, all of these things that continue to go up, and you are getting a 0.25-percent—one quarter of 1 percent—pay raise on an annual basis. It is pretty hard not to feel like you are starting to sink and your head is going to be below water before long.

Good jobs and opportunities for workers have been too few and too far between. Millions of Americans are working part time because they can't find full-time employment. Even as some economic markers have improved, our economy has stayed firmly stuck in the doldrums. Economic growth for 2016 averaged a dismal 1.6 percent, and there are few signs that things are improving.

By the way, the historical average going back to World War II is about 3.2 percent average growth in the economy. So last year we were at one-half of what the average had been going back all the way to World War II.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office is projecting average growth for the next 10 years at just 2 percent—in other words, long-term economic stagnation.

The good news, though, is that we don't have to resign ourselves to the status quo. We can get our economy going again. Republicans are committed to doing just that. To get our economy going again, we need to identify the reasons for the long-term stagnation we are experiencing.

A recent report from the Economic Innovation Group identified one important problem: a lack of what the organization calls ''economic dynamism.'' Economic dynamism, as the Economic Innovation Group defines it, refers to the rate at which new businesses are born and die.

In a dynamic economy, the rate of new business creation is high and significantly outstrips the rate of business deaths. But that hasn't been the case in the United State lately. New business creation has significantly dropped over the past several years. Between 2009 and 2011, business death outstripped business birth.

While the numbers have since improved slightly, the recovery has been poor and far, as I mentioned before, from historical norms. The Economic Innovation Group notes that in 2012—the economy's best year for business creation since the recession—it fell far short of its worst year prior to 2008. This is deeply concerning because new businesses have historically been responsible for a substantial part of the job creation in this country, not to mention a key source of innovation. When new businesses aren't being created at a strong rate, workers face a whole host of problems.

''A less dynamic economy,'' the Economic Innovation Group notes, ''is one likely to feature fewer jobs, lower labor force participation, slack wage growth, and rising inequality—exactly what we see today.''

Well, American workers clearly need relief, and restoring economic dynamism is a key to providing it. We need to pave the way for new businesses and the jobs they create, and we need to ensure that current businesses, particularly small businesses, are able to thrive.

There are a number of ways we can do this. One big thing we can do is relieve the burden of excessive government regulations. Obviously some government regulations are important and necessary, but too many others are unnecessary and doing nothing but loading businesses down with compliance costs and paperwork hours. The more resources businesses spend complying with regulations, the less they have available for growth and innovation. Excessive regulations also prevent many new businesses from ever getting off the ground. Small startups simply don't have the resources to hire individuals, let alone the consultants and lawyers to do the costly work of complying with the scores of government regulations.

Unfortunately, over the past 8 years, the Obama administration spent a lot of time imposing burdensome regulations on American businesses. According to the American Action Forum, the Obama administration was responsible for implementing more than 675 major regulations that cost the economy more than $800 billion. Given those numbers, it is no surprise that the Obama economy left businesses with fewer resources to dedicate to growing and creating jobs or that new business creation seriously dropped off during those years in the Obama administration.

Since the new Congress began in January, Republicans have been focused on repealing burdensome ObamaCare regulations using the Congressional Review Act. We have already used this law to repeal three Obama regulations, and this week we will use it to repeal at least two more, including the ''blacklisting'' rule, which imposes duplicative and unnecessary requirements for businesses bidding on Federal Government contracts, and the Bureau of Land Management methane rule, which curbs energy production on Federal lands by restricting drilling. This methane rule would cost jobs and deprive State and local governments of tax and royalty payments that they can use to address local priorities.

Another area of regulatory reform we need to address is ObamaCare, as I mentioned. Repealing the burdensome mandates and regulations this law has imposed on businesses will go a long way toward removing barriers to new businesses and spurring growth at existing businesses.

Another important thing we can do is remove unnecessary barriers that restrict access to capital. Both new and existing businesses rely on capital to help them innovate, expand, and create jobs.

In addition to removing burdensome regulations, tax reform needs to be a priority. Measures like allowing new businesses to deduct their startup costs and reducing rates for small businesses would spur new business creation and help small businesses thrive. Republicans plan to take up comprehensive tax reform later this year, and I look forward to that debate.

The American economy has always been known for being dynamic and innovative, and we need to make sure it stays that way. We need to free up the innovators and the job creators so that the next big idea isn't buried by government regulations before it has a chance to see the light of day.

Sluggish economic growth doesn't have to be the new normal. By removing burdensome government regulations and reforming our Tax Code, we can spur business creation and innovation. We can increase wages and opportunities for American workers, and we can put our economy on the path to long-term health, where that growth rate gets back to that more historic level that allows for better paying jobs and higher wages for American families.

I look forward to working with my colleagues in both Houses of Congress to achieve these goals, and I am anxious for us to start passing bills that will put policies in place that are favorable to higher economic growth, better jobs, and better wages for the American people and their families.

I yield the floor.

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, as we continue to debate H.J. Res. 44, a resolution of disproval to nullify the BLM planning 2.0 rule, I would like to bring to the attention of my colleagues an editorial published last week in the Grand Junction Daily Sentinel. It outlines many of the reasons we should oppose the repeal of the BLM planning 2.0 rule.

I ask unanimous consent that the article be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From The Daily Sentinel, Mar. 1, 2017]

ALIGNING VALUES

Colorado's biggest political guns are marching to the beat of the same drum, proclaiming the Centennial State is the perfect new location for the massive Outdoor Retailer Show which is leaving Salt Lake City over the extreme stance Utah's political leaders have taken on public lands.

Democratic Gov. John Hickenlooper and U.S. Sens. Cory Gardner, a Republican, and Democrat Michael Bennet sent a joint letter Monday to the Outdoor Retailer Show hailing Colorado's bipartisan commitment to maintaining and protecting public lands.

Considering that Utah is ground-zero for a movement to transfer management of public lands from the federal government to the states, it's not hard for Colorado to claim that its values are more closely aligned with the outdoor industry, which relies on public lands for its livelihood.

Colorado could enhance that claim if Gardner and Bennet refuse to overturn the first major revision of the Bureau of Land Management's land-use planning process in three decades.

Congress is seeking to overturn BLM's Planning 2.0 initiative under the Congressional Review Act. The House has already voted to eliminate the rule. If the Senate follows suit, it will undo an effort to increase public involvement, improve transparency and promote science-based decision-making in public-lands planning.

Planning 2.0 is not without its critics. The Western Governors' Association has asked Congress in a Feb. 10 letter to ''direct the BLM to re-examine the final Planning 2.0 rule. Any revisions . . . should be crafted collaboratively with western states.''

But there can be no revisions if the rule is repealed under the CRA, which is a ''nuclear bomb'' of a legislative tool. The CRA would not only overturn the rule, but block future rulemakings that are ''substantially the same'' without prior approval from Congress.

That means the BLM would be stuck with an antiquated planning process, hobbling the agency in a way that reinforces all the negative perceptions that already exist regarding the way it manages public lands.

Sportsmen's groups, the Pew Charitable Trusts, conservation groups and the Outdoor Industry Association all support Planning 2.0. The WGA wants to keep it alive to improve it.

Public lands are the backbone of the outdoor industry, which contributes $646 billion to the economy annually.

Gardner sponsored the Outdoor Recreation and Jobs Economic Impact Act, which was signed into law by the president last year. It requires the Bureau of Economic Analysis to calculate the economic impact of the outdoor recreation industry and requires the Commerce Department to provide Congress with a full evaluation of the outdoor recreation industry.

He obviously recognizes the importance of the outdoor recreation industry as a jobs creator and an economic engine. He should also understand that the industry equates killing the rule with hampering growth.

The Senate vote may have not any bearing on whether the Outdoor Retailer Show relocates to Colorado. But supporting 2.0 is a show of good faith that our senators get what's at stake.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I oppose today's resolution to overturn the Bureau of Land Management planning 2.0 rule.

The Bureau of Land Management is charged with ensuring responsible use of public lands, which requires extensive land use planning to balance priorities like recreation, conservation, and energy development. Planning 2.0 simply updates outdated planning processes that date back 30 years to provide greater community input and transparency. This is intended to create plans that work better for all users, including local communities. It is also meant to reduce the time it takes to complete the planning process.

Under the new rule, the public is involved in the planning process early to avoid costly and time-consuming disputes later. The rule allows for the use of current technology like geospatial data to allow for more science-based decisionmaking.

Developing planning 2.0 took 2 years and included consideration of more than 6,000 public comments. With today's resolution, we would abandon modernization that makes it easier for the public and State and local governments to be involved in the Federal planning process and revert to rules that were written in 1983.

A wide range of sportsmen groups, including the Izaak Walton League of America, the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, and Trout Unlimited have asked us to preserve Planning 2.0. They write: ''Stakeholders

from across the multiple-use spectrum agreed that the previous BLM planning process could be improved. Under the outdated process, opportunities for public involvement were too few, and the public didn't learn about agency plans until they were already proposed.''

If we pass this resolution today, BLM will have to go back to that outdated process and would be prohibited from proposing a rule that is substantially similar to planning 2.0. I urge my colleagues to vote against this resolution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

TRUMPCARE

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, last night the Republicans in the House revealed their plan to scrap the ACA and replace it with something much worse—TrumpCare. There are so many things that are wrong with this bill. A lot of us are still going through the 184 pages and all of its implications, so it is impossible to encapsulate all the difficulties in this legislation in one speech.

I am going to highlight eight problems with this bill to start. First of all, this bill is a complicated and rushed mess. Despite the fact that they had 7 years to work on their own plan, the Republicans cobbled together a bill that makes no sense. In an effort to make everyone in their caucus happy, they have made no one in their caucus happy. That is why we have seen conservative groups—from AEI to AFP, the Heritage Foundation, the Koch brothers—come out and express opposition to the legislation.

Second, this bill cuts Medicaid. They are going to use a phrase called block grants, but I want everyone to understand that is cutting Medicaid. That is a euphemism for cutting the resources for Medicaid. This cuts a program that helps more than 70 million Americans across the country get the healthcare they need. It means less care for pregnant moms, less care for families with loved ones in nursing homes. Nursing home benefits will be totally trashed, and all of these changes will reduce Medicaid to a level not seen before.

By the way, Medicare doesn't escape the ax. It is also in trouble if we enact the House legislation. TrumpCare will actually move up the date of insolvency of the Medicare trust fund by 3 years, to the year 2025. That is not 20, 30 years from now when they talk about the Social Security trust fund. That is quite soon to have Medicare be insolvent, and they are accelerating the date in which Medicare becomes insolvent.

Third, this bill hits the elderly with an age tax. Here is how the law currently works. It is basically a cap on the amount that an insurance company can charge a senior for healthcare. It says you cannot charge more than three times the amount you charge a young person for a senior citizen.

It is capped at three times what you charge for young people. This would increase the cap to five times the cost. If a young person's health insurance costs $250, the maximum under the current law is $750. Now you are talking five times $250—$1,250 per month.

This is an age tax. If there is any doubt about how difficult this is going to be for senior citizens, ask the AARP. They are a bipartisan, well-respected organization that works in every State. Seniors across the country need to understand what this age tax is. You will pay more for health insurance if the law passes as it is.

Fourth, and this is a very important point. This is basically not a healthcare bill because if it were a healthcare bill, everybody knows it would require 60 votes. It would be enacting new legislation. This is a budget bill. All they can do, really, is cut taxes related to healthcare. This is a bill that cuts taxes for rich people.

How does it finance it? First of all, it finances—probably a lot of it by borrowing. The other portion of it is by cuts to Medicare and Medicaid. TrumpCare has special tax cuts that only benefit the highest earning households and another one that will go to insurance company executives who make more than half a million dollars a year.

You cannot make this stuff up. They are cutting taxes for insurance company executives who make more than half a million dollars each year, and they are financing it by cutting healthcare for the people we all represent.

Fifth, this bill will blow up the debt and the deficit. The crazy thing is, we don't actually know how much our debt and deficit will increase because Republicans are in such a hurry to rush this through without a formal CBO analysis. We have no idea how much this is going to cost—probably trillions, but they haven't even asked for a CBO score. They don't want to know how much this is going to blow up the debt and the deficit because all of the fiscal hawks will be found to be hypocrites who have been railing about deficits for all of their career. Yet this might be the biggest budget-busting piece of legislation in many, many years, and they don't want to know how much it costs because they have made a promise. They are going to go ahead and fulfill that promise no matter how ridiculous it is.

Sixth, this bill will trash mental health coverage. The ACA was a huge step forward for the mental health community because it required insurance companies to cover mental health and substance abuse disorders. We are in a moment when every State is struggling with an addiction crisis. What I don't know is why we would rip away these services when so many people are counting on it to break their addictions.

Seventh, this bill will defund Planned Parenthood because they can't help themselves in the U.S. House of Representatives. Planned Parenthood is a provider that offers healthcare to millions of women across the country, but this bill will stop low-income women from getting critical health services like breast cancer screenings from local clinics. Oftentimes, this would happen in communities where women have nowhere else to turn. Many community health centers don't have the services women need or they have twice the wait times that a Planned Parenthood would have. For women waiting to find out if they have cancer, that is simply not an option.

Finally, this bill is too partisan. I think we can all agree that our approach to healthcare could use some improvements, and I am more than ready to work with my Republican colleagues to make healthcare better. That is not just a rhetorical flourish. I have tried to back that up with my legislative actions. I have worked with Senator HATCH on legislation to increase access to high-quality care in hard-to-reach regions. I have worked with Senator CASSIDY and many others on a bill to create a public health emergency fund. I have worked with Senators WICKER, COCHRAN, and THUNE on a telehealth bill.

We can work together on healthcare, but it requires three things: No. 1, good faith, and there is no good faith in this piece of legislation. No. 2, bipartisanship. This bill, I am quite sure, will get zero Democratic votes in the House or the Senate. No. 3, we need legislative hearings. We need to have a conversation in the light of day and let the American people weigh in. We need to figure out what it is that they are doing to the American healthcare system.

If they are so proud of their plan, why no hearings? If they are so proud of their plan, why not get at least a score from the Congressional Budget Office? If they are so proud of their plan, why do they lack the confidence that any Democrat will support it?

Look, we do have the opportunity to work together to improve healthcare, but this bill is basically a mess. It is worse than I thought. I think it is worse than a lot of people thought, especially given that they have been talking about this for 7 years. So one might think they would have had a really well-thought-through plan. This has all of the characteristics of something that was rushed out the door in about a 48-hour period.

I hope my colleagues will join me in opposing this very bad piece of legislation and give us some space and time to do this right and to do this in a bipartisan fashion.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous request that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, TrumpCare is here, and you are going to hate it. This replacement for the Affordable Care Act has been 7 years in the making. On a cursory overview, it appears that when you ask the question as to who gets hurt under the replacement plan, the answer is everyone, with the exception of insurance companies, drug companies, and the very wealthy.

I hope we are able to step back and take our time to analyze what this replacement plan is going to do to Americans who badly need healthcare, who believed Republicans when they told them that they were going to repeal the bill and replace it with something better, and who believed President Trump when he said that he was going to repeal the Affordable Care Act and replace it with something that was wonderful, that insured everybody who was insured under the Affordable Care Act and did it at lower costs.

I know that my colleagues who are well meaning in this Chamber cannot read this replacement plan and understand it to do anything but strip coverage away from millions of Americans and to drive up costs for millions of Americans. There is no credible way to look at this replacement plan without seeing the devastation that will be wrought.

I want to spend just a few minutes, now that we have had this plan to look at for 24 hours, talking about how dangerous it is and pleading with my Republican colleagues to take their time and, hopefully, decide instead to work with Democrats to try to strengthen the Affordable Care Act, fix what is not working as well, but preserve the parts that are working.

Here is what I mean when I say that everyone, with the exception of insurance companies, drug companies, and the superrich, is hurt by the GOP replacement plan. First, this idea that we are going to end the Medicaid expansion—that is what this replacement plan does. It says that in 2 years, effectively 2020, the Medicaid expansion will go away. That means in my State, 200,000 people will lose healthcare. Millions across the country will lose healthcare. They are, by and large, the poor and the lower middle class—largely women and children who can't get insurance other than through the Medicaid expansion—who will no longer be able to get it. Medicaid has been expanded in Democratic States, Republican States, blue States, red States. Letting Medicaid expansion hang around for 2 years is no solace to people who will jam into those years as much healthcare as they can get, but then be without it afterwards.

Even more insidious is the part of the GOP healthcare replacement plan that would turn Medicaid into a block grant after 2020. This has been talked about in conservative circles for a long time, but has been resisted, again, by Democrats and Republicans who understand what that means. It means Medicaid will eventually wither on the vine and will become a State responsibility. No longer will the Federal Government help States pick up the costs for insuring the most vulnerable citizens.

Remember who Medicaid covers. Medicaid covers 60 percent of children with disabilities in this country. Of the tens of millions of kids living with disabilities, 6 out of 10 of them get their insurance from Medicaid. If Medicaid is turned into a block grant, let me just tell you, let me guarantee you that healthcare will end for millions of those kids. If it does not end, it will be dramatically scaled back because States cannot afford to pick up 60, 70, 80 percent eventually of the cost.

Thirty percent of non-elderly adults with disabilities are covered by Medicaid. Sixty-four percent of nursing home residents are covered by Medicaid. Two out of every three of our senior citizens who are living in nursing homes are covered by Medicaid. If you block-grant Medicaid, all of a sudden States will not be able to pick up those costs and will not be able to deliver healthcare to people in nursing homes. That is just the truth.

The Republican bill effectively ends coverage for 11 million people all across this country who are covered by the Medicaid expansion after 2 years, and then it jeopardizes care for tens of millions more by dramatically cutting the Medicaid Program and the Medicaid reimbursement to States. This is not a game; this is 11 million people.

Remember, it is not a guess because in 2020 you will be reverting back to the rules before the Affordable Care Act. Before the Affordable Care Act, 11 million fewer people were covered under Medicaid. Even if States maybe hang around and decide to front the billions of dollars necessary to cover a few million of those, you are still talking about 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 million people who will lose insurance—again, people who can't buy it anywhere else. This is people's lives we are playing with—as I mentioned, 200,000 in Connecticut alone.

Do you know who else gets hurt by this replacement plan? Older Americans. It seems that older Americans are really targeted in this plan because although the underlying Affordable Care Act says that you can't charge older Americans more than three times that of younger Americans, this replacement plan changes the rules. It allows insurance companies to jack up prices on older Americans. So a 60-year-old would have their premium go up by about one-quarter. That is roughly $3,000, according to an AARP study. I don't know about the Presiding Officer, but a lot of adults getting ready to qualify for Medicare in Connecticut don't have $3,000 sitting around.

But it gets worse. Because the premium support is so skimpy, under this plan, that same 60-year-old in Connecticut would have their premium support—their tax credit—cut in half, from $8,000 down to $4,000. Do the math. That is a $9,000 increase in healthcare costs for a 60-year-old resident in Connecticut. That is unaffordable. There is just no way for anybody to say that for that 60-year-old living in Connecticut or living in Nebraska or living in California, that is better healthcare. Nine thousand more dollars out of pocket for a 60-year-old is not better healthcare.

The claim is that this bill will cover people with preexisting conditions, but because there is no minimum benefit requirement, the plans don't have to cover anything that you need for your preexisting condition. So, yes, they can't technically charge someone with cancer more, but they don't have to cover chemotherapy. The Affordable Care Act says insurance has to be insurance. There has to be some minimum, basic level of benefits so that everybody knows that when they buy an insurance plan, they are basically getting coverage for maternity care, for cancer treatment, for mental illness. Because this legislation strips away any requirement that insurance be insurance, maybe you get insurance if you have cancer, but it may not cover anything you have.

Of course the cruelest piece of this bill says that if you lose insurance, you then get charged more. Republicans are right that in the Affordable Care Act as it exists today, there is a penalty if you don't buy insurance. Republicans just do their penalty differently. What this replacement plan says is that if you lose insurance and you try to get it later on, you will pay 30 percent more. I admit that there is a penalty in the underlying Affordable Care Act and there is a penalty in the Republican bill, but the problem is that under the existing Affordable Care Act, the help you get to buy insurance allows you to buy insurance. That is why 20 million people have insurance today. But because the tax credits are basically cut in half under this proposal, it will render healthcare unaffordable; thus, more people will have gaps in coverage; thus, more people will pay the penalty.

So in the end, this bill really does not provide protection for people with preexisting conditions because they are not going to be able to buy insurance in the first place. They are going to fall into that gap, and then they are going to have to pay more. Even if they do have insurance, it may not even cover what they need.

All of this is made harder to understand because it seems to be one big excuse to deliver a giant tax cut to the wealthy. The Joint Committee on Taxation estimates that this bill would cut taxes by $600 billion for the wealthiest Americans. The Affordable Care Act was financed in part by a tax on unearned income for people making over $250,000 a year. I live in a pretty wealthy State—Connecticut—but people who are making $250,000 and a whole lot of unearned income are not amongst the most needy in our society. The average tax cut under this bill

would be $200,000. Why? Because we are taxing so few people who are making such big amounts of money, the average tax cut would be $200,000.

It is so hard to understand because when you do the sum total of parts that are moving under this replacement plan, it seems as if the biggest parts that are moving are care away from millions of poor people and the elderly and money going to the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans. That is not hyperbole; that is just how this bill works out.

The biggest net result of this bill from the status quo is that millions of people who are on Medicaid today in a few years won't have it—those are kids; those are the disabled; those are the elderly—and a handful of very wealthy Americans will make out with enormous tax cuts under this legislation.

I guess it is no secret that this bill was crafted behind closed doors. Seven years in the making, and this bill was hidden from public view until yesterday. Now House Republicans are saying they are going to give the American public 1 week to look at this. No estimate of the cost—they are going to ram it through as quickly as they can.

I held half a dozen townhalls in the summer of 2009, when the tea party tempest was at its highest, where people really wanted to talk to me about how upset they were with the way the healthcare debate was going. One of the refrains that I heard in those townhalls was that Democrats were ramming through the Affordable Care Act. Everybody heard it. Ramming through the Affordable Care Act. It was on FOX News every night. It was part of our townhalls regularly.

Well, let me tell you what happened in 2009. The House process spanned three committees: the Energy and Commerce Committee, the Ways and Means Committee, and the Education and Labor Committee. The House had 79 bipartisan hearings and markups on the health reform bill—79 bipartisan hearings and markups. House Members spent nearly 100 hours in hearings, heard from 181 witnesses, and considered 239 amendments and accepted 121. The HELP Committee had 14 bipartisan roundtables, 13 bipartisan hearings, and 20 bipartisan walkthroughs on health reform. The HELP Committee considered nearly 300 amendments and accepted 160 Republican amendments. The Finance Committee held a similar process. When the bill came to the floor, the Senate spent 25 consecutive days in session on health reform—the second longest consecutive session in history.

So don't tell me that the Affordable Care Act was rushed through when during that time the HELP Committee considered 300 amendments, held dozens of hearings, and in 2017 there are going to be no committee meetings, no committee markups, no committee amendments, and barely a week for the public, for think tanks, for hospitals, for doctors, for patients to be able to consider the chaos that will be wrought if this healthcare plan goes through.

So I am on the floor today to plead with my Republican colleagues to step back from this potential debacle. This seems like it was written on the back of a napkin in order to rush something out into the public so that Republicans can claim they are fulfilling the promise they made, without thinking through the consequences.

Over and over again, I heard my Republican friends and President Trump say they are going to repeal the Affordable Care Act and replace it with something better. I heard the new Secretary of Health and Human Services say that no one was going to lose insurance, that costs were not going to go up, and that the insurance protections were going to be preserved. None of that will be true under the current plan under consideration. Everybody knows it, which is why it is being hidden from public view.

Politicians love praise. We love good press. So if Republicans thought this was a praiseworthy plan, they would not be hiding it. They would not be trying to rush it through. They would be celebrating an achievement they have been crowing about for years—replacing the Affordable Care Act with something that is better.

This is worse for everyone except for insurance companies, drug companies, and the superrich. The superrich get a big tax cut, and all of the fees that were levied on the insurance companies and drug companies that were used to pay for additional expansion go away.

Tucked inside here, there is even a very specific tax cut for insurance company CEOs. I mean, think about that. Tucked into this bill is a specific tax cut for a select group of individuals—insurance company CEOs. I represent a lot of those CEOs, but it does not make it right.

I hope we will find a way to work together to try to strengthen the Affordable Care Act and fix what is wrong. The plan that was unveiled yesterday—I understand not by the Senate but by the House—hurts everybody except for a select few. I think most of my colleagues know we can do better.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at 3:45 p.m. today, there be 15 minutes of debate remaining on H.J. Res. 44, equally divided in the usual form.

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

DISCHARGE AND REFERRAL—S. 416

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship be discharged from further consideration of S. 416 and the bill be referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

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

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, we are coming to the end of debate on the disapproval resolution for the BLM Planning 2.0 Rule. I would like to take just a few minutes to highlight the very broad support it has drawn here on Capitol Hill but really across the country.

Here in the Senate, I mentioned earlier that there is a total of 17 Members who have joined me in sponsoring our version of this resolution. That is nearly one-fifth of this Chamber. It includes every Republican from a Western State with BLM lands within its borders. These are Alaska, Arizona, Idaho, Nebraska, Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, Nevada, Montana, even Kentucky, and the State of the occupant of the Chair, North Dakota, and Oklahoma, so a very strong contingent of Members who are in support of this disapproval resolution.

Across the Capitol, the House of Representatives passed this resolution with bipartisan support a couple of weeks ago through the leadership of Representative CHENEY of Wyoming. This resolution wound up with 234 votes in the House. That is a pretty strong vote.

The reason why so many Members of the House and the Senate want to overturn BLM's planning 2.0 Rule is pretty simple. We know what it means for our Western States. We don't like the impacts that it will have and neither do a wide variety of elected officials and stakeholders back home.

In my State of Alaska, I have heard from the Alaska Municipal League, the Alaska Farm Bureau, and the Associated General Contractors of Alaska. The Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce wrote to ask us to overturn the rule. The Alaska Chamber wrote in support of our resolution because they said BLM's planning process ''has grown to be substantially lengthier, more confusing, and burdensome for stakeholders to engage in.''

We have heard from our leaders in the Alaska State Legislature, State Senators Pete Kelly and John Coghill, who have asked for this rule to be nullified, as have several of our Alaska Native corporations, including CIRI, Olgoonik, and Calista Corporation. The Alaska chapter of the Safari Club opposes it because its landscape-level approach to land management planning has the potential to withdraw and lock up even more land in Alaska.

Alaska's energy, mineral, and timber producers are united in their opposition to this rule and in their support of our disapproval resolution. We have heard from the Resource Development Council, the Alaska Oil and Gas Association, the Alaska Forest Association, the Council of Alaska Producers, the Alaska Support Industry Alliance, the Fortymile Mining District, and the Alaska Miners Association, and they all oppose BLM's planning 2.0 Rule because it reduces economic opportunities for Alaskans—those who actually live near these BLM lands, who know

the most about them, and who depend on them to provide for their families.

It is the same story in many other Western States, from Arizona and New Mexico to Washington and Oregon, to Montana and South Dakota. This rule affects all 12 BLM States, and those States just are not happy about it.

We have heard from about 80 groups so far that oppose that rule, and I ask unanimous consent that a copy of the list of supporters be printed in the RECORD.

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

S.J. RES. 15/H.J. RES. 44

STRONG SUPPORT FROM WESTERN STAKEHOLDERS

NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

American Energy Alliance, American Exploration and Mining Association, American Farm Bureau Federation, American Petroleum Institute, Americans for Prosperity, American Sheep Industry Association, Association of National Grasslands, Independent Petroleum Association of America, National Association of Conservation Districts, National Association of Counties, National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, National Cattlemen's Beef Association, National Mining Association, National Water Resources Association, Public Lands Council, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Western Energy Alliance.

STATE STAKEHOLDERS

Associated General Contractors of Alaska, Alaska Chamber of Commerce, Alaska Chapter, Safari Club International, Alaska Farm Bureau, Inc., Alaska Forest Association, Alaska Miners Association, Alaska Municipal League, Alaska Oil and Gas Association, Alaska Support Industry Alliance, Alaska Trucking Association, Calista Corporation, Cook Inlet Region, Inc., Council of Alaska Producers, Fortymile Mining District, Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce, Members of the Alaska State Senate, Olgoonik Corporation, Resource Development Council.

Arizona Association of Counties, Arizona Cattle Growers Association, Arizona County Supervisors Association, Arizona Farm Bureau Federation, Arizona Mining Association, California Cattlemen's Association, California Farm Bureau Federation, California Wool Growers Association, Rural County Representatives of California, Colorado Cattlemen's Association, Colorado Farm Bureau, Colorado Wool Growers Association, Idaho Cattle Association, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation, Idaho Wool Growers Association, Montana Association of Counties, Montana Association of State Grazing Districts, Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association.

Montana Farm Bureau Federation, Montana Mining Association, Montana Petroleum Association, Montana Public Lands Council, Montana Stockgrowers Association, Montana Wool Growers Association, Eureka County, Nevada, Nevada Association of Conservation Districts, Nevada Association of Counties, Nevada Cattlemen's Association, Nevada Farm Bureau Federation, New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association, New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau, New Mexico Wool Grower, Inc, North Dakota Stockmen's Association, Association of Oregon Counties, Oregon Association of Conservation Districts, Oregon Cattlemen's Association.

Oregon Farm Bureau, South Dakota Cattlemen's Association, South Dakota Public Lands Council, Utah Association of Conservation Districts, Utah Association of Counties, Utah Cattlemen's Association, Utah Farm Bureau Federation, Utah Wool Growers Association, Washington Cattlemen's Association, Washington Farm Bureau Federation, Western Interstate Region of NACo, Governor Mead of Wyoming, Petroleum Association of Wyoming, Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts, Wyoming County Commissioners Association, Wyoming Farm Bureau, Wyoming Stock Growers Association, Wyoming Wool Growers Association.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. This list includes our Nation's energy and mineral producers, the people who keep our lights on, who provide fuel for our vehicles, and who construct everything from semiconductors to skyscrapers. The American Petroleum Institute, the Independent Petroleum Association of America, the Western Energy Alliance, the National Mining Association, and the American Exploration & Mining Association are all opposed to this rule, and so are many State groups, like the Arizona Mining Association, the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association, and the Petroleum Association of Wyoming.

Joining them are many of our Nation's farmers and ranchers, the individuals who provide so much of our Nation's food supply, whether that is steak or whether that is milk or something else. The National Cattlemen's Beef Association and the American Sheep Industry Association have registered their opposition. The American Farm Bureau Federation opposes the rule and so do many of its State partners, including the Colorado Farm Bureau, the New Mexico Farm & Livestock Bureau, the Oregon Farm Bureau, and the Washington Farm Bureau.

Perhaps most critically, planning 2.0 has drawn strong opposition from local and State governments, the entities that are elected to represent all of the people, not just one specific interest. The National Association of Counties, the voice of county governments all across the country, sent a letter outlining their support for the disapproval resolution. Another group, the National Association of Conservation Districts, wrote that planning 2.0 should be repealed because it ''skirts the Federal Land Policy and Management Act and reduces the ability of local government involvement'' while seeming ''forced and blind to the many issues raised in the public comment period.''

Again, this disapproval resolution has drawn strong support from a wide range of stakeholder groups—energy, mining, and grazing, America's farmers and ranchers, State officials, local counties, and conservation districts. Everything from the Alaska Trucking Association to the Public Lands Council and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce have all weighed in. At last count, more than 80 groups had asked us to repeal BLM's planning 2.0 Rule, and I am sure there are many others that are not included in that count.

We have heard such strong support because this is a misguided rule that will negatively impact our Western States. It subverts the special status relationship between the Federal Government and the States and local governments. It limits local involvement and local input. It opens the door for decisionmaking authority to be centralized at BLM's headquarters here in Washington, DC. It upends BLM's multiple-use mission by allowing the agency to pick and choose among preferred uses, while sidelining industries that provide good-paying jobs in our western communities.

I think there is broad agreement that planning 2.0 should be overturned. That is what we are here to do, and we will have that opportunity in just a few moments.

So I ask all Members of the Senate, including those who do not have BLM lands in their States, to consider the strong support this resolution of disapproval has drawn and to join us in passing it at 4 o'clock.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, we had a chance earlier today to talk about this Congressional Review Act resolution before us that I urge my colleagues to turn down. This resolution basically would negate a very important aspect of a rule that was put in place to help the public have more input on public lands.

The rule was pretty straightforward—common sense—to make sure that there was a lot of increased public input to bolster the decisionmaking process and to ensure that there are 21st century management policies in place.

There is nothing in this rule that was implemented in the last administration that erodes or takes away from the States' and local governments' planning processes and the decisionmaking they do.

So it is very important to me that we continue to have the transparency and openness and sunshine in our public planning. I think one editorial from the Post-Register from Idaho said it best. So I will read from it.

Resource management planning. Sound boring? Maybe. But if you are a Westerner, it definitely shouldn't be.

Resource management planning (RMP) affects how you can or can't use the vast swaths of public lands outside your back door for things like hunting, camping, four-wheeling, hiking, fishing, and rock climbing—a lot of the things you probably love about being a Westerner.

With a new Republican presidential administration in power and the GOP-controlled Congress rubbing its hands together in delight, ready to implement part one of its grand scheme for public lands—cashing in on

those resources—RMPs should get a whole lot more interesting to Westerners.

Since 2014, BLM officials have been toiling away, rebuilding the current rules for land use planning in a significant way for the first time since 1983. . . .

One important change is that Planning 2.0 would let the BLM take into account local impacts from the beginning.

Going on to read from the editorial:

The Republican-controlled House has already passed a resolution to strike Planning 2.0 from the books once and for all. The Senate will vote within days on whether or not they'll use the same sledgehammer—the Congressional Review Act (CRA). It's an especially diabolical weapon.

Once the CRA is used on Planning 2.0, it will be gone forever. It prevents future BLM rules for planning land use from being introduced if they are ''substantially the same.''

The utterly confounding part is why this rule is being picked on in the first place. . . .

Planning 2.0 actually mandates more local control, gives it more often and is a smarter, more elegant solution to sharing use of our public lands.

I couldn't say it better than that editorial. Local communities are watching. They want more sunshine. They want more input. They want a smoother process. They don't want lawsuits that take forever. They want us to work in a collaborative fashion, guaranteeing the public input of local governments, States, and our citizens in how we manage our Federal lands.

I urge my colleagues to turn down this resolution.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I yield back the remaining time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time is yielded back.

The joint resolution was ordered to a third reading and was read the third time.

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

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

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

The result was announced—yeas 51, nays 48, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 82 Leg.]

YEAS—51

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

NAYS—48

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

NOT VOTING—1

Isakson

The joint resolution (H.J. Res. 44) was passed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 18, Seema Verma, to be Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

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

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Seema Verma, of Indiana, to be Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Seema Verma, of Indiana, to be Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Department of Health and Human Services.

Mitch McConnell, Steve Daines, John Cornyn, Tom Cotton, Bob Corker, John Boozman, John Hoeven, James Lankford, Roger F. Wicker, John Barrasso, Lamar Alexander, Orrin G. Hatch, David Perdue, James M. Inhofe, Mike Rounds, Bill Cassidy, Thom Tillis.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call with respect to the nomination be waived.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

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

The motion was agreed to.

PROVIDING FOR CONGRESSIONAL DISAPPROVAL OF A RULE SUBMITTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to H.J. Res. 58.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to H.J. Res. 58, providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Department of Education relating to teacher preparation issues.

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

The motion was agreed to.

PROVIDING FOR CONGRESSIONAL DISAPPROVAL OF A RULE SUBMITTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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

The bill clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (H.J. Res. 58) providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Department of Education relating to teacher preparation issues.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. JOHNSON). The Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. SASSE. Mr. President, I rise in support of S.J. Res. 26, a resolution to disapprove the Obama administration Department of Education's regulation on teacher preparation issues. This resolution is simple. It overturns the last administration's overreach into scores of States and territories, into thousands of college and university teacher preparation programs, and into millions of American classrooms.

Last night, I drafted a fairly detailed statement on some of the problems deep inside this regulation, but I have decided to skip past most of that. Why? Because the problem with this regulation is actually much more basic than all of the substantive problems in the regulation. This regulation actually makes the assumption that bureaucrats in Washington, DC, are competent to micromanage teacher training programs in America. That is what this regulation ultimately does, and that is absurd.

So I would like to ask three questions of folks who plan to vote to defend this regulation. First, do you really think that bureaucrats in this city know better how to run teacher training programs than people who have spent most of their lives inside actual classrooms with actual future teachers and with students? How many of you have ever run a teacher training program? Has anyone in this body ever run a teacher training program? Because I have—almost. I have spent a lot of my life around these programs. As a kid, with my dad, who was a lifelong public schoolteacher and coach, and I have been in many of these classrooms with him when he was getting master's and continuing education programs; then with my wife who is also a public high school teacher; and then I was a college president at a university that had multiple teacher training programs. I know Keith Rohwer, and I know the other deans of education that have been at Midland University and at many other colleges and universities across Nebraska. Yet, even though I have been around a lot of these programs in some detail, I wouldn't possibly think I am ready to decree all the details inside those programs from thousands and thousands of miles away.

Question No. 2, has anyone actually read this regulation that folks are going to say they want to defend on this floor? Because I have been reading in it. I will not claim I have read it, but I have read in it. This is the 695 pages of the regulation itself. There is actually a lot of guidance material as well, but I didn't bring that because I didn't want to have both of my hands occupied. This is the 695 pages of the regulation we are talking about today, and it is actually really silly. If you read inside it, it is filled with enough specificity that if you tried to explain it to thoughtful, generally educated Americans, I submit to you that you would blush. There is a level of detail and a level of specificity in this that we are not possibly competent to defend at the micro level.

Question No. 3, can the folks who think this is what Washington, DC, ought to be doing right now—please show me somewhere in this document, the Senate version of the Constitution—show me somewhere in this document where we are given the specific authority to micromanage local programs like this from here. Because, honestly—I mean this sincerely to my colleagues who plan to vote to defend this rule—I don't see how you can defend this document and think that this is conceivably our job from here. We are not competent to do this.

Now, a couple of qualifications are in order. Am I suggesting that all teacher training programs in America work well? Heavens, no. There are some that are fairly strong, and there are actually a lot that are really, really poor and weak, but having a good intention to make them better is not the same as actually having accomplished something that will make them better. Good intentions are not enough. For us in this body to act because we have compulsory governmental powers, we would need not merely good intentions, we would also need competence and authority. We have neither of those about teacher training programs.

Everyone in this body agrees that education is darn near the center of the future of our country. We all want and we need good teachers. Most of us can remember specific teachers who stood out because of her or his creative presentation, because of their unexpected humor, because of their charm and their compassion, because of their tireless drive, because of their inspired mentorship. None of us in this Chamber who has the privilege of serving our fellow country men and women regret or are unaware of the fact that the skills and the guidance and the abilities that we have are the function of the mentorship and the pedagogy of life-changing teachers early in our lives. We have benefited from and we need good, prepared teachers.

If we all agree teachers are critically important to our future, and since we all agree teacher training programs are important and we also agree that some of them aren't very good, the question would be, What would we do about that? What kind of debate should we have about why much education in America isn't good enough? Does anyone in this body sincerely believe that the big, pressing problem in American education is that there aren't enough rules like this coming out of bureaucracies in Washington, DC?

Because if you believe that, I would humbly suggest that you should go and meet with some of the ed school faculties back in your State and ask them if you can read them these 695 pages so you can tell them that we have the answers. Read it to them, and then please come back and tell us in this body that they agree with you, that what we really need is more 700-page regulations from Washington, DC, micromanaging things as specific and local as teacher preparation programs.

Oh, and one more thing, which is actually kind of big. This regulation explicitly violates the plain language and the congressional intent of the Federal education law that was passed in this body last year. You will all recall that the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was passed in this Chamber with overwhelming bipartisan support last year. I think it got 83 votes. The act prohibits the Secretary of Education from prescribing ''any aspect or parameter of a teacher, a principal, or other school leader evaluation system within a State or local education agency'' or ''indicators or specific measures of teacher, principal, or other school leader effectiveness or quality.'' There is nothing ambiguous about this language.

In addition, the Higher Education Act is clear that the levels of performance used by a State to assess teacher training programs ''shall be determined solely by the State.''

This rule overrides State authority over literally tens of thousands of discipline-specific teacher preparation programs across the Nation, burdening States with a federally defined and expensive mandate. Under this regulation, States would be required to create elaborate new data systems that would link K–12 teacher data to data on evaluations of teachers and administrators in particular schools and then on to the data back into the teacher preparation programs. This regulation's goal would be to measure the success of teacher preparation based largely on teachers' students' subsequent test scores, and it would all need to be backlinked in the data. This is data that is not currently gathered.

Rube Goldberg is smiling somewhere because this sounds like a bureaucrat's dream, a paperwork trail monitoring all the strengths and weaknesses of some vast machine spitting out layers and layers of new data over which Washington's experts could then postulate and tinker. Again, I have no doubt the bureaucrats who wrote these 700 eye-glazing pages—pages about rules, about data to be gathered that States are not currently gathering—I have no doubt the people who wrote this mean well. I also have no doubt the people who are going to defend this rule as somehow commonsensical—then why is it 700 pages—also mean well, but those good intentions don't change the fact that what they have actually done in this rule—what they have actually done—is build a much larger requirement set of paper trails, demanding further burdens on our teachers, on our principals, and on the professors who are teaching teachers, and then require all of them to report back through new or expanded bureaucracies at the State level, though the States have not chosen to gather this data, and then pass this data on to a bureaucracy a couple of blocks from here.

These Rubik's Cubes of rules and data collection are not being done today, and supposedly we are going to make teacher preparation programs better by all of the specificity that comes from this rule.

The fact that these regulations will likely cost States millions of dollars to implement simply adds insult to injury. Let's be honest. Education is not some vast complex machine that just needs a little bit more tinkering from Washington-level intervention before it will be at utopia. It isn't true, and this rule is not an effective way to actually help the teachers who care so much that they are investing their lives in our kids.

Nebraska's parents and educators and locally elected school boards are better equipped and better positioned to tackle the most important educational challenges. They are better equipped and they are better intentioned, even than the smartest, the

nicest, and the most well-meaning experts in Washington, DC. If you disagree, again, I humbly challenge you to go and try and read this rule to elementary and secondary school teachers in your State and to those who are running the programs that train them. Read the 695 pages to them and then report back to us that they actually share your view that the really big problem in American education is not enough 700-page rules from educational bureaucrats from DC.

Good intentions are not enough. Federal intervention and reforms should never make problems worse, and that is what this rule would do.

I urge my colleagues to reject this rule and to rededicate ourselves to the duties that really and fundamentally are ours, to the duties the Federal Government is exclusively and monopolistically empowered to carry out because it isn't this. We are not competent to displace the expertise of the district and the State level, and we should not be trying to regulate teacher training programs from Washington, DC. We are not competent to do this.

Thank you for your consideration.

I yield the floor.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I come to the floor actually on behalf of students across the country, and for those who are so passionate about their education that they want to dedicate themselves to teaching, and to urge my colleagues to oppose this resolution and support strong and accountable teacher preparation in America today.

While this rule may not be the rule that any of us would have written on our own, it is important.

Let me say at the outset that there are many great teacher prep programs that exist around our country, and they are doing a great job preparing our teachers to succeed in the classroom, but there are also teacher preparation programs out there that are struggling and need support to help make sure they produce great teachers for our schools.

Now, as a former preschool teacher and as a mom, I know how important it is to have great teachers in our classrooms, and I understand how a good education, with an amazing teacher, can change a child's life. I am sure all of our colleagues think back on that one special teacher they had who shaped their mind and changed their life. They teach us not only how to read and write and do arithmetic, but good teachers teach us how to think critically, how to be creative, how to form an argument. I know I am not alone in saying that I owe much of what I have to the quality of the public education I received growing up, and I have spent my career fighting to make sure every child in America has the same opportunity I did.

Unfortunately, too many teaching students today are forced to take out huge amounts of student loans to afford continuing their education so they can realize their dream. They are willing to make this sacrifice. They don't complain. The very least we can do for those who want to become teachers is to make sure they are actually getting their money's worth when they make an investment in themselves.

That is what this rule does. It helps make sure students can make informed decisions about the quality and preparedness of their education.

Here are a few of the ways this rule does that—and I am hoping my colleagues will see that this shouldn't be controversial. This rule strengthens and streamlines reporting requirements of teacher prep programs to focus on employment placement and retention of graduates. It provides information from employers to future teacher candidates so they can make an informed decision about their education by choosing a school that improves the likelihood they will find employment after graduation. It makes sure that prospective teachers can access this information they need before they take out massive amounts of student debt.

When teacher programs are struggling, this rule helps States identify at-risk and low-performing programs so States can provide them the support they need to adapt or adjust their programs and help their teaching students succeed.

There is one more reason I would urge my colleagues to oppose this resolution today. Simply put, it would put more power into the hands of Secretary DeVos, and many of us don't yet have the trust that she would use that power to promote the best interests of students in higher education. Secretary DeVos does not come from a higher education background. We don't know whether she supports providing information on teacher placement rates and retention rates before prospective teachers take out student loans. We have no idea what she would do if this rule went away, and I believe it would be too risky to find out.

By investing in our teachers, we are investing in our future generations. Our future teachers have the right to know whether they are receiving a quality education, and they deserve to know that before they take out massive amounts of student debt.

It helps to improve teacher prep program accountability and gives prospective teachers the information they need to make an accurate decision on which program is most likely to make them a successful teacher in the classroom.

It ensures that Secretary DeVos does not have more power to implement unknown policies that could hurt students and reduce the number of qualified great teachers in our public schools.

Without this rule and the information that it ensures, students will have a hard time finding a quality teacher prep program that will help them get a job after they graduate. I think that is simply wrong. We should be working to make sure teaching students have full access to information and options. This rule would give them less.

For all the future teachers out there, I urge my fellow Senators to vote against this CRA because every young adult deserves to know that the program they enroll in is actually preparing them to be a successful teacher in the classroom, and every student deserves to have an amazing teacher in every classroom.

EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS BILL

Finally, Mr. President, I wish to bring up one more thing that is very important to me—the bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act—and a potential serious threat to it. It seems that Republicans are thinking about bringing to the floor another CRA that would eliminate the rule that provides States with flexibility and guidelines to create their State plans. I want to be very clear. I hope Republicans reconsider that approach.

The Every Student Succeeds Act is a critical part of our bipartisan education law. It is an important part of the civil rights protections it offers, as well as the assurances it made that every student would have an opportunity to succeed, no matter where they live or how they learn or how much money parents make. Jamming through that resolution would weaken it, and it would be a major step toward turning our bipartisan law into another partisan fight.

Rolling back the Every Student Succeeds Act rule less than a month before States have to submit their plans to the Department of Education will cause chaos and confusion in the States, and it will hurt our students, our teachers, and our schools. It will also give Secretary DeVos greater control over that bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act and give her the tools to implement her anti-public education agenda.

Secretary DeVos's lack of experience and expertise, as well as her damaging track record on school privatization, leaves her unqualified to implement this bipartisan law that governs public education and public schools without the important guardrails that rule ensures. Given her record and her comments, she would almost certainly push for measures that disregard key civil rights protections in the Every Student Succeeds Act and could allow unequal, unfair, and unreliable accountability for schools across the country.

The Every Student Succeeds Act rule is supported by Democrats and Republicans, by teachers and businesses, and by parents and communities. We should not go backward.

I urge my colleagues to reconsider moving forward with that resolution, which I understand they want to bring up later this week, and work with us to continue building on that bipartisan progress that we all worked toward for our students.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

REPUBLICAN HEALTHCARE BILL

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise today to offer a few comments about the House Republican bill that was just unveiled yesterday. Those who have been promoting it or those who have been working on this issue for a couple of weeks are claiming it is a new healthcare plan or a new comprehensive healthcare proposal—in essence, by their argument, a replacement if the Affordable Care Act were repealed. I disagree. I don't believe in any way it is a plan. It might be a bill, but I think a better description of it in terms of its impact would be that it is a scheme, not a plan. It is a scheme that will roll back coverage gains from the Affordable Care Act, which is better known by a longer name: the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Kaiser—one of the great institutions that track healthcare data and healthcare policy—told us that there are 156 million Americans with employer-sponsored coverage. Those Americans didn't have much protection before the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act with regard to preexisting conditions or annual lifetime limits—a whole series of protections for people that were not there before that.

This scheme, as I am calling it, will not only roll back coverage gains in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, in the process it will also devastate the Medicaid Program, leaving many of the most vulnerable Americans behind.

Another impact of this scheme will be to increase costs for middle-class families while cutting taxes for millionaires or multimillionaires as well as big corporations. It will raise the cost of care for older Americans and substantially cut funding for hospitals in rural communities.

How did we get there, and where are we going based upon the House Republican proposal? Last night the Republicans released their bill to ''replace'' the Affordable Care Act, and the House Energy and Commerce Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee will be marking up the bill tomorrow. I guess it doesn't require much reading to get to a markup tomorrow.

Usually when you introduce a bill, the bill is reviewed by Members of Congress. There is some public debate on it. There is some back-and-forth. And then a period of time later, maybe weeks, there is a markup. The committee engages in a thorough review of the bill, and the markup means they make changes. They add amendments or try to alter the bill in one way or another. That is a serious approach when you do this work of legislating on a serious issue.

Healthcare is about as serious and difficult an issue as there is. I think it should be accorded the serious review that the complexity and the consequence of this issue demand. This is not a serious proposal. It is a scheme, but it is also not a serious process that the House seems to be focused on right now. This process means the House will mark up this bill within I guess about 48 hours of it being unveiled, maybe less than 48 hours. That means there will not be a single hearing on the bill or getting the bill scored, which is a fancy Washington word for having someone tell us what it costs. There will be no thorough review, no serious review on such a monumental issue called healthcare and what happens to hundreds of millions of Americans.

At the same time, the markup will proceed with lightning speed, and there will not be any information on the record about an analysis of the bill that is thorough and serious, and of course we will not know how to pay for it and we will not have the score that will tell us how it will be paid for and what the cost will be.

It is hard to come up with the words, but the impact of this bill would be a disaster. If you are a millionaire and up, you are doing quite well under this bill. You are going to get a bonanza from this bill. You are going to have a great payday. If you are a child or you happen to be a senior or if you are a woman or if you are an individual with a disability or a chronic disease, you are out of luck. You are in big trouble. I would hope that those Americans would have the benefit of a serious review of a serious issue. If the bill is not serious, I guess they are going to ram it through. We will see what happens in the next couple of days.

There is one analysis that should be on the record. There are some that are hot off the presses. This is a report released today that I am looking at. It is about 2½ pages. They know the vote will take place soon in the committee—two committees, maybe in the House. This report by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities is moving quickly to keep up with the fast pace at which the bill is proceeding. I won't read the whole report, and I won't enter the whole report into the RECORD; I am sure people can go online and look at it. Here is the title of the report: ''House GOP Medicaid Provisions Would Shift $370 billion in costs to states over a decade.'' It is written by Edwin Park, who has been writing about Medicaid for a long time. Few Americans know more about Medicaid than Edwin Park and people like him who study it. I will read the first sentence, which gives you the basics of it: ''The new House Republican health plan would shift an estimated $370 billion in Medicaid costs to states over the next ten years, effectively ending the Affordable Care Act's (ACA) Medicaid expansion for 11 million people while also harming tens of millions of additional seniors, people with disabilities, and children and parents who rely upon Medicaid today.''

That is the opening line of this proposal, which I believe is a scheme. What does that mean for Medicaid?

One of the basic debates we will have here is what happens to Medicaid itself, and we will have a lot of debates about other aspects of the implications for the Affordable Care Act.

Here is what it means. It means that 70 million Americans who rely upon Medicaid—again, they are children in urban areas, children in rural areas, children in small towns who get their healthcare from Medicaid. It is a lot of individuals with disabilities, a lot of children with disabilities who benefit from Medicaid. It is also, of course, pregnant women, as well as seniors trying to get into nursing homes, because we know that a lot of seniors can't get into a nursing home unless they have the benefits of Medicaid. The idea in the bill on Medicaid that is objectionable, among other objections I have, is a so-called per capita cap. This idea limits Federal contributions to a fixed amount. If the caps are not tied to overall increases in healthcare spending, the net effect is fewer healthcare dollars over time so they can afford the tax cuts they want to have as part of this scheme.

We have heard a lot around here about flexibility, that States want more flexibility when it comes to Medicaid. I will tell you what they don't want. They don't want a flexibility argument to be a scheme that results in cuts to those States, where the Federal Government says: Here is a block grant that may increase or may not, but good luck, States, as you balance your budgets.

Of course, Governors and State legislators balance their budgets, and they have very difficult choices to make—sometimes choices the Federal Government never makes. That is why some Republican Governors took advantage of the Medicaid expansion and expanded healthcare to a lot of people in their States. That is one of the reasons they are worried about—and some will oppose this idea of so-called per capita caps or block-granting of Medicaid or the like.

If we have a proposal to cut $370 billion from the House, what does that mean for some of those groups that I just mentioned earlier? Well, we know that more than 45 percent of all the births in the United States of America are paid for by Medicaid, so that is a consequence for pregnant women and their children. One in five seniors receives Medicaid assistance by way of the benefit to someone trying to get into a nursing home. Medicaid also pays for home-based care for seniors and, of course, long-term care as well. What if you have a disability? Over one-third of the Nation's adults with disabilities who require extensive services and support are covered by Medicaid.

We know that in a State like mine—because we had a Republican Governor

embrace the Medicaid expansion, and then we had a Democratic Governor embrace it and really develop it and bring it to where it is today—we have expansion of Medicaid that resulted in some 700,000—that is not an exact number, but it is approaching 700,000 Pennsylvanians gaining coverage through the Medicaid expansion. And 62 percent of Americans who gained coverage through the Medicaid expansion are working. So we are talking about a lot of families and a lot of individuals who are working and getting their healthcare through Medicaid. That opportunity presented itself because, in the Affordable Care Act, Medicaid was expanded.

There are lots of numbers we could talk about. I will give maybe two more. Medicaid is the primary payer for mental health and substance abuse treatment. Medicaid expansion enabled 180,000 Pennsylvanians to receive these lifesaving services. If you are a Member of Congress and you have been going home and talking about the opioid crisis—and to say it is a crisis is a terrible understatement. It has devastated small towns and rural areas. It has devastated cities. It has destroyed families. We know how bad it is. Some of the numbers indicate it is getting worse, not leveling off. If you say you care about that and you supported the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act as a Member of Congress and you supported the funding that was in the 21st Century Cures Act at the end of the year, and you say you are working toward help for communities devastated by the opioid crisis, it is OK to say that, but you can't then say: But I want to support the House Republican proposal on Medicaid, when Medicaid is the primary payer for these substance abuse treatment programs.

I mentioned before adults and children with disabilities. Medicaid covers 60 percent of children with disabilities. We know the range of that—ranging from autism to Down syndrome, to traumatic brain injury, and many other disabilities or circumstances that I have not mentioned. For a lot of people, this is real life. It is not some theory that gets kicked around Washington, often by people who have good healthcare coverage as they are talking about cutting healthcare for others. We have a lot of testimony from what we might want to call the real world.

One of the most compelling pieces of correspondence I received in my time in the Senate was from a mom about her son. Her name is Pam. She is from Coatesville, PA. That is in Southeastern Pennsylvania, within the range of suburban Philadelphia. She wrote to tell me how important Medicaid is to her family and to tell me about her 5-year-old son Rowan. She sent me a picture of Rowan with a firefighter's hat on. Of course, he is fascinated, as we all are, by the heroic work of firefighters. Her story—I will not go through her whole letter, but she got news a couple of years ago that many parents get in the course of the lives of their children. She got news in March of 2015 that her son Rowan was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. The diagnosis was made by a psychologist who worked for the Intermediate Unit—meaning the institution that works for the school districts and helps to provide special education. Rowan continued in the preschool program and daycare program before and after school, but then Pam goes on to say:

> I was never able to find a daycare suitable for all of Rowan's needs. In late January of 2016, I applied for [Medical Assistance].

I will stop there for a moment to explain. Medical Assistance is the State share of the State end of the Medicare Program. We call it Medical Assistance. Other States have a different name for it.

Pam said she applied for Medical Assistance:

> After Rowan was awarded this assistance we were able to obtain wrap-around services, which included a Behavioral Specialist Consultant . . . and a Therapeutic Staff Support worker.

Pam goes on to say, and I am quoting her again:

> Without Medical Assistance, I am confident that I could not work full time to support our family. . . . [We] would be bankrupt and my son would go without the therapies he needs.

These are the therapies I just mentioned. Then Pam goes on to say, urging me as one of her two Senators to focus on her son, focus on her family when we are casting votes and having debates about policies that relate to healthcare and Medicaid. Here is what Pam asked me to do as her Senator:

> Please think of Rowan. . . . My 9-month-old Luna, who smiles and laughs at her brother, she will have to care for Rowan late in her life after we are gone. We are desperately in need of Rowan's Medical Assistance and would be devastated if we lost these benefits.

So said Pam about her son and about the importance of the Medical Assistance Program, which is known on the national level as Medicaid. I would hope that those in the House, as they are quickly marking up legislation that would have a huge impact on families like Pam's and many more—I would hope they would think of Rowan, think of his little sister Luna and what her challenges might be years from now when she would likely have to care for Rowan and answer some of Pam's questions.

There are a lot of questions that we have about policy and numbers and budget impacts, and they are all appropriate. But some of the most important questions we have to answer for those who are asking them are questions that our constituents are asking. And one of those is Pam. We have to be responsive to her concerns about her son and the challenges her son faces.

I hope, in the midst of debate, in the midst of very rapid consideration of a complicated subject on a bill that has been slapped together—in my judgment, too quickly—that Pam's concerns would be an uppermost priority in the minds of those who are working on this legislation.

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

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

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for up to 15 minutes as in morning business.

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, this is my ''Time to Wake Up'' speech No. 159. In giving these speeches, I have come to realize that some of my colleagues seem to have a hard time wrapping their heads around the basic understanding of climate change. Some of President Trump's Cabinet nominees seem to have the same problem.

They say the scientific community is split on the issue. It is not.

They say the climate has always been changing. Not like this, it hasn't.

They say we can't trust projections and complex computer models. But overall, they have actually been right.

And, of course, they have the notorious ''I'm not a scientist'' dodge. Well, if a colleague doesn't understand this, then perhaps he ought to trust the scientists at NOAA and at NASA, at our National Labs, and at universities in Rhode Island and across the country—the scientists whose job it is to understand this.

I must say, in addition to trusting the scientists, I also trust Rhode Island fishermen who see the changes in their traps and nets and our shoreline homeowners watching the sea steadily rising toward their homes. You don't need fancy computer models to see the ocean changes already taking place; you just need a thermometer to measure rising temperatures, basically a yardstick to measure sea level rise or a simple pH kit to measure the acidification of our oceans.

Let's look at ocean acidification. The oceans have absorbed about one-third of all the excess carbon dioxide produced by humans since the industrial revolution, around 600 gigatons' worth. When that carbon dioxide dissolves into the ocean, chemistry happens, and it makes the oceans more acidic.

Carbon dioxide reacts with water to form carbonic acid. Carbonic acid isn't stable in ocean water, so it breaks down into bicarbonate ions, a base, and hydrogen ions, an acid. The increase in acidic hydrogen ions is the crux of the chemistry of ocean acidification. More hydrogen ions lower the water's pH,

and the lower the pH, the higher the acidity.

Regular viewers of my ''Time to Wake Up'' speeches or people who spent the night up with us while we objected to Administrator Pruitt's nomination may remember that I demonstrated this in a simple experiment on the Senate floor just a few weeks ago. I took the glass of water on my desk, and I used the carbon dioxide in my own breath. Blowing through an aquarium stone, I was able to show, with the help of a little pH dye, how easy it is to actually measure the effect of CO_2 on the acidity of water. With just a few breaths into the water, I was able to visibly make this glass of drinking water more acidic.

That little experiment is a microcosm of what is happening in our oceans right now, except, instead of bubbles blown through a straw, it is a transfer of excess CO_2 from the atmosphere into the surface waters of the ocean all around the globe.

Scientific observations confirm that what the laws of chemistry tell us should happen is actually happening. Massive carbon pollution resulting from burning fossil fuels is changing ocean acidity faster than ever in the past 50 million years.

Now, you start talking in big numbers, and it all goes into a blur—50 million years, compared to how long the human species has been on the planet, which is about 200,000 years. So 50 million years is, what, 250 times the length of time that our species has inhabited the Earth.

This chart shows measurements of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere taken at the Mauna Loa Observatory in Hawaii. That is the redline of climbing carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. And it shows carbon dioxide in the ocean, which is the green measure, which is also climbing in tandem with the rise of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Finally, it shows the pH of ocean water in the sea. Of course, as the chemistry would tell us, as the carbon dioxide goes up, the pH comes down, and the acidity rises; the water becomes more acidic.

We measure that surface seawater on the Earth's oceans has, since the industrial revolution, become roughly 30 percent more acidic. NOAA predicts that oceans will be 150 percent more acidic than now by the end of the century. Coastal States, like Rhode Island and Florida, will feel the hit.

Ocean acidification disrupts life in the sea when those loose hydrogen ions we talked about latch onto free carbonate ions. Usually that carbonate is plentiful in ocean water. Shell-forming marine creatures, like oysters and clams, use this loose carbonate to help form their shells. But if the carbonate they need is bound up by hydrogen ions, they can't get enough carbonate to build their shells.

We have even seen acidification scenarios in which shells start to dissolve in the water. Shellfish hatcheries on the west coast have already seen devastating losses of larval oysters due to acidic waters. When ocean pH fell too low, baby oysters couldn't form their shells, and they quickly died off. Dr. Julia Ekstrom, the lead researcher for Nature Climate Change's 2015 study on ocean acidification, told PBS that it has cost the Pacific Northwest oyster industry more than $100 million and jeopardized thousands of jobs. Her research flagged 15 States where the shellfish industry would be hardest hit, from Alaska to Florida, to my home State of Rhode Island.

Toward the bottom of the oceanic food web is the humble pteropod. Pteropods are sometimes called sea butterflies because their tiny snail foot has evolved into an oceanic wing. In 2014 NOAA found that more than half of pteropods sampled off the west coast were suffering from severely dissolved shells due to ocean acidification, and it is worsening.

This is a pteropod shell degrading over time in acidified water.

Of course, we are here in ''Mammon Hall,'' where it feels laughable to care about anything that can't be monetized. We talk a good game here in the Senate about God's Earth and God's creation and God's creatures, but what we really care about is the money. So let's monetize this.

Who cares about this humble species? Salmon do. As the west coast loses its pteropods, that collapse reverberates up the food chain, and the salmon care because many of them feed on the pteropods. The west coast salmon fishery is a big deal, so salmon fishermen care about this.

Another foundational marine species, krill, is also affected by ocean acidification. In the Southern Ocean, nearly all marine animals can thank krill for their survival. From penguin diets to whale diets, krill is king.

A 2013 study in Nature Climate Change found ocean acidification inhibiting the hatching of krill eggs and the normal development of larvae. The researchers note that unless we cut emissions, collapse of the krill population in the Southern Ocean portends ''dire consequences for the entire ecosystem.''

Closer to home, the University of Alaska's Ocean Acidification Research Center—yes, ocean acidification is serious enough that the University of Alaska has an Ocean Acidification Research Center, and it warns that ocean acidification ''has the potential to disrupt [Alaska's fishing] industry from top to bottom.''

Turning to warmer waters, coral reefs are also highly susceptible to ocean acidification. A healthy coral reef is one of the most productive and diverse ecosystems on Earth, home to 25 percent of the world's fish biodiversity. Those reef-building corals rely on calcium carbonate to build their skeletons.

Since the Presiding Officer is from Florida, I know how important coral reefs are to the tourism industry in his State.

Coral depends on a symbiotic relationship with tiny photosynthetic algae, called zooxanthellae, that live in the surface tissue of the coral. There is a range of pH, as well as temperature, salinity, and water clarity, within which this symbiosis between the coral and the zooxanthellae thrives. Outside that comfort range, the corals get stressed, and they begin to evict the algae. This is called coral bleaching because corals shed their colorful algae. Without these algae, corals soon die.

The effects of acidification on sea life are far-reaching. Studies have found ocean acidification disrupts everything from the sensory systems of clownfish—those are little Nemos, for those who have seen the movie—to phytoplankton populations, to sea urchin reproduction, to the Dungeness crab, another valuable west coast specialty.

I asked Scott Pruitt, our ethically challenged Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, about ocean acidification. He gave these answers: ''The oceans are alkaline and are projected to remain so,'' and two, ''The degree of alkalinity in the ocean is highly variable and therefore it is difficult to attribute that variability to any single cause.''

Let's look at those answers.

The first answer is plain and simple nonsense because the harm to ocean creatures from acidification comes from the dramatic shift in ocean acidity, not from where along the acid-based spectrum the shift takes place. The observation he made is irrelevant to the question.

His second answer is no better. It exhibits purposeful ignorance of the role humans' carbon pollution plays in damaging the ocean, because the chemical principles at issue here are indisputable. You can replicate them in a middle school laboratory in any Florida school. As I showed in my little demonstration, you can replicate them even here on the Senate floor. Like its carbon cousin, climate change, ocean acidification doesn't care whether you believe in chemistry. It doesn't matter to chemistry if you swallow the propaganda pumped out by the fossil fuel lobby. The principles of science operate notwithstanding. The chemical interactions take place by law of nature whether you believe them or not. If you believe in God, then you have to acknowledge that these laws of nature are God's laws, the basic operating principles He established in His creation. But, of course, here at Mammon Hall, it is always about the money.

Any decent EPA Administrator is obliged to trust in real science and to take action to protect human health and the environment. I am deeply unconvinced that Administrator Pruitt will live up in any respect to those obligations, but I would welcome being proven wrong. Likewise, I similarly challenge my colleagues here in the Senate.

This Chamber and our Nation will be judged harshly by our descendants, both for our pigheaded disregard for the basic truths, the basic operating systems of the world we live in, and for the shameful reason why we disregard them. Mammon Hall indeed.

Mr. President, it is time for the Senate to wake up before it is too late.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

REPUBLICAN HEALTHCARE BILL

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, the House's plan to repeal the Affordable Care Act is dangerous and irresponsible. Just listen to Governor John Kasich, Republican Governor of my State, who says we should not be throwing 500, 600, 700,000 Medicaid beneficiaries—mostly people who have jobs and work in low-income jobs—we shouldn't throw them off their insurance. In fact, in Ohio there are 900,000 people—700,000 on Medicaid, 100,000 on their parents' healthcare plan, and another 100,000 on the exchanges—who would lose their insurance if the House succeeds and the Senate goes along in changing dramatically or repealing the Affordable Care Act.

My office is flooded with letters and calls from Ohioans begging us not to take away their care. Let me share some of those letters.

A woman from Beachwood, OH, in Northeast Ohio wrote to me on January 11 terrified of possible changes to the Medicaid system that helps fund nursing homes like the one where she lives. She writes:

I strongly believe changes would drastically diminish my quality of life and many other residents' in the nursing home setting. My care needs are currently well managed by qualified and caring staff members. I am a 2-person assist with dressing, bathing, and getting to the bathroom. I also require two people with getting dressed every morning.

Medicaid cuts would decrease the number of staff members. . . . Without adequate staff, I am afraid of extensive wait periods and frequent bathing accidents. . . . It would be very difficult to endure, cause embarrassment, while destroying my dignity in the process.

I am not as strong as I used to be. I have children who love and care for me and placed me in a safe environment. Living in the nursing home has allowed me to live a little better, smile a little longer, and enjoy my days with family members.

''Please consider,'' she writes, ''the people who will be affected the most.''

Understand that most Medicaid dollars—dollars that unfortunately Republicans want to block-grant or capitate in some way, whatever terms they want to use here, send to the States, shrink those dollars, and people like this lady from Beachwood will be the losers as a result. Understand again that most Medicaid dollars—two-thirds of them—go to nursing home care. ''Please consider the people who will be affected the most,'' she writes.

Another woman from Mount Vernon, OH, a part of the State where I grew up in Mansfield, wrote to urge us not to rip coverage away from individuals who are currently receiving mental health and addiction services. She writes:

As a constituent concerned about preserving access to lifesaving mental health and addiction services, I am writing today to urge and request your support in protecting the Affordable Care Act and preserving Medicaid expansion.

I work as a substance abuse counselor in Knox County and work with adolescents and women with co-occurring disorders. Without the Medicaid expansion, many of our clients would not be able to get the help they need.

Without ObamaCare, without the Affordable Care Act.

Without the Medicaid expansion, many of our clients would not be able to get the help they need.

Today in Ohio, 200,000 people are in the midst of opioid addiction treatment, and 200,000 of them have insurance so they could get that treatment delivered in the right way and have insurance because of the Affordable Care Act. This House proposal would just rip it away from them.

She goes on to write:

Knowing that they can receive help and healthcare often is one of the motivating factors for our clients to begin to make change. Their ability to access medications such as Vivitrol through Medicaid has been a strengthening point in the recovery process of many. With our teens, I have seen them be able to change substance use with the resources that Medicaid provides.

In other words, some of them are breaking their addiction and some of them are being cured because of the Affordable Care Act, because they have Medicaid.

Medicaid allows our rural and low-income teens—

And of the 88 counties in Ohio, 70 or so are classified as small town or rural, like the county I grew up in, Richland County—

many of whom otherwise would not be able to attend treatment due to transportation barriers—to attend treatment through public transportation. Working with these clients, you learn their stories. So many have been through unimaginable trauma, losses, and emotional/physical pain. Many have never had the support to help them begin to work through these issues underlying the substance use.

She is worried. The lady in Mount Vernon, OH, is worried, with very good reason, that these repeal plans would ''leave millions of Americans without access to needed mental health and addictions treatment in our state and communities.''

Most recently, a woman in Butler County—the congressional district of former Speaker John Boehner and some members of my staff, past and present—writes:

I am extremely concerned about the cuts President Trump and the Republican-led Congress propose to make in the Medicaid program and services for the developmentally disabled.

Her son is 14 years old. He was diagnosed with a specific type of autism. He is nonverbal, with severe cognitive and physical challenges. She wrote to my office how Medicaid has been ''a godsend'' for her and her family. Before her son received a waiver under the Medicaid Program, her family was spending $100 a month in copays for psychiatric medications alone. That is in addition to all the extra medical costs in caring for a severely challenged child. They couldn't afford the physical therapy he needs, despite having insurance coverage through her husband's employer. She wrote that Medicaid ''more than anything else, improved the quality of my son's life, and by extension, the life of our whole family.''

Understand that health challenges—especially mental health challenges but health challenges overall—in one member of a family afflict the whole family. That is something we should remember as this Congress seems to rush pell-mell into trying to repeal Medicare, trying to repeal the Affordable Care Act.

These three letters are three of hundreds of thousands that we received—hundreds of thousands of letters and calls that Members of the Senate are receiving. I don't understand how, when 20 million people will lose their insurance, so many Members of Congress, who themselves have government-financed health insurance—we have health insurance in this body paid for by taxpayers, most of us. Yet we think it is appropriate to pass legislation in part giving tax cuts to the richest Americans and at the same time stripping away Medicare benefits, taking 22 million people who now have insurance off of that insurance and proposing minor insurance for some of them but not nearly all of them. If we are people of God, if we are people who care about our constituents, how we can do that is just beyond me.

I go back to the quote from one of the people I read about today from Beachwood. She writes: ''Please consider the people who will be affected the most.''

CONSUMER FINANCIAL PROTECTION BUREAU

Mr. President, President Trump declared this week Consumer Protection Week, but his proclamation has gaping holes. It ignores the many ways large corporations cheat consumers and the biggest tool Americans have to fight back.

Not once did the proclamation mention the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, which has returned $12 billion to 29 million consumers. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau was created under Dodd-Frank 8 or 9 years ago. Not once does it talk about the unscrupulous lenders who targeted Americans with predatory mortgages before blowing up the economy in 2007 and 2008. Not once does the President's Consumer Protection Week proclamation mention the millions of fake accounts opened by Wells Fargo. Not once does it mention the shady outfits that set up shop outside the gates of our military bases and the payday

lenders and other unscrupulous lenders who set up shop outside the gates of the military bases because they aren't allowed on the military bases as they try to exploit our service men and women and their families.

Not only did the President ignore some of the most pressing consumer protection issues, his administration is attacking the most important consumer advocate indeed—the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

Last week, President Trump's Department of Justice filed papers in Federal court signaling that it will argue that the CFPB shouldn't be independent. The President and White House want the CFPB under their control so they can weaken it, so they can help Wall Street, so they can take away some of its power. They think the President should have the power to fire the head of the agency for any reason.

The whole reason we wrote it to be independent was to protect it from a President who chose Wall Street over Main Street. It was Presidential Candidate Trump who sounded pretty good standing up to Wall Street and helping Main Street. If you look at the nominees, his appointments, and his actions so far, it has been exactly the opposite. He has been the president of Wall Street and at the same time exploiting Main Street. It means that what the President has proposed is that the President can fire his director for doing his job: stepping on the toes of special interests.

The CFPB works in part because it has an independent Director. The current Director of the CFPB, Richard Cordray from Ohio, has protected consumers, has returned billions to Americans who were cheated and who were taken advantage of by big companies.

The CFPB has an independent budget. Banks can't kill it by lobbying it and cutting off its budget. That is the point. People whom he has in many cases recovered money from because he represents consumers—those banks, those large Wall Street banks and other financial institutions, because of the way it is set up, can't lobby Congress to take money away from it and put it out of business. Special interests have relentlessly attacked the CFPB since the day we created it.

President Trump ran on the promise of protecting the little guy, but he hasn't followed through on the promise of protecting ordinary Americans from some of the wealthiest, most privileged special interests in this town.

If you are one of the 29 million Americans who received help from CFPB, you might know how important saving it is, but you might not know how important it is to especially protecting one group of people, and that is protecting our veterans and our servicemembers. The CFPB has an entire office that is dedicated to helping men and women who have served in uniform—the Office of Servicemember Affairs.

A couple of weeks ago, my Rhode Island Senator friend, JACK REED, was in the Armed Services Committee with the senior enlisted advisers of military services—the Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines. Their job is to make sure our servicemembers and their families are getting the support they need. Every one of them had great things to say about the CFPB's Office of Servicemember Affairs—of the value it provides and the support it provides to the men and women who sacrifice so much for our country.

Senator REED brought up an alarming figure. A recent report estimated that thousands of servicemembers are forced out of service every year because of financial hardships—problems with their mortgages, with payday loans, with credit card debt. One will remember earlier in the presentation that I talked about how many of these financial groups set up right outside military bases. That causes a tragedy for these men and women who want to serve their country, and it causes tragedy for their families. It costs taxpayers $57,000 every time someone is forced out of service. Many other servicemembers lose their security clearances because of financial trouble, which directly affects the mission readiness that is brought on by shady business practices.

The CFPB is stepping in to protect these heroes who are often taken advantage of. The CFPB's Office of Servicemember Affairs is led by men and women who have served in the military and know what kind of help servicemembers need. They visit 145 military facilities across the country in order to help servicemembers get their finances straightened out and to hear about their concerns. They have handled 70,000 complaints from servicemembers and veterans about abusive practices by financial institutions. They have returned $130 million back to servicemembers and their families simply by enforcing the law and protecting those consumers.

The CFPB protects the men and women who protect our country. It protects all of us. The best way to celebrate Consumer Protection Week is not through words and proclamations, it is through actions.

We need to combat cyber crimes and identity theft, as the President mentioned, but we also need to combat all kinds of tricks and traps—loans with outrageous interest rates, for-profit colleges that promise far more than they deliver, lenders who discriminate based on race. The list goes on and on.

I urge my colleagues to join me in working to ensure that the CFPB remains a strong, active ally in the cause of consumer protection this week, next week, every week.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

SILENCING OF POLITICAL DEBATE

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I am truly saddened that I must address what I fear is a growing threat to our Republic—the silencing of political debate by totalitarian mob violence on college campuses.

I was not in Burlington, VT, last Thursday to witness what happened at Middlebury College, but I would like to read from accounts that have been provided by two people who were, in fact, there and who saw these things unfold. They were the targets of the mob's violence. Their names are Allison Stanger, professor of political science at Middlebury College, and Charles Murray, the author of several groundbreaking books, including the work ''The Bell Curve'' and a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. America deserves and needs to hear their stories.

On Saturday, 2 days after the incident, Professor Stanger wrote on her Facebook page as follows:

I agreed to participate in the event with Charles Murray because several of my students asked me to do so. They are smart and good people—all of them—and this was their big event of the year.

I, actually, welcomed the opportunity to be involved because, while my students may know I am a Democrat, all of my courses are nonpartisan, and this was a chance to demonstrate publicly my commitment to a free and fair exchange of views in my classroom.

As the campus uproar about his visit built, I was genuinely surprised and troubled to learn that some of my faculty colleagues had rendered judgment on Dr. Murray's work and character while openly admitting that they had not read anything he had written. With the best of intentions, they offered their leadership to enraged students, and we all know what the results were.

I want you to know what it feels like to look out at a sea of students yelling obscenities at other members of my beloved community. . . . I saw some of my faculty colleagues, who had publicly acknowledged that they had not read anything Dr. Murray had written, join the effort to shut down the lecture. All of this was deeply unsettling to me.

What alarmed me most, however, was what I saw in student eyes from up on that stage. Those who wanted the event to take place made eye contact with me. Those intent on disrupting it steadfastly refused to do so. It was clear to me that they had effectively dehumanized me. They couldn't look me in the eye because, if they had, they would have seen another human being. There is a lot to be angry about in America today, but nothing good ever comes from demonizing our brothers and sisters.

When the event ended and it was time to leave the building, I breathed a sigh of relief. We had made it. I was ready for dinner and conversation with faculty and students in a tranquil setting. What transpired instead felt like a scene from [the TV show] ''Homeland'' rather than an evening at an institution of higher learning. We confronted an angry mob as we tried to exit the building.

Most of the hatred was focused on Dr. Murray, but when I took his right arm both to shield him from the attack and to make sure we stayed together so I could reach the car, too, that's when the hatred turned on me.

One thug grabbed me by the hair, and another shoved me in a different direction. I noticed signs with expletives and my name on them. . . . For those of you who marched in Washington the day after the inauguration, imagine being in a crowd like that, only being surrounded by hatred rather than love. I feared for my life.

The next day, on Sunday, the American Enterprise Institute's website published this account from Dr. Charles Murray.

Dr. Murray wrote:

If it hadn't been for Allison and Bill Burger [Middlebury's Vice President for Communications] keeping hold of me and the security guards pulling people off me, I would have been pushed to the ground. That much is sure. What would have happened after that I don't know, but I do recall thinking that being on the ground was a really bad idea, and I should try really hard to avoid that. Unlike Allison, I wasn't actually hurt at all. . . .

In the 23 years since ''The Bell Curve'' was published, I have had considerable experience with campus protests. Until last Thursday, all of the ones involving me have been as carefully scripted as kabuki: The college administration meets with the organizers of the protest, and ground rules are agreed upon. The protesters have so many minutes to do such and such. It is agreed that, after the allotted time, they will leave or desist. These negotiated agreements have always worked. At least a couple of dozen times, I have been able to give my lecture to an attentive or, at least, quiet audience despite an organized protest.

Middlebury tried to negotiate such an agreement with the protesters, but for the first time in my experience, the protesters would not accept any time limits. If this becomes the new normal, the number of colleges willing to let themselves in for an experience like Middlebury's will plunge to near zero. Academia is already largely sequestered in an ideological bubble, but at least it's translucent. That bubble will become opaque.

Worse yet, the intellectual thugs will take over many campuses. In the mid-1990s, I could count on students who had wanted to listen to start yelling at the protesters after a certain point, ''Sit down and shut up. We want to hear what he has to say.'' That kind of pushback had an effect. It reminded the protesters that they were a minority.

I am assured [he continues] by people at Middlebury that their protesters are a minority as well, but they are a minority that has intimidated the majority. The people in the audience who wanted to hear me speak were completely cowed. That cannot be allowed to stand. A campus where a majority of students are fearful to speak openly because they know a minority will jump on them is no longer an intellectually free campus in any meaningful sense.

I suspect that most of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle may not necessarily be fans of Dr. Charles Murray. There is nothing wrong with that, but I am confident they at least would be honest enough and self-respecting enough not to condemn any scholar's work without ever having read it, like many of Middlebury's faculty members apparently did. More importantly, I am confident my Democratic colleagues would join me in denouncing the violence of the Middlebury campus protesters who sought to silence Dr. Murray. On countless occasions, I have heard my Democratic colleagues come to the Senate floor to condemn violence in all of its forms. Why would this time be any different?

We do not agree on everything, but I am confident that if Dr. Murray were invited to testify here on Capitol Hill—perhaps at a committee of the United States Senate—my Democratic colleagues would eagerly join in an open and respectful debate that would ensue as a result of that visit. I am confident they would reject any effort to silence or to do harm to those with whom they might disagree. In fact, I am confident that if any outburst like that happened, whoever was chairing that committee and the ranking personnel associated with that committee would immediately bring the disruption to a close so an open, honest, respectful discussion could occur within that meeting.

I know tensions are high in America today, and I know what it is like to be on the losing side of a bitterly fought Presidential election as we, as Republicans, found ourselves in just a few years ago in the wake of the 2012 election cycle and in the wake of the previous Presidential election cycle before that in 2008, but that does not and cannot give anyone the license to shout down a fellow American, let alone to physically assault him just because he holds a different opinion.

Democracy and freedom—the republican form of government—depend on open, tolerant, and civil political discourse, and sustaining our democratic freedoms is, perhaps, the sole reason the government subsidizes institutions of higher education in this country.

It is embarrassing that teachers and students at an elite college like Middlebury should need reminding, but speech is not violence, and violence is not speech. Totalitarians who fail to recognize this core fact of decency and tolerance are goose-stepping into some of the darkest corners of the human heart.

If there is anything that should unite us in these polarized times, it is that the kind of violence we saw on Middlebury's campus last week must not be tolerated. That is why I commend the 44 Middlebury College professors who have signed a ''Statement of Principles'' on ''Free Inquiry on Campus.'' I hope more Middlebury professors will join them. In any event, I hope all Americans will join them in standing up for free, open, honest, respectful debate.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

TRIBUTE TO CHARLES THOMAS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I want to take a few moments to acknowledge Charles Thomas, a veteran broadcast journalist and political reporter. Last week, after a career spanning four decades, Charles Thomas appeared in his final newscast at ABC 7 Chicago.

Born in Webster Groves, MO, Charles grew up in the St. Louis area and graduated from the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Journalism. Shortly after graduation, Charles began his career as a radio reporter at KCMO in Kansas City. He has also worked in news stations in San Francisco and Philadelphia before becoming the ABC News bureau Midwest correspondent in St. Louis. In 1991, Charles was hired as a general assignment reporter at ABC 7 Chicago and later named to the coveted position of political reporter in 2009.

Since joining ABC 7's ''Eyewitness News'' in 1991, its newscast was and remains the most watched TV news in Chicago. On Charles's 25th anniversary at the station, he said: ''I am very blessed to have worked here and like to think that my efforts have had something to do with that success.'' As an avid viewer, I am here to say it has. His unique perspective and keen ability to tell stories make him invaluable to any newsroom. Let me tell you, Charles asks the tough questions and holds us all accountable. As the politician often in the crosshairs, I can tell you I knew Charles was always prepared and ready to challenge any weak response. I speak for all of Chicago when I say Charles Thomas will be missed.

For more than a quarter century, Charles has covered the biggest stories in the country—the OJ Simpson Trial, Oklahoma City bombing, Rodney King trials, Great Chicago Flood, and the election of the first African-American President, to name just a few. He truly had a front row seat to history. He even joined then-Senator Barack Obama on a trip to Africa in 2006. His remarkable career has taken him to every State in America and five continents, and he leaves with no regrets. Reflecting on his years covering national, State, and local politics, he said: ''Without a moment's hesitation, I can look back and say I had the best TV reporting job in America.''

Charles Thomas has had an amazing career. His work earned him two Emmy awards for reporting in 1983 and 1992. Although he is retiring, Charles is not done telling stories. He plans to explore digital storytelling focusing on the African-American community, celebrating positive stories often missing in local and national broadcasts—what a noble and necessary endeavor. I am heartened that Charles will remain an inspirational voice in the community.

I want to congratulate Charles Thomas on his distinguished career and thank him for his outstanding service to the people of Chicago. I especially want to thank Charles's wife, Maria, and their three children for sharing so much of their husband and father with our community. I wish him and his family all the best in their next chapter.

PROTECTING YOUNG VICTIMS FROM SEXUAL ABUSE ACT

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, yesterday I introduced the Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse Act, a bill to protect young athletes who participate in the U.S. amateur ranks from sexual abuse.

Before last summer's Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, the Indianapolis Star published an investigative piece that revealed that amateur gymnasts were sexually abused in gyms all across the country. No one knew how widespread the problem was in that sport.

But throughout the investigation, the Indianapolis Star tallied—after reviewing police files and court cases across the country—368 gymnasts who alleged they were sexually abused over a 20-year time period.

Kids as young as 6 were secretly photographed in the nude by coaches. Young athletes were molested by coaches during ''therapy'' sessions. Sexual predators spent countless hours with children one-on-one and abused them for years before anything was done. These accounts were devastating. And they were just the tip of the iceberg.

After reviewing this report, I, along with my colleagues Senator LEAHY, Senator BLUMENTHAL, and Senator DONNELLY, wrote to USA Gymnastics to urge the organization to do more to protect their young athletes.

Specifically, we urged the organization to update its policies and require that all members—including coaches, athletes, and others—immediately report to law enforcement when there is an incident of sexual abuse committed against an athlete.

After we sent the letter, several sexual abuse victims from California reached out to my staff. They revealed that they were abused by individuals affiliated with USA Gymnastics. I told my staff that I had to meet them.

Six brave women, who were each abused as young gymnasts at various points in their careers, then travelled across the country to share their testimonies with me. Two athletes from another sport who were sexually abused also joined us. I will never forget their faces that day. When I walked into the room, I could sense the overwhelming devastation wrought on their lives.

One by one, they shared their hopes and dreams as young athletes. The gymnasts talked about how, while pursuing future Olympic glory, they put their complete faith in the USA Gymnastics infrastructure. They fully trusted the coaches and doctors who had the USA Gymnastics seal of approval. And it was in this environment that they were sexually exploited by those whom they trusted.

Several of the women had been abused repeatedly—over the course of months and years—by a USA Gymnastics team doctor named Larry Nassar. Nassar is currently being prosecuted for a number of horrific crimes against children. One of those brave women was Jamie Dantzscher, a retired gymnast who won the bronze medal competing in the 2000 Olympics in Sydney. Jamie told me how she trained as a young girl in California. When she was 13 years old, she was thrilled to be invited to train with the national USA Gymnastics team. It was with the national team that Nassar gained her trust. Nassar became her ''buddy,'' in the midst of an intense training environment. With USA Gymnastics backing him as a famous doctor and trainer, Jamie felt that there was absolutely no reason to believe Nassar was not trustworthy.

So when Jamie went to see Nassar for back pain, she was confused when Nassar began to touch her in inappropriate places. She was 13 and 14 years old. As she described the abuse to me in graphic detail, the other women around the room began to sob quietly. The tactics that Nassar used were too familiar to them.

And for the longest time, each of the victims believed that their horrific experiences were one-off events, that they were isolated in their own subjective memories. But the sharing of their stories—together in that room with me and the others—affirmed to them that what they had experienced was wrong.

One of the other gymnasts who bravely shared her story with me was Jeanette Antolin, who competed on the national team in the late nineties. Hailing from southern California, Jeanette shared how she was incredibly fearful of ever saying anything about the abuse committed against her because she believed she was being treated by a world-class doctor with USA Gymnastics' approval. As an aspiring Olympian, she feared that if she complained about anything, it would affect her career.

The same fears had overcome Jessica Howard, a rhythmic gymnast who was 15 years old when Nassar began abusing her. She was sent to Nassar for hip problems, and he told her that she should not wear any underwear for her treatment. At the time, she was confused and afraid to say anything to anyone. She believed she would be prevented from pursuing her dreams if she said anything.

I also met Doe Yamashiro from southern California. Doe was sexually abused by a 1984 Olympic Coach named Don Peters. In the mid-1980s, Coach Peters began fondling Doe and then had sex with her. Doe told me and the group of the pain and anguish she still suffers from many years later. The same pain and devastation was felt by all of the young victims who were in the room.

One of the common themes I heard from their stories was not just the predatory behavior of the perpetrators, but also how the USA Gymnastics institution failed to protect them. One of the women told me how she heard USA Gymnastics officials say at one point that it was their top priority to obtain ''medals and money'' and that a ''reputation of a coach'' should not be tarnished by an allegation raised by a victim.

This shocked me, and as I dug deeper into the USA Gymnastics institution, which is considered a ''national governing body'' under Federal law and oversees over 3,000 gymnasiums nationwide, I saw that their policies made it harder for victims, rather than easier, to report incidents of abuse. Their bylaws stated, for example, that the only way for a member athlete to ''effectively'' make a complaint about a coach was through a signed, written complaint.

Furthermore, USA Gymnastics' policy indicated that the organization ''may'' report sexual abuse to law enforcement authorities if a child's safety was at risk, but it was not mandatory. It further stated that it complied with State mandatory reporting laws, but if a State law didn't require anything more, there was no other obligation to do anything else.

It is my strong belief that these arcane policies left children vulnerable to the advances of sexual predators and failed to protect them even when incidents came to light. For example, in reviewing USA Gymnastics' history in public accounts, there were multiple instances where gymnastics coaches were convicted of heinous child sex crimes, years after USA Gymnastics had received complaints about those coaches. In other words, USA Gymnastics appears to have sat on reports of sexual abuse for years, while predators continued to prey on children.

At the end of my meeting with the survivors, I looked at each of them and told them that I would work on legislation to protect other kids and amateur athletes like them from sexual predators.

The legislation we have introduced does three main things to help child sex abuse survivors. It is a strong bipartisan bill, and I want to extend my deepest thanks to those Members who have worked with me on it, including Senators COLLINS, GRASSLEY, DONNELLY, NELSON, BLUMENTHAL, FLAKE, MCCASKILL, ERNST, KLOBUCHAR, SHAHEEN, WARREN, HARRIS, CORTEZ-MASTO, RUBIO, and YOUNG.

The first thing the bill does is to mandate that any person affiliated with USA Gymnastics or other national governing bodies immediately report child abuse, including sexual abuse, to local or Federal law enforcement. This requirement would apply not only to USA Gymnastics, but to each of the other 47 national governing bodies that oversee various Olympic sports, including USA Taekwondo, USA Speed Skating, USA Swimming, and USA Cycling. It is absolutely imperative that a bright line be drawn for all those working with national governing bodies that, once there are facts giving rise to suspect child or sex abuse, a report must be made as soon as possible to proper authorities. This bill mandates that.

Second, this bill strengthens Masha's law, which was named after a 5-year-old Russian orphan who was adopted by an American man only to be raped and sexually abused by him for 6 years until he was finally caught by the FBI in 2003. Her adoptive father had not only abused her, but he had also produced over 200 sexually explicit images of that abuse. Masha's law allows civil suits by minors against sex abuse perpetrators who violate a variety of crimes against children, including sex trafficking, sexual exploitation, and child pornography crimes.

This law is significant for victims to obtain justice because there are times when criminal cases against perpetrators are declined due to difficulties in proving a criminal case. Therefore, for many traumatized victims, the only avenue for them to ever seek justice against their perpetrators is through Masha's law or other civil remedies.

The bill, therefore, updates Masha's law to help victims. It clarifies, for example, that victims of child sex crimes are entitled to statutory damages of $150,000 and possible punitive damages, due to the particularly severe nature of the crimes.

The bill also extends the statute of limitations for Masha's law. 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.

Finally, the bill makes reforms to the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act, which establishes ''national governing bodies'' like USA Gymnastics. The Stevens Act specifically lists the authorities and duties of national governing bodies.

When I first wrote to USA Gymnastics about its poor handling of sexual abuse allegations, they replied that the Stevens Act limits their abilities to fully protect athletes from sexual abuse, so this bill fixes that. It requires national governing bodies like USA Gymnastics to develop for each of its members: specific policies and procedures for the mandatory reporting of sex abuse to law enforcement, policies and procedures to keep track of coaches who leave one gym due to complaints and then go to another gym and repeat cycles of abuse, policies to ensure that minors and amateur athletes are not in one-on-one situations with adults, policies to facilitate reporting of sex abuse allegations to national governing bodies and other authorities, and stronger oversight and enforcement policies so that the national governing bodies take a greater role in making sure that the policies are actually being implemented and enforced throughout the country.

These provisions give national governing bodies like USA Gymnastics absolutely no excuse to make sure that all members are subjected to the strongest training and procedures to prevent sexual abuse.

It further forces organizations like USA Gymnastics to impact the culture of their sports, through various oversight mechanisms, to make sure that all members of such organizations adhere to the strictest standards when it comes to sexual abuse prevention.

Finally, I would like to close with this. All over the country, victims of sexual abuse are coming forward to disclose how they were abused and exploited at the height of their innocence when they were children. Multiple victims from California and throughout the country have, for example, contacted my office and described with great courage their pain and anguish. Rather than list statistics, I want you to know that each of these individual stories represents an untold amount of pain and suffering that reverberates throughout generations, leaving devastation in its path. I urge my colleagues in this body to work with me and the sponsors of this bill to pass this important legislation to protect victims.

I would also like to acknowledge the support for this bill from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, National Children's Alliance, Rights4Girls, University of Utah Law Professor Paul Cassell, Child Sex Crime Victims' Lawyer James Marsh, Crime Victims Expert Steve Twist, National Crime Victims Center, Child USA, National Association of VOCA Administrators, National Organization for Victim Assistance, ToPrevail, ChampionWomen, National Children's Advocacy Center, National Alliance to End Sexual Violence, the National Association to Protect Children, and the Rape Abuse & Incest National Network.

They are on the front lines of this work, and I greatly appreciate their support.

Thank you very much.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, today I wish to support the Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse Act of 2017. I commend Senator FEINSTEIN for her leadership on this bill and for shining a spotlight on the atrocious crimes perpetrated against young American athletes.

Sexual abuse is a heinous crime that must be eradicated in every corner of our society. I have long worked to prevent sexual assault and ensure that survivors have access to the resources and support they need. Last year, the Indianapolis Star reported on allegations of sexual abuse and misconduct made against coaches, gym owners, and other adults affiliated with USA Gymnastics over several decades. These very serious allegations included sexual abuse against young athletes. Predatory coaches were allowed to move from gym to gym, undetected by a lax system of oversight. The investigation also revealed that officials at USA Gymnastics, one of America's most prominent Olympic organizations, failed to alert police to many incidents of sexual abuse that occurred on their watch.

These crimes have hurt hundreds of victims across various sports. This Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Assault Act would require amateur athletic governing bodies, such as USA Gymnastics and other U.S. Olympic organizations, to promptly report every allegation of sexual abuse to the proper authorities. This legislation would help survivors receive justice and protect more people from becoming victims.

In addition, the Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Assault Act would require these national governing bodies to develop robust policies and procedures for mandatory reporting to law enforcement and to develop training and oversight practices to prevent abuse. This bill would also bolster Masha's Law, the law that lets minors bring civil suits against sexual predators and extends the statute of limitations for such cases.

The young athletes who train to represent our country at the top levels of competition and those at all levels who aspire to compete should not have to fear victimization by trusted coaches and sports officials. I want to again thank Senator FEINSTEIN for her leadership on this issue. I urge my colleagues to support the legislation.

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

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

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The messages received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 10:02 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that pursuant to 46 U.S.C. 51312(b), and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Member on the part of the House of Representatives to the Board of Visitors to the United States Merchant Marine Academy: Mr. SUOZZI of New York.

MEASURES REFERRED

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

H.R. 46. An act to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study of Fort Ontario in the State of New York; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 428. An act to survey the gradient boundary along the Red River in the States of Oklahoma and Texas, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 560. An act to amend the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area Improvement Act to provide access to certain vehicles serving residents of municipalities adjacent to the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

MEASURES DISCHARGED

The following bill was discharged from the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship and referred as indicated:

S. 416. A bill to amend the Small Business Investment Incentive Act of 1980 to require an annual review by the Securities and Exchange Commission of the annual government-business forum on capital formation; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

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

EC–926. A communication from the Associate General Counsel, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, twelve (12) reports relative to vacancies in the Department of Agriculture, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 7, 2017; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–927. A communication from the Acting Secretary of the Army, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on gifts made for the benefit of military musical units; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC–928. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, performing the duties of the Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition, Technology and Logistics), transmitting, pursuant to law, the National Defense Stockpile (NDS) Annual Materials Plan (AMP) for fiscal year 2018 and the succeeding four years, fiscal years 2019 - 2022; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC–929. A communication from the Secretary, Securities and Exchange Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Exhibit Hyperlinks and HTML Format'' (RIN3235–AL95) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 6, 2017; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–930. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Export Administration, Bureau of Industry and Security, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Temporary General License: Extension of Validity'' (RIN0694–AG82) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 6, 2017; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–931. A communication from the Secretary of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, a six-month periodic report on the national emergency that was declared in Executive Order 13694 of April 1, 2015, with respect to significant malicious cyber-enabled activities; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–932. A communication from the Director of Regulations and Policy Management Staff, Food and Drug Administration, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Use of Ozone Depleting Substances'' ((RIN0910–AH36) (Docket No. FDA–2015–N–1355)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 2, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–933. A communication from the Senior Official performing the duties of the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works), transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Area Flood Risk Management project; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–934. A communication from the Director of Congressional Affairs, Office of New Reactors, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Operator Licensing Examination Standards for Power Reactors'' (NUREG–1021, Rev. 11) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 6, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–935. A communication from the Acting United States Trade Representative, Executive Office of the President, transmitting, pursuant to law, the 2017 Trade Policy Agenda and 2016 Annual Report of the President of the United States on the Trade Agreements Program; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–936. A communication from the Bureau of Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report certifying for fiscal year 2017 that no United Nations agency or United Nations affiliated agency grants any official status, accreditation, or recognition to any organization which promotes and condones or seeks the legalization of pedophilia, or which includes as a subsidiary or member any such organization; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–937. A communication from the Assistant Legal Adviser for Treaty Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to the Case-Zablocki Act, 1 U.S.C. 112b, as amended, the report of the texts and background statements of international agreements, other than treaties (List 2017–0013 - 2017–0031); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–938. A communication from the Secretary of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to Executive Order 13313 of July 31, 2003, a semiannual report detailing telecommunications-related payments made to Cuba pursuant to Department of the Treasury licenses; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–939. A communication from the Bureau of Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report prepared by the Department of State on progress toward a negotiated solution of the Cyprus question covering the period October 1, 2016, through November 30, 2016; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–940. A communication from the Director of Regulations and Policy Management Staff, Food and Drug Administration, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Gastroenterology-Urology Devices; Manual Gastroenterology-Urology Surgical Instruments and Accessories'' (Docket No. FDA–2016–N–4661) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 6, 2017; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC–941. A communication from the Regulations Coordinator, Health Resources and Services Administration, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''340B Drug Pricing Program Ceiling Price and Manufacturer Civil Monetary Penalties; Delay of Effective Date'' (RIN0906–AA89) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 6, 2017; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC–942. A communication from the Secretary of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, a six-month periodic report on the national emergency with respect to South Sudan that was declared in Executive Order 13664 of April 3, 2014; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–943. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21–645, ''Four-unit Rental Housing Tenant Grandfathering Amendment Act of 2016''; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–944. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21–646, ''At-Risk Tenant Protection Clarifying Temporary Amendment Act of 2016''; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–945. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21–647, ''Professional Engineers Licensure and Regulation Clarification Amendment Act of 2016''; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–946. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21–648, ''Active Duty Pay Differential Amendment Act of 2016''; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–947. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21–649, ''Continuing Care Retirement Community Exemption Amendment Act of 2016''; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–948. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21–650, ''UDC DREAM Amendment Act of 2016''; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–949. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21–651, ''Accountancy Practice Amendment Act of 2016''; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–950. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21–652, ''Pesticide Education and Control Amendment Act of 2016''; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–951. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21–653, ''Risk-Based Capital Amendment Act of 2016''; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–952. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21–654, ''End Taxation Without Representation Amendment Act of 2016''; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–953. A communication from the Acting Chairman, Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Commission's fiscal year 2016 report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (No FEAR Act); to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–954. A communication from the District of Columbia Auditor, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled, ''Planning,

Buying, and Implementing New Information Technology: A Case Study of the D.C. Business Center''; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–955. A communication from the Director of the Office of Regulatory Affairs and Collaborative Action, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustments; Annual Adjustments'' (RIN1076–AF35) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 6, 2017; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

EC–956. A communication from the Acting Assistant Attorney General, Office of Legislative Affairs, Department of Justice, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled ''The Department of Justice 2016 Freedom of Information Act Litigation and Compliance Report'', the Uniform Resource Locator (URL) for all federal agencies' Freedom of Information Act reports; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC–957. A communication from the Assistant Administrator of the Office of Diversion Control, Drug Enforcement Agency, Department of Justice, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Schedules of Controlled Substances: Placement of 10 Synthetic Cathinones Into Schedule I'' (Docket No. DEA–436) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 3, 2017; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC–958. A communication from the Assistant Attorney General, Office of Legislative Affairs, Department of Justice, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled ''Report of the Attorney General to Congress Pursuant to the Death in Custody Reporting Act''; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC–959. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Airworthiness Directives; The Boeing Company Airplanes'' ((RIN2120–AA64) (Docket No. FAA–2016–8186)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 3, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–960. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Airworthiness Directives; The Boeing Company Airplanes'' ((RIN2120–AA64) (Docket No. FAA–2016–6427)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 3, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–961. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Airworthiness Directives; The Boeing Company Airplanes'' ((RIN2120–AA64) (Docket No. FAA–2016–7261)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 3, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–962. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Airworthiness Directives; The Boeing Company Airplanes'' ((RIN2120–AA64) (Docket No. FAA–2016–6430)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 3, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–963. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Standard Instrument Approach Procedures, and Takeoff Minimums and Obstacle Departure Procedures; Miscellaneous Amendments (101); Amdt. No. 3733'' (RIN2120–AA65) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 3, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–964. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Airworthiness Directives; The Boeing Company Airplanes'' ((RIN2120–AA64) (Docket No. FAA–2016–9050)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 3, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–965. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Airworthiness Directives; The Boeing Company Airplanes'' ((RIN2120–AA64) (Docket No. FAA–2014–0571)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 3, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–966. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Airworthiness Directives; The Boeing Company Airplanes'' ((RIN2120–AA64) (Docket No. FAA–2013–0797)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 3, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–967. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Airworthiness Directives; The Boeing Company Airplanes'' ((RIN2120–AA64) (Docket No. FAA–2016–9111)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 3, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–968. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Airworthiness Directives; The Boeing Company Airplanes'' ((RIN2120–AA64) (Docket No. FAA–2016–6664)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 3, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–969. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Airworthiness Directives; The Boeing Company Airplanes'' ((RIN2120–AA64) (Docket No. FAA–2016–5468)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 3, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–970. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Airworthiness Directives; The Boeing Company Airplanes'' ((RIN2120–AA64) (Docket No. FAA–2016–6426)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 3, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–971. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Airworthiness Directives; Airbus Helicopters'' ((RIN2120–AA64) (Docket No. FAA–2016–5040)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 3, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–972. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Airworthiness Directives; Airbus Helicopters'' ((RIN2120–AA64) (Docket No. FAA–2016–9066)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 3, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–973. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Airworthiness Directives; Airbus Helicopters'' ((RIN2120–AA64) (Docket No. FAA–2016–9305)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 3, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–974. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Airworthiness Directives; Gulfstream Aerospace Corporation Airplanes'' ((RIN2120–AA64) (Docket No. FAA–2016–9191)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 3, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–975. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Airworthiness Directives; Empresa Brasileira de Aeronautica S.A. (Embraer) Airplanes'' ((RIN2120–AA64) (Docket No. FAA–2016–9049)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 3, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–976. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Airworthiness Directives; Textron Aviation Inc. (Type Certificate Previously Held by Cessna Aircraft Company) Airplanes'' ((RIN2120–AA64) (Docket No. FAA–2017–0122)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 3, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–977. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Airworthiness Directives; Bombardier, Inc. Airplanes'' ((RIN2120–AA64) (Docket No. FAA–2016–9190)) received during adjournment of the Senate

in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 3, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–978. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Airworthiness Directives; BAE Systems (Operations) Limited'' ((RIN2120–AA64) (Docket No. FAA–2016–9186)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 3, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–979. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Airworthiness Directives; Alexander Schleicher GmbH and Company Gliders'' ((RIN2120–AA64) (Docket No. FAA–2016–9049)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 3, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–980. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Airworthiness Directives; PILATUS AIRCRAFT LTD. Airplanes'' ((RIN2120–AA64) (Docket No. FAA–2016–7003)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 3, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–981. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Airworthiness Directives; Airbus Helicopters Deutschland GmbH Helicopters'' ((RIN2120–AA64) (Docket No. FAA–2016–7415)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 3, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–982. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Airworthiness Directives; Piper Aircraft, Inc. Airplanes'' ((RIN2120–AA64) (Docket No. FAA–2017–0045)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 3, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–983. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Standard Instrument Approach Procedures, and Takeoff Minimums and Obstacle Departure Procedures; Miscellaneous Amendments (57); Amdt. No. 3731'' (RIN2120–AA65) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 3, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–984. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Part 95 Instrument Flight Rules; Miscellaneous Amendments; Amendment No. 531'' (RIN2120–AA63) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 3, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–985. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Amendment of Class E Airspace, Salem, OR'' ((RIN2120–AA66) (Docket No. FAA–2016–6984)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 3, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–986. A communication from the Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Reel Fish Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico; 2016 Recreational Accountability Measures and Closure for Gulf of Mexico Greater Amberjack'' (RIN0648–XE757) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 1, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–987. A communication from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; 2016 Commercial Accountability Measure and Closure for South Atlantic Vermilion Snapper'' (RIN0648–XE910) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 2, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–988. A communication from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Exchange of Flatfish in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area'' (RIN0648–XE878) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 2, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–989. A communication from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; 2016 Commercial Accountability Measure and Closure for South Atlantic Greater Amberjack'' (RIN0648–XE896) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 2, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–990. A communication from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Exchange of Flatfish in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area'' (RIN0648–XE009) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 2, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–991. A communication from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod by Catcher/Processors Using Trawl Gear in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska'' (RIN0648–XE854) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 1, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–992. A communication from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic; 2016 Commercial Accountability Measure and Closure for the South Atlantic Lesser Amberjack, Almaco Jack, and Banded Rudderfish Complex'' (RIN0648–XE754) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 1, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–993. A communication from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; 2016 Accountability Measure-Based Closures for Commercial and Recreational Species in the U.S. Caribbean Off Puerto Rico'' (RIN0648–XE491) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 1, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–994. A communication from the Assistant General Counsel for Regulatory Affairs, Consumer Product Safety Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Revisions to Safety Standard for Toddler Beds'' (Docket No. CSPC–2017–0012) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 6, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–995. A communication from the Chief of Staff, Media Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Revitalization of the AM Radio Service'' ((MB Docket No. 13–249) (FCC 17–14)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 6, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EXECUTIVE REPORT OF COMMITTEE

The following executive report of a nomination was submitted:

By Mr. MCCAIN for the Committee on Armed Services.

Army nomination of Lt. Gen. Herbert R. McMaster, Jr., to be Lieutenant General.

(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. REED (for himself, Ms. COLLINS, and Mr. WARNER):

S. 536. A bill to promote transparency in the oversight of cybersecurity risks at publicly traded companies; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. FRANKEN (for himself, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. BROWN, Mr. CASEY, Mr. COONS, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. HEITKAMP, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. MERKLEY, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. REED, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. SCHATZ, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. UDALL, Ms. WARREN, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, and Mr. WYDEN):

S. 537. A bill to amend title 9 of the United States Code with respect to arbitration; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Ms. STABENOW (for herself, Mr. CRAPO, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. RISCH, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. WICKER, Ms. CANTWELL, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. DAINES, Mr. KING, Mr. PETERS, and Mr. TESTER):

S. 538. A bill to clarify research and development for wood products, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

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

S. 539. A bill to designate the area between the intersections of 16th Street, Northwest and Fuller Street, Northwest and 16th Street, Northwest and Euclid Street, Northwest in Washington, District of Columbia, as ''Oswaldo Paya Way''; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. THUNE (for himself, Mr. BROWN, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. BLUNT, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. PERDUE, Mr. REED, Mr. HOEVEN, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. BARRASSO, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. HELLER, Mrs. ERNST, Mr. DONNELLY, Mr. ISAKSON, Ms. HASSAN, and Mr. BOOZMAN):

S. 540. A bill to limit the authority of States to tax certain income of employees for employment duties performed in other States; to the Committee on Finance.

By Ms. HIRONO (for herself and Mr. SCHATZ):

S. 541. A bill to amend the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990 to provide for a macadamia tree health initiative, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

By Mr. WHITEHOUSE (for himself, Mr. LEAHY, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. FRANKEN, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. MARKEY, and Mr. MERKLEY):

S. 542. A bill to amend title 9, United States Code, with respect to arbitration; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. TESTER (for himself, Mrs. MCCASKILL, and Mr. BENNET):

S. 543. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to include in each contract into which the Secretary enters for necessary services authorities and mechanism for appropriate oversight, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. TESTER (for himself, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. MORAN, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. SCHATZ, Mr. BENNET, Mr. BOOZMAN, Ms. HEITKAMP, and Mr. ROUNDS):

S. 544. A bill to amend Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 to modify the termination date for the Veterans Choice Program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. PAUL (for himself, Mr. BARRASSO, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. COTTON, Mr. CRUZ, Mr. ENZI, Mrs. ERNST, Mr. HATCH, Mr. HELLER, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. LANKFORD, Mr. LEE, Mr. MORAN, Mr. PERDUE, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. ROUNDS, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. SCOTT, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. WICKER, and Mr. GRAHAM):

S. 545. A bill to preserve and protect the free choice of individual employees to form, join, or assist labor organizations, or to refrain from such activities; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. BARRASSO (for himself, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. ENZI, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. WICKER, Mr. ALEXANDER, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. GARDNER, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. MORAN, Mr. CASEY, Mr. CORNYN, and Mrs. FEINSTEIN):

S. 546. A bill to reduce temporarily the royalty required to be paid for sodium produced on Federal lands, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mrs. GILLIBRAND (for herself and Ms. COLLINS):

S. 547. A bill to prevent mail, telemarketing, and Internet fraud targeting seniors in the United States, to promote efforts to increase public awareness of the enormous impact that mail, telemarketing, and Internet fraud have on seniors, to educate the public, seniors, their families, and their caregivers about how to identify and combat fraudulent activity, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Ms. CANTWELL (for herself, Mr. HATCH, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. SCHATZ, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. HELLER, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. BOOKER, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. YOUNG, Ms. COLLINS, and Mr. BENNET):

S. 548. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to reform the low-income housing credit, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. MURPHY (for himself, Mr. LEAHY, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. CARPER, Ms. CANTWELL, Mr. SANDERS, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. MERKLEY, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. COONS, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. SCHATZ, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. BOOKER, and Mr. VAN HOLLEN):

S. 549. A bill to block implementation of the Executive Order that restricts individuals from certain countries from entering the United States; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. LEAHY (for himself, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. MARKEY, Ms. WARREN, Mrs. MURRAY, Ms. BALDWIN, Ms. HEITKAMP, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. BROWN, Mr. BOOKER, and Mrs. SHAHEEN):

S. 550. A bill to restore statutory rights to the people of the United States from forced arbitration; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

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

S. 551. A bill to establish responsibility for the International Outfall Interceptor; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. BROWN (for himself, Mr. LEAHY, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. REED, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. CASEY, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. WARNER, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. SCHATZ, Ms. HIRONO, Ms. WARREN, Ms. HEITKAMP, and Mr. VAN HOLLEN):

S. 552. A bill to amend the Truth in Lending Act and the Electronic Fund Transfer Act to provide justice to victims of fraud; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Ms. WARREN, Mr. REED, Mr. BROWN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, and Ms. HIRONO):

S. 553. A bill to provide that chapter 1 of title 9 of the United States Code, relating to the enforcement of arbitration agreements, shall not apply to enrollment agreements made between students and certain institutions of higher education, and to prohibit limitations on the ability of students to pursue claims against certain institutions of higher education; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. PAUL (for himself and Mr. LEE):

S. 554. A bill to provide for reconciliation pursuant to section 2002 of the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2017; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN:

S. 555. A bill for the relief of Shirley Constantino Tan; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN:

S. 556. A bill for the relief of Joseph Gabra and Sharon Kamel; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN:

S. 557. A bill for the relief of Jose Alberto Martinez Moreno, Micaela Lopez Martinez, and Adilene Martinez; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN:

S. 558. A bill for the relief of Esidronio Arreola-Saucedo, Maria Elena Cobian Arreola, Nayely Arreola Carlos, and Cindy Jael Arreola; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN:

S. 559. A bill for the relief of Alfredo Plascencia Lopez; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN:

S. 560. A bill for the relief of Jorge Rojas Gutierrez and Oliva Gonzalez; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN:

S. 561. A bill for the relief of Alicia Aranda De Buendia; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN:

S. 562. A bill for the relief of Ruben Mkoian, Asmik Karapetian, and Arthur Mkoian; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. FLAKE (for himself, Mr. JOHNSON, Mr. BARRASSO, Mr. BLUNT, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. COTTON, Mr. CRUZ, Mrs. FISCHER, Mr. HATCH, Mr. HELLER, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. LEE, Mr. PAUL, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. SHELBY, Mr. SULLIVAN, Mr. THUNE, Mr. WICKER, and Mr. MORAN):

S.J. Res. 34. A joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Federal Communications Commission relating to ''Protecting the Privacy of Customers of Broadband and Other Telecommunications Services''; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

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

By Mr. CARDIN (for himself, Mr. MCCAIN, and Mr. VAN HOLLEN):

S. Res. 82. A resolution congratulating the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory on the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Laboratory; considered and agreed to.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 14

At the request of Mr. HELLER, the names of the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR) and the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO) were added as cosponsors of S. 14, a bill to provide that Members of Congress may not receive pay after October 1 of any fiscal year in which Congress has not approved a concurrent resolution on the budget and passed the regular appropriations bills.

S. 58

At the request of Mr. HELLER, the names of the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) and the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) were added as cosponsors of S. 58, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to repeal the excise tax on high cost employer-sponsored health coverage.

S. 92

At the request of Mr. MCCAIN, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. HASSAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 92, a bill to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to allow for the personal importation of safe and affordable drugs from approved pharmacies in Canada.

S. 96

At the request of Ms. KLOBUCHAR, the name of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 96, a bill to amend the Communications Act of 1934 to ensure the integrity of voice communications and to prevent unjust or unreasonable discrimination among areas of the United States in the delivery of such communications.

S. 104

At the request of Mrs. GILLIBRAND, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 104, a bill to provide for the vacating of certain convictions and expungement of certain arrests of victims of human trafficking.

S. 170

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 170, a bill to provide for nonpreemption of measures by State and local governments to divest from entities that engage in commerce-related or investment-related boycott, divestment, or sanctions activities targeting Israel, and for other purposes.

S. 203

At the request of Mr. BURR, the name of the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. MCCASKILL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 203, a bill to reaffirm that the Environmental Protection Agency may not regulate vehicles used solely for competition, and for other purposes.

S. 241

At the request of Mrs. ERNST, the name of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 241, a bill to prohibit Federal funding of Planned Parenthood Federation of America.

S. 252

At the request of Mr. NELSON, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 252, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to require drug manufacturers to provide drug rebates for drugs dispensed to low-income individuals under the Medicare prescription drug benefit program.

S. 253

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the names of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. GARDNER) and the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) were added as cosponsors of S. 253, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to repeal the Medicare outpatient rehabilitation therapy caps.

S. 260

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the name of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 260, a bill to repeal the provisions of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act providing for the Independent Payment Advisory Board.

S. 272

At the request of Mr. SCHATZ, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 272, a bill to enhance the security operations of the Transportation Security Administration and the stability of the transportation security workforce by applying a unified personnel system under title 5, United States Code, to employees of the Transportation Security Administration who are responsible for screening passengers and property, and for other purposes.

S. 301

At the request of Mr. LANKFORD, the name of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 301, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to prohibit governmental discrimination against providers of health services that are not involved in abortion.

S. 303

At the request of Mr. BOOKER, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 303, a bill to discontinue a Federal program that authorizes State and local law enforcement officers to investigate, apprehend, and detain aliens in accordance with a written agreement with the Director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and to clarify that immigration enforcement is solely a function of the Federal Government.

S. 315

At the request of Mr. SULLIVAN, the name of the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 315, a bill to direct the Secretary of the Army to place in Arlington National Cemetery a monument honoring the helicopter pilots and crewmembers who were killed while serving on active duty in the Armed Forces during the Vietnam era, and for other purposes.

S. 324

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the name of the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 324, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the provision of adult day health care services for veterans.

S. 333

At the request of Mr. LANKFORD, the name of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 333, a bill to limit donations made pursuant to settlement agreements to which the United States is a party, and for other purposes.

S. 339

At the request of Mr. NELSON, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) was added as a cosponsor of S. 339, a bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to repeal the requirement for reduction of survivor annuities under the Survivor Benefit Plan by veterans' dependency and indemnity compensation, and for other purposes.

S. 370

At the request of Mr. CRUZ, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 370, a bill to eliminate the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection by repealing title X of the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act, commonly known as the Consumer Financial Protection Act of 2010.

S. 394

At the request of Mr. ROUNDS, the name of the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 394, a bill to amend chapter 44 of title 18, United States Code, to provide that a member of the Armed Forces and the spouse of that member shall have the same rights regarding the receipt of firearms at the location of any duty station of the member.

S. 407

At the request of Mr. CRAPO, the names of the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS), the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SULLIVAN), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY) and the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN) were added as cosponsors of S. 407, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to permanently extend the railroad track maintenance credit.

S. 431

At the request of Mr. THUNE, the name of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 431, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to expand the use of telehealth for individuals with stroke.

S. 438

At the request of Mr. BLUNT, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 438, a bill to encourage effective, voluntary investments to recruit, employ, and retain men and women who have served in the United States military with annual Federal awards to employers recognizing such efforts, and for other purposes.

S. 482

At the request of Mr. THUNE, the name of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 482, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to treat certain amounts paid for physical activity, fitness, and exercise as amounts paid for medical care.

S. 487

At the request of Mr. CRAPO, the name of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 487, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for an exclusion for assistance provided to participants in certain veterinary student loan repayment or forgiveness programs.

S. 489

At the request of Mr. PORTMAN, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 489, a bill to amend the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 and the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 with respect to participant votes on the suspension of benefits under multiemployer plans in critical and declining status.

S. 505

At the request of Mr. CASSIDY, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 505, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for an energy equivalent of a gallon of diesel in the case of liquefied natural gas for purposes of the Inland Waterways Trust Fund financing rate.

S. 512

At the request of Mr. BARRASSO, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 512, a bill to modernize the regulation of nuclear energy.

S. 518

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

S.J. RES. 1

At the request of Mr. BOOZMAN, the names of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO), the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON), the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES), the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY), the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH), the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN) and the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) were added as cosponsors of S.J. Res. 1, a joint resolution approving the location of a memorial to commemorate and honor the members of the Armed Forces who served on active duty in support of Operation Desert Storm or Operation Desert Shield.

S.J. RES. 27

At the request of Mr. CASSIDY, the names of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY), the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), the Senator from Alabama (Mr. STRANGE), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE) and the Senator from Indiana (Mr. YOUNG) were added as cosponsors of S.J. Res. 27, a joint resolution disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of Labor relating to ''Clarification of Employer's Continuing Obligation to Make and Maintain an Accurate Record of Each Recordable Injury and Illness''.

S.J. RES. 28

At the request of Mr. INHOFE, the names of the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY) and the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. SCOTT) were added as cosponsors of S.J. Res. 28, a joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency relating to accidental release prevention requirements of risk management programs under the Clean Air Act.

S. RES. 23

At the request of Mr. GARDNER, the name of the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 23, a resolution establishing the Select Committee on Cybersecurity.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. REED (for himself, Ms. COLLINS, and Mr. WARNER):

S. 536. A bill to promote transparency in the oversight of cybersecurity risks at publicly traded companies; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, today I am reintroducing the Cybersecurity Disclosure Act of 2017 along with two members of the Select Committee on Intelligence, Senator Collins, and the ranking member, Senator Warner. In response to data breaches of various companies that exposed the personal information of millions of customers, our legislation asks each publicly traded company to include—in Securities and Exchange Commission, SEC, disclosures to investors—information on whether any member of the board of directors is a cybersecurity expert, and if why having this expertise on the board of directors is not necessary because of other cyber security steps taken by the publicly traded company. To be clear, the legislation does not require companies to take any actions other than to provide this disclosure to its investors.

Many investors may be surprised to learn that board directors who participated in the National Association of Corporate Directors, NACD, roundtable discussions on cyber security late in 2013 admitted that ''the lack of adequate knowledge of information technology risk has made it challenging for them to 'effectively oversee management's cybersecurity activities.''' More recently, in Deloitte's 10th Global Risk Management Survey of Financial Services Institutions, published this month, 42 percent of respondents considered their institution to be less effective in managing cybersecurity. And according to the 2016–2017 NACD Public Company Governance Survey, ''fifty-nine percent of respondents reported that they find it challenging to oversee cyber risk, and only 19 percent of respondents said that their boards possess a high level of knowledge about cybersecurity.'' Indeed, Yahoo in its most recent annual report, which was filed with the SEC last week, disclosed that ''the Independent Committee found that failures in communication, management, inquiry and internal reporting contributed to the lack of proper comprehension and handling of the 2014 Security Incident. The Independent Committee also found that the Audit and Finance Committee and the full board were not adequately informed of the full severity, risks, and potential impacts of the 2014 Security Incident and related matters.'' The 2014 Security Incident here refers to the fact that ''a copy of certain user account information for approximately 500 million user accounts was stolen from Yahoo's network in late 2014.'' This is particularly troubling given that data breaches are on the rise. Indeed, 2016 was a recordbreaking year for data breaches, which increased 40 percent from the prior year to 1,093 breaches according to the Identity Theft Resource Center.

Investors and customers deserve a clear understanding of whether publicly traded companies are prioritizing cyber security and have the capacity to protect investors and customers from cyber-related attacks. Our legislation aims to provide a better understanding of these issues through improved SEC disclosure.

While this legislation is a matter for consideration by the Banking Committee, of which I am a member, this bill is also informed by my service on the Armed Services Committee and the Select Committee on Intelligence. It is through this Banking-Armed Services-Intelligence perspective that I see that our economic security is indeed a matter of our national security, and this is particularly the case as our economy becomes increasingly reliant on technology and the Internet.

For example, when he was Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, appeared before the Armed Services Committee in 2015 and testified that ''cyber threats to the U.S. national and economic security are increasing in frequency, scale, sophistication and severity of impact.'' He further said that ''[b]ecause of our heavy dependence on the Internet, nearly all information communication technologies and I.T. networks and systems will be perpetually at risk.''

Indeed, retired Army GEN Keith Alexander, who is the former commander of the United States Cyber Command and former Director of the National Security Agency, appeared before the Armed Services Committee this month and stated that ''while the primary responsibility of government is to defend the nation, the private sector also shares responsibility in creating the partnership necessary to make the defense of our nation possible. Neither the government nor the private sector can capably protect their systems and networks without extensive and close cooperation.''

With mounting cyber threats and concerns over the capabilities of corporate directors, we all need to be more proactive in ensuring our Nation's cyber security before there are additional serious breaches. This legislation seeks to take one step toward that

goal by encouraging publicly traded companies to be more transparent to their investors and customers on whether and how their boards of directors are prioritizing cyber security.

I thank Harvard Law School professor John Coates, MIT professor Simon Johnson, Columbia Law School professor John Coffee, and the Consumer Federation of America for their support, and I urge my colleagues to join Senator Collins, Senator Warner, and me in supporting this legislation.

By Mr. LEAHY (for himself, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. MARKEY, Ms. WARREN, Mrs. MURRAY, Ms. BALDWIN, Ms. HEITKAMP, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. BROWN, Mr. BOOKER, and Mrs. SHAHEEN):

S. 550. A bill to restore statutory rights to the people of the United States from forced arbitration; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, today, I have reintroduced legislation to protect Americans from being stripped of their legal rights by little known clauses that are now hidden in an alarming number of contracts. When we enter into agreements to obtain cell phone service, rent an apartment, or accept a new job, most are not made aware of the forced arbitration clauses that are tucked away in the legal fine print. But these dangerous provision force us to abandon our constitutional right to protect ourselves in court and instead send hard-working Americans to face wealthy corporations behind closed doors in private arbitration. This must change.

When Congress passed the Federal Arbitration Act in 1925, it was intended to help businesses resolve legal disputes with each other. But over the past two decades, private arbitration has been abused by large companies to push Americans out of court. In doing so, these companies have effectively opted out of critical labor, consumer, and civil rights laws that give Americans the ability to assert their claims before our independent judiciary.

Forced arbitration clauses now appear in nearly every contract we sign. Unfortunately, examples of the injustice caused by these clauses are equally ubiquitous and can be found all across the country. They affect consumers, workers, seniors, veterans, and families in Vermont and every other State, and the cases are heart-wrenching.

Just last week, the Washington Post reported that hundreds of current and former employees of Sterling Jewelers—a company that earns $6 billion in annual revenue—have for years alleged that the company is engaged in pervasive gender discrimination and has fostered a culture that condones sexual harassment. The stories now being reported are shocking and date back to the early 1990s. Yet, despite the fact that women at the company have been alleging misconduct for decades, no one knew about it. That is because their claims were hidden behind closed doors because of private arbitration. To this day, we still do not know the full details.

The press has helped to bring attention to other instances of forced arbitration in recent years. In 2015, the Los Angeles Times revealed that Wells Fargo used arbitration clauses to deny customers whose names were used to open fraudulent accounts an opportunity to seek justice in court. In fact, Wells Fargo asked a Federal court in Utah to move a number of sham account allegations to arbitration. The New York Times dedicated a three-part investigative series to highlighting the impact on consumers and workers of forced arbitration clauses. And becoming the story herself, television journalist Gretchen Carlson was barred from speaking publicly about her allegations of sexual harassment against former FOX News chairman Roger Ailes.

I have long raised concerns about the practice of forced arbitration, and as chairman led hearings of the Senate Judiciary Committee in 2007, 2008, 2011, and 2013. This should not be a partisan issue. Both Republican and Democratic attorneys general have repeatedly spoken out against the Federal Arbitration Act's intrusion on State sovereignty and a State's compelling interest in protecting the health and welfare of its citizens. In Vermont, lawmakers enacted commonsense legislation to limit the abuse of forced arbitration clauses and raise consumer awareness, but but this law was invalidated because it conflicted with Federal law. Companies have effectively created a ''get out of jail free'' card that guts our laws and shields bad actors from any type of public accountability. This is an unconscionable situation, and Congress must act.

The Restoring Statutory Rights Act that I am reintroducing today/will protect Americans' right to seek justice in our courts. It will ensure that our Federal laws will actually be effective by ensuring that Americans cannot be stripped of their ability to enforce their rights before our independent court system. This bill also ensures that when States act to address forced arbitration, as my home State of Vermont has, they are not preempted by an overbroad reading of our Federal arbitration laws.

This effort is supported by the Leadership Conference for Civil and Human Rights, the National Employment Lawyers' Association, and consumer groups such as National Association of Consumer Advocates, Consumers Union, Public Citizen, the National Consumer Law Center, and Consumers for Auto Reliability and Safety. For years, these groups and many others have worked tirelessly to highlight the injustice of forced arbitration and the full scope of the number of people it affects.

All Senators should care about ensuring that corporations cannot unilaterally circumvent the statutes that this body writes, debates, and enacts into law. Senators should also care about the ability of the States to protect consumers from unconscionable contracts. I urge Members to support this bill.

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Ms. WARREN, Mr. REED, Mr. BROWN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, and Ms. HIRONO):

S. 553. A bill to provide that chapter 1 of title 9 of the United States Code, relating to the enforcement of arbitration agreements, shall not apply to enrollment agreements made between students and certain institutions of higher education, and to prohibit limitations on the ability of students to pursue claims against certain institutions of higher education; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

S. 553

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Court Legal Access and Student Support (CLASS) Act of 2017''.

SEC. 2. INAPPLICABILITY OF CHAPTER 1 OF TITLE 9, UNITED STATES CODE, TO ENROLLMENT AGREEMENTS MADE BETWEEN STUDENTS AND CERTAIN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 1 of title 9 of the United States Code (relating to the enforcement of arbitration agreements) shall not apply to an enrollment agreement made between a student and an institution of higher education.

(b) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term ''institution of higher education'' has the meaning given such term in section 102 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1002).

SEC. 3. PROHIBITION ON LIMITATIONS ON ABILITY OF STUDENTS TO PURSUE CLAIMS AGAINST CERTAIN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

Section 487(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1094(a)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(30) The institution will not require any student to agree to, and will not enforce, any limitation or restriction (including a limitation or restriction on any available choice of applicable law, a jury trial, or venue) on the ability of a student to pursue a claim, individually or with others, against an institution in court.''.

SEC. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This Act and the amendments made by this Act shall take effect 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN:

S. 555. A bill for the relief of Shirley Constantino Tan; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, today I am reintroducing a bill for the private relief of Shirley Constantino Tan. Ms. Tan is a Filipina national living in Pacifica, CA. She is the proud

mother of 20-year-old U.S. citizen twin boys, Joriene and Jashley, and the spouse of Jay Mercado, a naturalized U.S. citizen.

I believe Ms. Tan merits Congress's special consideration for this extraordinary form of relief because her removal from the United States would cause undue hardship for her and her family. She faces deportation to the Philippines, which would separate her from her family and jeopardize her safety.

Ms. Tan experienced horrific violence in the Philippines before she left to come to the United States. When she was only 14 years old, her cousin murdered her mother and her sister and shot Shirley in the head. While the cousin who committed the murders was eventually prosecuted, he received a short jail sentence. Fearing for her safety, Ms. Tan fled the Philippines just before her cousin was due to be released from jail. She entered the United States legally on a visitor's visa in 1989.

Ms. Tan's current deportation order is the result of negligent counsel. She applied for asylum in 1995. While her case appeal was pending at the Board of Immigration Appeals, her attorney failed to submit a brief to support her case. As a result, the case was dismissed, and the Board of Immigration Appeals granted Shirley voluntary departure from the United States.

Ms. Tan never received notice that the Board of Immigration Appeals granted her voluntary departure. Her attorney moved offices, did not receive the order, and ultimately never informed her of the order. As a result, Ms. Tan did not depart the United States and the grant of voluntary departure automatically led to a removal order. She learned about the deportation order for the first time on January 28, 2009, when Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents took her into immigration custody.

Because of her attorney's negligent actions, Ms. Tan was denied the opportunity to present her case in immigration proceedings. She later filed a complaint with the State Bar of California against her former attorney. She is not the first person to file such a complaint against this attorney.

On February 4, 2015, Ms. Tan's spouse, Jay, a U.S. citizen, filed an approved spousal petition on her behalf. On August 20, 2015, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services denied her application due to the fact that she still had a final order of removal. Ms. Tan must go back to the immigration court and ask for the court to terminate her case and then reapply for her green card. Ms. Tan is now again facing the threat of deportation while she seeks to close her case before an immigration court.

In addition to the hardship that Ms. Tan would endure if she is deported, her deportation would cause serious hardship to her two U.S. citizen children, Joriene and Jashley.

Joriene is a junior at Stanford University and is premed, majoring in human biology. In addition to his studies, Joriene is involved in Stanford's Pilipino-American Student Union.

Jashley is a junior at Chapman University, majoring in business administration. Ms. Tan no longer runs her in-home daycare and is a homemaker.

If Ms. Tan were forced to leave the United States, her family has expressed that they would go with her to the Philippines or try to find a third country where the entire family could relocate. This would mean that Joriene and Jashley would have to leave behind their education and the only home they know in the United States.

I do not believe it is in our Nation's best interest to force this family, with two U.S. citizen children, to make the choice between being separated and relocating to a country where they may face safety concerns or other serious hardships.

Ms. Tan and her family are involved in their community in Pacifica and own their own home. The family attends Good Shepherd Catholic Church, volunteering at the church and the Mother Teresa of Calcutta's Daughters of Charity. Ms. Tan has the support of dozens of members of her community who have shared with me the family's spirit of commitment to their community.

Enactment of the legislation I am introducing on behalf of Ms. Tan today will enable this entire family to continue their lives in California and make positive contributions to their community.

Mr. President, I ask my colleagues to support this private bill.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN:

S. 556. A bill for the relief of Joseph Gabra and Sharon Kamel; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, today I am reintroducing private relief legislation on behalf of Joseph Gabra and Sharon Kamel, a couple living with their four U.S. citizen children in Camarillo, CA.

Joseph and Sharon are nationals of Egypt who fled their home country over 19 years ago after being targeted for their religious membership in the Christian Coptic Church in Egypt. They became involved with this church during the 1990s, Joseph as an accountant and project coordinator helping to build community facilities and Sharon as the church's training director in human resources.

Unfortunately, Joseph and Sharon were also subjected to threats and abuse. Joseph was jailed repeatedly because of his involvement with the church. Sharon's family members were violently targeted, including her cousin who was murdered and her brother whose business was firebombed. When Sharon became pregnant with her first child, she was threatened by a member of a different religious organization for raising her child in a non-Muslim faith.

Joseph and Sharon came to the United States legally on visitor visas in November 1998. Due to their fears of persecution in Egypt based on their religious beliefs, they filed for asylum in the United States in May 1999.

However, Joseph, who has a speech impediment, had difficulty communicating why he was afraid to return to Egypt, and 1 year later their asylum application was denied. Considering that Sharon's brother, who also applied for asylum for similar reasons, was granted asylum in the United States, Joseph and Sharon appealed the denial of their asylum applications, to no avail.

While Sharon's brother, who is now a U.S. citizen, has filed a family-based immigrant petition on Sharon's behalf, it will be at least 4 years until she will even be eligible for a visa number due to visa backlogs.

If Sharon and Joseph are deported before then, they will not only be separated from their family but will be forced to return to a country where persecution of Coptic Christians continues.

Due to their fear of returning to Egypt, Joseph and Sharon have therefore tried to build a life for themselves here in the United States, working hard while building their beautiful family. With the protection of past private bills I filed on their behalf, Joseph was able to get his certified public accountant license and opened his own accounting firm, where Sharon works by his side.

Joseph and Sharon make sure that their four U.S. citizen children—Jessica, age 18, Rebecca, age 17, Rafael, age 16, and Veronica, age 11—all attend school in California and maintain good grades.

Joseph and Sharon carry strong support from friends, members of their local church, and other Californians who attest to their good character and community contributions.

I am concerned that the entire family would face serious and unwarranted hardships if Joseph and Sharon were forced to return to Egypt. For Jessica, Rebecca, Rafael, and Veronica, the only home they know is in the United States. Separation of this family would be devastating and the alternative—relocating the family to Egypt—could be dire, as it is quite possible that these four American children would face discrimination or worse on account of their religion, as was the experience of many of their family members.

Joseph and Sharon have made a compelling plea to remain in the United States. These parents emphasize their commitment to supporting their children and creating a healthy and productive place for them to grow up in California. I believe this family deserves that opportunity.

I respectfully ask my colleagues to support this private relief bill on behalf of Joseph Gabra and Sharon Kamel.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN:

S. 557. A bill for the relief of Jose Alberto Martinez Moreno, Micaela

Lopez Martinez, and Adilene Martinez; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, today I am reintroducing private immigration relief legislation to provide lawful permanent resident status to Jose Alberto Martinez Moreno, Micaela Lopez Martinez, and their daughter, Adilene Martinez. This family is originally from Mexico but has been living in California for over 20 years. I believe they merit Congress's special consideration for this extraordinary form of relief.

When Jose came to the United States from Mexico, he began working as a busboy in restaurants in San Francisco, CA. In 1990, he started working as a cook at Palio D'Asti, an award-winning Italian restaurant in San Francisco.

Jose worked his way through the ranks, eventuall becoming Palio's sous chef. His colleagues describe him as a reliable and cool-headed coworker and as ''an exemplary employee'' who not only is ''good at his job but is also a great boss to his subordinates.''

He and his wife Micaela call San Francisco home. Micaela is a homemaker and part-time housekeeper. They have three daughters, two of whom are U.S. citizens. Their oldest daughter, Adilene, age 28, is undocumented. She currently works fulltime at a cinema and hopes to continue pursuing her studies in the future.

The Martinez's second daughter, Jazmin, age 24, is a U.S. citizen. She graduated from Leadership High School and is now studying at California State University, San Francisco. Jazmin has been diagnosed with asthma, which requires constant treatment. According to her doctor, if Jazmin were to return to Mexico with her family, the high altitude and air pollution in Mexico City could be fatal to her. The Martinez's other U.S. citizen daughter, Karla, is 19 years old and attends San Francisco City College.

The Martinez family attempted to legalize their status through several channels.

In 2001, Jose's sister, who has legal status, petitioned for Jose to get a green card. However, the current green card backlog for siblings from Mexico is very long, and it will be many years before Jose will be eligible to legalize his status though his sister.

In 2002, the Martinez family applied for political asylum. Their application was denied. An immigration judge denied their subsequent application for cancellation of removal.

Finally, Daniel Scherotter, the executive chef and owner of Palio D'Asti, petitioned for an employment-based green card for Jose based upon his unique skills as a chef. Jose's petition was approved by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. However, before he will be eligible for a green card, he must apply for a hardship waiver, which cannot be guaranteed.

The Martinez family has become an integral part of their community in California. They are active in their faith community. They volunteer with community-based organizations and are, in turn, supported by their community. When I first introduced this bill, I received dozens of letters of support from their fellow parishioners, teachers, and members of their community.

The Martinez family truly exemplifies the American dream. Jose worked his way through the restaurant industry to become a chef and an indispensable employee at a renowned restaurant. With great dedication, Micaela has worked hard to raise three daughters who are advancing their education and look forward to continuing the pursuit of their goals.

I believe the Martinez family's continued presence in the United States would allow them to continue making significant contributions to their community in California.

I ask my colleagues to support this private bill.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN:

S. 558. A bill for the relief of Esidronio Arreola-Saucedo, Maria Elena Cobian Arreola, Nayely Arreola Carlos, and Cindy Jael Arreola; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, today I offer private immigration relief legislation to provide lawful permanent resident status to Esidronio Arreola-Saucedo, Maria Elena Cobian Arreola, Nayely Arreola Carlos, and Cindy Jael Arreola. The Arreolas are Mexican nationals living in the Fresno area of California.

Esidronio and Maria Elena have lived in the United States for over 20 years. Two of their five children—Nayely, age 30, and Cindy, age 28—also stand to benefit from this legislation. The other three Arreola children—Robert, age 25, Daniel, age 22, and Saray, age 20—are U.S. citizens. The story of the Arreola family is compelling, and I believe they merit Congress's special consideration for such an extraordinary form of relief as a private bill.

The Arreolas are facing deportation in part because of grievous errors committed by their previous counsel, who has since been disbarred. In fact, the attorney's conduct was so egregious that it compelled an immigration judge to write to the Executive Office of Immigration Review seeking the attorney's disbarment for his actions in his clients' immigration cases.

Esidronio came to the United States in 1986 and was an agricultural migrant worker in the fields of California for several years. As a migrant worker at that time, he would have been eligible for permanent residence through the Seasonal Agricultural Workers, SWA, Program, had he known about it.

Maria Elena was living in the United States at the time she became pregnant with her daughter Cindy. She returned to Mexico to give birth because she wanted to avoid any immigration issues.

Because of the length of time that the Arreolas were in the United States, it is likely that they would have qualified for suspension of deportation, which would have allowed them to remain in the United States legally. However, the poor legal representation they received foreclosed this opportunity.

One of the most compelling reasons for my introduction of this private bill is the devastating impact the deportation of Esidronio and Maria Elena would have on their children—three of whom are American citizens—and the other two who have lived in the United States since they were toddlers. America is the only country the Arreola children have ever known.

Nayely, the oldest, was the first in her family to graduate from high school and the first to graduate college. She recently received her Masters in Business Administration from Fresno Pacific University, a regionally ranked university, and now works in the admissions office. Nayely is married and has a young son named Elijah Ace Carlos.

At a young age, Nayely demonstrated a strong commitment to the ideals of citizenship in her adopted country. She worked hard to achieve her full potential both through her academic endeavors and community service. As the Associate Dean of Enrollment Services at Fresno Pacific University states in a letter of support, ''[T]he leaders of Fresno Pacific University saw in Nayely, a young person who will become exemplary of all that is good in the American dream.''

In high school, Nayely was a member of the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) college preparatory program in which students commit to determining their own futures through attaining a college degree. Nayely was also President of the Key Club, a community service organization. Perhaps the greatest hardship to Nayely's U.S. citizen husband and child, if she were forced to return to Mexico, would be her lost opportunity to realize her dreams and contribute further to her community and to this country.

Nayely's sister, Cindy, is also married and has a 7-year-old daughter and a 5-year-old son. Neither Nayely nor Cindy is eligible to automatically adjust their status based on their marriages because of their initial unlawful entry.

The Arreolas also have other family who are U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents of this country. Maria Elena has three brothers who are American citizens, and Esidronio has a sister who is an American citizen. They have no immediate family in Mexico.

According to immigration authorities, this family has never had any problems with law enforcement. I am told that they have filed their taxes every year from 1990 to the present. They have always worked hard to support themselves.

As I mentioned, Esidronio was previously employed as a farm worker but now has his own business in California repairing electronics. His business has been successful enough to enable him to purchase a home for his family. He and his wife are active in their church community and in their children's education.

It is clear to me that this family has embraced the American dream. Enactment of the legislation I have reintroduced today will enable the Arreolas to continue to make significant contributions to their community as well as the United States.

I ask my colleagues to support this private bill.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN:

S. 559. A bill for the relief of Alfredo Plascencia Lopez; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I rise today to offer legislation to provide lawful permanent residence status to Alfredo Plascencia Lopez, a Mexican national who lives in the San Bruno area of California.

I offer legislation on his behalf because I believe that, without it, this hard-working man, wife who is a lawful permanent resident, and children would face extreme hardship. His children would either face separation from their father or be forced to leave the only country they know and give up the education they are pursuing in the United States.

Alfredo and his wife Maria have been in the United States for over 20 years. They worked for years to adjust their status through appropriate legal channels, but poor legal representation ruined their opportunities.

The Plascencias' lawyer refused to return their calls or otherwise communicate with them in any way. He also failed to forward crucial immigration documents. Because of the poor representation they received, Alfredo only became aware that they had been ordered to leave the United States 15 days prior to his scheduled deportation.

Alfredo was shocked to learn of his attorney's malfeasance, but he acted quickly to secure legitimate counsel and filed the appropriate paperwork to delay his deportation and determine if any other legal action could be taken.

Together, Alfredo and Maria have used their professional successes, with the assistance of private bills, to realize many of the goals dreamed of by all Americans. They have worked hard and saved up to buy their home.

They have good health care benefits, and they each have begun saving for retirement. They are sending their children Christina, Erika, and Danny, to college and plan to send the rest of their children to college, as well.

Their oldest child, Christina, is 26 years old, and takes classes at Heald College to become a paralegal. Erika, age 22, graduated from high school and is currently taking classes at Skyline College. Her teachers have praised her abilities and have referred to her as a ''bright spot'' in the classroom. Danny, age 20, currently attends the University of California and volunteers at his local homeless shelter in the soup kitchen. Daisy, age 15, and Juan Pablo, age 10, are in school and plan on attending college.

Allowing Alfredo to remain in the United States is necessary to enable his family to continue thriving in the United States. His children are dedicated to pursuing their education and being productive members of their community.

I do not believe that Alfredo should be separated from his family. I am reintroducing this legislation to protect the best interest of Alfredo's U.S. citizen children and his wife, who is a lawful permanent resident. I believe that Alfredo will continue to make positive contributions to his community in California and this country. I respectfully ask my colleagues to support this bill.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN:

S. 560. A bill for the relief of Jorge Rojas Gutierrez and Oliva Gonzalez; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, today I am reintroducing a private relief bill on behalf of Jorge Rojas Gutierrez and his wife, Oliva Gonzalez. The Rojas family, originally from Mexico, is living in the San Jose area of California.

The story of the Rojas family is compelling, and I believe they merit Congress's special consideration for such an extraordinary form of relief as a private bill.

Jorge and Oliva originally came to the United States in 1990 when their son Jorge Rojas, Jr., was just 2 years old. In 1995, they left the country to attend a funeral and then reentered the United States on visitors' visas.

The family has grown to include three U.S. citizen children: Alexis, now 24 years old, Tanya, 22 years old, and Matias, now 7 years old. Jorge and Oliva are also the grandparents of Meena Rojas.

The Rojas family first attempted to legalize their status in the United States when an unscrupulous immigration consultant, who was not an attorney, advised them to apply for asylum. Unfortunately, without proper legal guidance, the family did not realize at the time that they lacked a valid basis for asylum. Their asylum claim was denied in 2008, leaving the Rojas family with no further options to legalize their status.

Since their arrival in the United States more than 20 years ago, the Rojas family has demonstrated a robust work ethic and a strong commitment to their community in California. They have paid their taxes and worked hard to contribute to this country.

Jorge is a hard-working individual who has been employed by BrightView Landscaping Services, formerly known as Valley Crest Landscape Maintenance, in San Jose, CA, for the past 20 years. Currently, he works on commercial landscaping projects. Jorge is well-respected by his supervisor and his peers.

In addition to supporting his family, Jorge has volunteered his time to provide modern green landscaping and building projects at his children's school in California. He is active in his neighborhood association, through which he worked with his neighbors to open a library and community center in their community.

Oliva, in addition to raising her three children, has also been very active in the local community. She volunteers with the People Acting in Community Together, PACT, organization, where she works to prevent crime, gangs, and drug dealing in San Jose neighborhoods and schools.

Jorge Rojas, Jr., who entered the United States as an infant with his parents, is now the father of 6-year-old Meena. He is 28 years old and working at a job that allows him to support his daughter. Jorge graduated from Del Mar High School in 2007. He has obtained temporary protection from deportation through the 2012 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, DACA, Program.

Alexis, age 24, graduated from West Valley College in Saratoga, CA, and is interested in continuing his linguistics studies at San Jose State University. Tanya, age 22, is now in her second semester at San Jose State University. Their teachers have described them as ''fantastic, wonderful and gifted'' students.

Perhaps one of the most compelling reasons for permitting the Rojas family to remain in the United States is the impact that their deportation would have on their four children. Three of the Rojas children—Alexis, Tanya, and Matias—American citizens. Additionally, Jorge Rojas, Jr., has lived in the United States since he was a toddler. America is the only country these children have called home. It seems so clear to me that this family has embraced the American dream, and their continued presence in our country would do so much to promote the values we hold dear,

When I first introduced this bill, I received dozens of letters from the community in Northern California in support of this family. Enactment of the legislation I have reintroduced today will keep this great family together and enable each of them to continue making significant contributions to their community as well as the United States.

I ask my colleagues to support this private bill.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN:

S. 561. A bill for the relief of Alicia Aranda De Buendia; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I am reintroducing a private relief bill

on behalf of Alicia Buendia, a woman who has lived in the Fresno area of California for more than 20 years. I believe her situation merits Congress's special consideration.

She is married to Jose Buendia, and together they have raised two outstanding children, Ana Laura, age 28, and Alex, age 26, a U.S. citizen. Both children have excelled in school. Ana Laura graduated from University of California, Irvine, and Alex is currently attending the University of California, Merced.

I previously introduced bills for Alicia, her husband, and Ana Laura. Thankfully, Jose has successfully secured lawful permanent residency for himself through cancellation of removal. This followed 7 unfortunate years of delay in the immigration courts to determine his eligibility under the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 for permanent residence. Ana Laura has obtained temporary protection from deportation through the 2012 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, DACA, Program.

However, Alicia, who is eligible to adjust status, is still awaiting a determination on a family-based immigration petition filed by her U.S. citizen son. Additionally, she would be required to file a waiver application, which could result in separation from her family

Alicia warrants private relief and a chance to start fresh in America. She goes to work season after season in California's labor-intensive agriculture industry in Reedley, CA, where she currently works for a fruit packing company.

In the more than 20 years of living in California, Alicia has dedicated herself to her family and community. She and Jose have worked hard to honestly feed their family and have raised two exceptional children who have both pursued and excelled in higher education.

Alicia has a strong connection to her local community, serving as an active member of her church. She and Jose pay their taxes every year, have successfully paid off their mortgage, and remain free of debt. They have shown that they are responsible, maintaining health insurance, savings accounts, and retirement accounts. Without this private bill, Alicia would be separated from her lawful permanent resident husband, two children who rely on her for love, support, and guidance.

I ask my colleagues to support this private bill.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN:

S. 562. A bill for the relief of Ruben Mkoian, Asmik Karapetian, and Arthur Mkoian; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I am reintroducing private relief legislation in the 115th Congress on behalf of Ruben Mkoian, Asmik Karapetian, and their son, Arthur Mkoian. The Mkoian family has been living in Fresno, CA, for over 20 years. I continue to believe this family deserves Congress's special consideration for such an extraordinary form of relief as a private bill.

The Mkoian family is originally from Armenia. They decided to leave Armenia for the United States in the early 1990s, following several incidents in which the family experienced harassment, vandalism and threats to their well-being.

In Armenia, Ruben worked as a police sergeant on vehicle licensing. At one point, he was offered a bribe to register stolen vehicles, which he refused and reported to his superior, the police chief. He later learned that a coworker had registered the vehicles at the request of the same chief.

After Ruben reported the bribe offer to illegally register vehicles and said he would call the police, his family store was vandalized and he received threatening phone calls telling him to keep quiet. A bottle of gasoline was thrown into his family's residence, burning it to the ground. In April 1992, several men entered the family store and assaulted Ruben, hospitalizing him for 22 days.

Ruben, Asmik, and their son Arthur, who was 3 years old at the time, left Armenia and entered the United States on visitor visas. They applied for political asylum that same year on the grounds that they would be subject to physical attacks if returned to Armenia. It took 16 years for their case to be finalized, with the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals denying their asylum case in January 2008.

At this time, Ruben, Asmik, and Arthur have exhausted every option to obtain immigration relief in the United States. While Ruben and Asmik's other son, Arsen, is a U.S. citizen, he is too young to file a green card petition on their behalf.

It would be a terrible shame to remove this family from the United States and to separate them from Arsen, who is 20 years old and a U.S. citizen. The Mkoians have worked hard to build a place for their family in California and are an integral part of their community.

The family attends St. Paul Armenian Apostolic Church in Fresno. They do charity work to send medical equipment to Armenia.

Ruben works as a driver for Uber. He previously worked as a manager at a car wash in Fresno and as a truck-driver for a California trucking company that described him as ''trustworthy,'' ''knowledgeable,'' and an asset to the company. Asmik has worked as a medical assistant the past 6 years at the Fresno Shields Medical Center.

Arthur has proven to be a hard-working, smart young man who applies himself. He was recognized nationally for his scholastic achievement, having maintained a 4.0 grade point average in high school and serving as his class valedictorian. After graduating on the Dean's Merit List from the University of California, Davis with a major in Chemistry, he is now a full-time analyst at a water testing company. He also teaches Armenian School on Saturdays at the church.

Arthur's brother, Arsen currently attends Fresno State University, is majoring in Computer Science, and maintains a 3.8 GPA. These two young men have already accomplished so much and clearly aspire to do great things here in the United States.

Reflecting their contributions to their community, Representatives George Radanovich and JIM COSTA strongly supported this family's ability to remain in the United States. When I first introduced a private bill for the Mkoian family, I received more than 200 letters of support and dozens of calls of support from friends and community members, attesting to the positive impact that this family has had in Fresno, California.

I believe that this case warrants our compassion. I respectfully ask my colleagues to support this private legislation on behalf of the Mkoian family.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 82—CONGRATULATING THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY APPLIED PHYSICS LABORATORY ON THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE LABORATORY

Mr. CARDIN (for himself, Mr. MCCAIN, and Mr. VAN HOLLEN) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 82

Whereas, on March 10, 2017, the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory (in this preamble referred to as ''APL''), located in Laurel, Maryland, celebrates the 75th anniversary of the founding of APL on March 10, 1942;

Whereas, less than 4 months after the attack on the United States Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, APL was established to perfect and help field the radio proximity fuze, one of the most closely guarded wartime secrets of the United States;

Whereas historians have ranked the development of the radio proximity fuze as one of the 3 most important technological developments of World War II, along with the development of radar and the atomic bomb;

Whereas, during and after World War II, APL developed the first generation of Navy surface-to-air missiles and associated propulsion, guidance, control, and targeting technologies;

Whereas APL developed the initial ''phased array'' radar system, called AMFAR, for the Navy that provided the scanning, tracking, and targeting necessary to defend the ships of the United States against simultaneous aircraft and missile raids;

Whereas APL created the first satellite-based global navigation system, called Transit, the forerunner of modern GPS, to serve the ballistic missile submarine force of the United States and provide essential capabilities to the Navy from 1964 until the 1990s;

Whereas APL developed prototypes, experiments, ocean physics research, and engineering models that unlocked the potential of towed sonar arrays, groundbreaking developments that revolutionized anti-submarine

warfare and guided stealth designs for multiple generations of submarines of the United States;

Whereas APL led development of the Navy's Cooperative Engagement Capability that revolutionized air defenses by enabling ships to engage aircraft and missiles not seen by the radars of the ships by using composite radar tracks created from the radars of ships within the battle group;

Whereas APL developed a system called SATRACK to ensure the accuracy of the Trident II submarine-launched ballistic missiles and confidently estimate missile accuracy anywhere in the world;

Whereas APL proposed, developed, built, and operated a number of the most innovative low-cost planetary science missions of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, including—

(1) the Near Earth Asteroid Rendezvous (commonly known as ''NEAR'') mission in 2001, the first mission to orbit an asteroid;

(2) the MESSENGER Mercury orbiter, launched in 2004; and

(3) New Horizons, which launched in 2006 and completed a historic flyby of Pluto in 2015;

Whereas APL has been responsible for hundreds of significant contributions to the most critical challenges faced by the United States with respect to national security and space exploration; and

Whereas the sustained commitment by APL to the United States and the Federal Government sponsors of APL allowed APL—

(1) to continuously provide significant contributions to critical challenges with respect to systems engineering and integration, technology research and development, and analysis; and

(2) to serve as the most comprehensive University Affiliated Research Center in the United States: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) congratulates the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory on the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Laboratory;

(2) recognizes the scientific, engineering, and analytical expertise that the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory has applied to solve many of the most critical challenges faced by the United States in the areas of national security and space exploration; and

(3) respectfully requests that the Secretary of the Senate transmit an enrolled copy of this resolution to the director of the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I have 3 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 THE JUDICIARY

The Committee on the Judiciary be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate, on March 7, 2017, at 10 a.m., in room SD–226 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled ''Nominations.''

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence be authorized to meet during the session of the 115th Congress of the U.S. Senate on Tuesday, March 7, 2017 from 2:30 p.m., room SH–219 of the Senate Hart Office Building to hold a closed hearing.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence be authorized to meet during the session of the 115th Congress of the U.S. Senate on Tuesday, March 7, 2017 from 2:20 p.m.–2:30 p.m., in room SH–219 of the Senate Hart Office Building to hold a closed busines meeting.

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that privileges of the floor be granted to the following individuals with the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources: Frances Brie Van Cleve, a Democratic fellow, through December 31, 2017; Stephanie Teich-McGoldrick, a Democratic fellow, through December 31, 2017; Patricio Portillo, a Democratic fellow, through December 31, 2017; and Devinn Lambert, a Democratic detailee, through December 31, 2017.

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

RAISING AWARENESS OF MODERN SLAVERY

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Foreign Relations Committee be discharged from further consideration of and the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 68.

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

The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 68) raising awareness of modern slavery.

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

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I know of no further debate on the resolution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Hearing no further debate, the question is on agreeing to the resolution.

The resolution (S. Res. 68) was agreed to.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the preamble be agreed to and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in the RECORD of February 27, 2017, under ''Submitted Resolutions.'')

CONGRATULATING THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY APPLIED PHYSICS LABORATORY ON THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE LABORATORY

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. Res. 82, 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. 82) congratulating the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory on the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Laboratory.

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

Mr. LEE. 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. 82) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

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

ORDERS FOR WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8, 2017

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 9:30 a.m. on Wednesday, March 8; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and morning business be closed; finally, that following leader remarks, the Senate resume consideration of H.J. Res. 58.

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

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:30 A.M. TOMORROW

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 6:16 p.m., adjourned until Wednesday, March 8, 2017, at 9:30 a.m.

NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate:

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

R. ALEXANDER ACOSTA, OF FLORIDA, TO BE SECRETARY OF LABOR.

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

AJIT VARADARAJ PAI, OF KANSAS, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION FOR A TERM OF FIVE YEARS FROM JULY 1, 2016. (REAPPOINTMENT)