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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable LUTHER STRANGE, a Senator from the State of Alabama.

PRAYER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Today's opening prayer will be offered by our guest Chaplain, the Reverend Bruce Scott, pastor of Pentecostals of South Lake, from Merrillville, IN.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Precious Lord, Creator of the heavens and the Earth, and all that dwells therein, we honor You from a grateful heart, knowing all of our blessings that we enjoy every day come from You.

Heavenly Father, as the Senators assemble in this Chamber today, let them come together in unity to build a stronger and better America. Thank You for their dedication and commitment, as they labor together with You for what is right and acceptable in Your sight. This Nation was founded on biblical principles. Lord, I pray that You would grant to them wisdom to make right decisions. The Old Testament prophet declares it is not by might, nor by power but by My Spirit, saith the Lord. Bless their families at home with peace and safety.

Lord, bless our military all over this world. Just as You paid the ultimate price for our freedom on Calvary, our brave military men and women are willing to give their all so we may live in freedom today. Strengthen and encourage each family as they wait for the safe return of their loved one. Bless and protect our first responders, police, fire, and EMS personnel.

It is true that God has shed His Grace on us. Lord, surround this Chamber with Your presence.

We pray in Jesus's 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 assistant bill clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, May 11, 2017.

To the Senate:

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

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

NOMINATION OF ROBERT LIGHTHIZER

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, today the Senate will take a cloture vote on the U.S. Trade Representative nominee, Robert Lighthizer. We know the task before Mr. Lighthizer is an important one. I appreciate his willingness to take on this challenge, and I look forward to working with the administration on pro-growth trade policies moving forward.

CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW ACT RESOLUTIONS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, over the past 8 years, the American people struggled in an economy that too often failed to meet its potential. Many struggled to pay bills. Many struggled to make the mortgage. Too many couldn't find a job at all.

Yet, time after time, when Americans looked to the Obama administration, they got tired leftwing ideology instead of serious solutions. When Americans asked for policies that would allow the economy to grow again, the Obama administration gave them just the opposite: a highly aggressive regulatory rampage that sometimes veered outside congressional authority, that often hurt the economy and job creation even more, that nearly always empowered unaccountable Washington bureaucrats at the expense of the American people.

Of course, not all regulations are bad regulations. Many are necessary and even beneficial, but what the Obama administration seemed to forget in its fit of ideological pique is this key point: Regulations are not issued in a vacuum. They can harm the middle class. They can kill jobs. They can raise prices. They can depress wages. They can reduce opportunity.

No matter how well-intentioned, regulations can have undesirable, often unexpected, impacts—and in this regulatory avalanche of the last 8 years, we saw another example of the consequences of putting leftwing ideology over the lives of real people.

It is one reason why Americans decided to go in a pro-growth direction last November. They elected a new President who, as one of his first acts, ordered the elimination of at least two existing regulations for every new one issued. He called for a regulatory budget to cap regulatory costs. He and his administration took a number of actions that are already helping to turn the regulatory tide back in favor of growth and jobs.

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



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The American people also reelected a Republican Congress that wasted no time in providing regulatory relief to Americans and restoring legislative power where it rightfully belongs, with the people through their elected representatives right here in Congress.

We have a tool that has proved incredibly helpful in this regard. It is called the Congressional Review Act. It is the brainchild of a bipartisan group of legislators, including former Democratic Leader Harry Reid, and what it allows Congress to do is overturn regulations issued over the last 60 days with a simple majority vote.

From its inception in 1996 until this February, it had only been used successfully one time. From February until today, it has been used successfully 13 times—with the 14th soon to be signed into law; namely, to overturn a number of Obama administration regulations rushed through at the last minute.

Getting this done hasn't always been easy, and we have met a lot of obstruction along the way. Although the Democrats once championed the CRA, a tool that is "fair" in the words of former Leader Reid, our current Democratic colleagues seem to take a very different view. They have fought against our efforts to deliver relief to the American people, just as they have blocked and punted and forced unnecessary procedural hurdles on the President's nominees for months, and that, remember, was mostly for the sake of unnecessarily taking up valuable floor time, knowing full well it would not change the end result. Regardless, despite those obstructionist tactics, we have continued our regulatory relief efforts because we knew it could make a positive difference for our country.

This congressional action we have taken already, in coordination with key administration actions, is estimated to result in more than \$67 billion in regulatory cost savings. Let me say that again. The actions we have taken so far, coupled with key administrative actions they have taken on their own, result in more than \$67 billion in regulatory cost-savings and about 56 million hours' worth of paperwork reductions.

The New York Times says the efforts we have undertaken represent "a historic reversal of government rules in record time." A historic reversal of government rules in record time. The Washington Post proclaimed it "the most ambitious regulatory rollback since Reagan." Politico calls it "a once-in-a-generation opportunity," and that is exactly right.

In just a few short months, we have turned a significant corner from how things operated under the Obama administration. Instead of going around Congress to push through regulations, the President is working with us to ease the burden. Instead of adding even more redtape to the Federal Register, we are breaking through it. Instead of promoting policies that hinder growth,

we are pursuing ones that actually encourage it.

The actions we have taken can benefit the American people in a number of meaningful ways: Like hard-working families saving for retirement—we made sure Obama-era regulations wouldn't stand in their way. Like students who want to receive the best education they can—we made sure Obama-era regulations wouldn't hold them back either.

After 8 years of an administration which punished coal miners and their families for simply working hard to make a living, we are finally working hand-in-glove with an administration that wants to help mining families instead. Here is an example of what I mean.

In the Republican administration, President Trump used Executive action to order a review of Obama-era regulations that attempted to close existing coal plants and prevent future ones from ever, ever being built. In the Republican Congress, we used the CRA to overturn an Obama administration rule which would have put as many as one-third of coal mining jobs at risk.

Together, Congress and the Trump administration are taking decisive action to support jobs in domestic energy and coal communities. As we do so, we have seen encouraging news as well. According to one report, Kentucky saw a slight, slight increase in coal production last quarter, and Federal projections predict that national production will continue to increase over the next few years. I was pleased to see that news. It is a trend we would like to see continue. I will keep working with the administration and my colleagues in Congress to continue to protect Kentucky jobs and Kentucky families.

These examples, and others, offer yet another illustration of how we can make meaningful and positive impacts in the lives of the people we represent.

Look, we know there is a lot more to be done. We know the scale of the challenge. The growth of the regulatory state has taken a substantial toll on our economy, one that can't be remedied overnight. A recent Washington Post column cited studies saying that "the costs of complying with federal rules and regulations totaled nearly \$1.9 trillion in 2015, equal to about half the federal budget"—\$1.9 trillion in 2015—and that regulations may have shrunk our annual growth rate by as much as 0.8 percent. These regulations may well have shrunk our growth rate by 0.8 percent. As the column pointed out, "A main rap against the administrative state is that, through its aggressive growth, the executive branch has usurped power from other parts of the government, mainly Congress."

With the action we have taken with the CRA, that is beginning to change. Indeed, one reason the Congressional Review Act is so important is because it helps Congress serve as a check and balance on the executive branch. As three former Senators, including

former Leader Reid, put it, the Congressional Review Act can help "redress the balance [between the executive and legislative branches], reclaiming for Congress some of its policy-making authority."

While we can't simply turn back time or completely erase the negative impact that Obama regulations have had already, the CRA has allowed us to stop a number of them in their tracks while also preventing agencies from creating similarly harmful rules in the future.

A lot of time and a lot of effort has gone into seeing these resolutions across the finish line so I thank each of our colleagues who had a hand in that effort. Specifically, I recognize those who introduced these resolutions or the Senate companion of House CRA resolutions.

I thank: Senator INHOFE; Senator GRASSLEY, chairman of the Judiciary Committee; Senator JOHNSON, chair of Homeland Security; Senator MURKOWSKI, chair of Energy; Senator SASSE; Senator ALEXANDER, chairman of the HELP Committee; Senator CRUZ; Senator SULLIVAN; Senator CASSIDY; Senator FLAKE; Senator ERNST; Senator HATCH, the Finance chairman; and Senator BARRASSO.

I also thank Senator TILLIS, who was an outstanding advocate for using the CRA process, as well as Senator CORNYN who worked tirelessly to bring these resolutions over the finish line.

This historic regulatory rollback would not have been possible without their leadership. Because of their efforts and key actions by the Trump administration, we have begun chipping away at policies that have hurt the middle class and prevented economic growth for far too long. Much work remains to be done, but we are going to keep working together to help our economy fully recover from 8 years of anti-growth regulatory overreach, 8 years of missed opportunities, 8 years of dreams deferred, and 8 years of government that left far too many behind.

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

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

The assistant bill 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.

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, the dismissal of Director Comey has raised a bevy of troubling questions over the

last few days. The President of the United States fired the man in charge of an active investigation about the President and his campaign ties to Russia. The truth is, the dismissal of Director Comey is part of a much longer pattern of this administration's interfering with or removing the people who are in a position to conduct an independent investigation of the President and his administration.

The administration requested that the chairmen of the House and Senate Intelligence Committees help them beat back reports in the press about the Russia probe. The administration picked this Attorney General—a very close political ally, then-Senator Jeff Sessions—to lead a Justice Department that was supposed to independently conduct this investigation.

Attorney General Sessions, of course, has since had to recuse himself from the Russia investigation after he misled Congress about his meetings with the Russian Ambassador.

The administration is not shy about removing independent prosecutors and law enforcement officers from their posts if they are simply doing something the President doesn't like, even if it is required by law. They fired Sally Yates. They fired Preet Bharara. They fired more than 40 U.S. attorneys across the country. Now they have fired Director Comey.

This is about more than just Mr. Comey. This is about a pattern of events that casts tremendous doubt on whether this administration has any interest in allowing the Russia investigation or any other investigation that could be politically damaging to them to proceed unimpeded. This is about one of the most sacred things we believe in as Americans, the rule of law—the rule of law being threatened here.

We in Congress, in both parties, should have one overarching goal: to get the full unvarnished truth. That means getting to the bottom of the events that led to Mr. Comey's dismissal and making sure the Russia investigation is conducted impartially. Here in Congress, the Senate Intelligence Committee is doing its investigation in a bipartisan way, but the executive branch investigation has been compromised.

Attorney General Sessions, who had to recuse himself from the Russia investigation, played a significant role in firing the man who was leading it. Not only that, but the Attorney General is now reportedly leading a search to replace Mr. Comey. He is helping select the next FBI Director, who will be in charge of an investigation he cannot oversee—what an irony.

This Attorney General shouldn't be anywhere near the hiring process of the next FBI Director. His role will jaundice the entire process, if it hasn't already.

In order to ensure the American people can have faith in the impartiality of the investigation, it must be con-

ducted far from the reach of the White House. It is the overwhelming view of my caucus that a special prosecutor should now be appointed to conduct the investigation into the Trump campaign's ties to Russia.

This special prosecutor should be appointed by the highest ranking civil servant at the Justice Department. Mr. Rosenstein and other political appointees should not be the ones who decide on a special prosecutor, lest that decision be seen as influenced, or worse, made at the direction of the administration. I thank my colleague from California, Senator FEINSTEIN, for speaking so eloquently on this proposal.

In addition, there are several things that should happen here on Capitol Hill that will help get us to the bottom of the events this week.

First, Mr. Comey should testify before Congress. There are so many questions that only Mr. Comey can answer. So I applaud Senators BURR and WARNER for inviting him to appear before the Intelligence Committee next week. It was the right thing to do. We ought to hear from Mr. Comey, and I urge Mr. Comey to come and tell the whole story.

Second, Attorney General Sessions and Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein should make themselves available to Congress. I am renewing my request of the majority leader to call an all-Senators briefing where they can answer the questions swirling about from Tuesday night's firing. Attorney General Sessions and Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein should appear separately and partially in a classified setting if necessary, but they must come.

Mr. Rosenstein has played a central role in all of these events. He could help clear up questions about where the decision to fire Mr. Comey originated. So later today, separate and apart from my request that he come before the Senate, I will be sending Mr. Rosenstein a letter with a list of questions for him to answer publicly. America needs to hear them. Many Democrats voted for Mr. Rosenstein a few weeks ago because he had a reputation for integrity. He assured us he would be an independent force inside the Department of Justice, and 94 Senators voted for him, but the events of last week have made many of us question that belief. He owes it to the Senate. He owes it to the people he supervises in the Justice Department and in the FBI, and he owes it to the American people to provide some answers.

In sum, we demand the appointment of a special prosecutor by a non-political appointee at the Department of Justice. We want to hear from Mr. Comey. We are asking the majority leader to hold separate all-Senators briefings with the Attorney General and Deputy Attorney General. This would help us get a hold on what happened, would explain why, and would help guide us in what to do next because this investigation will not die no

matter who wants it to. I sincerely hope we will get an answer from the majority leader by the end of the day. This is a very serious matter.

Right now, there are two different stories coming out of the White House. Some are saying the decision to fire Mr. Comey came directly from the White House; others, including the Vice President, have said it came from the Department of Justice—specifically, Mr. Rosenstein and Mr. Sessions. We need to resolve these two story lines on something as important as this. We need the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. So I hope my Republican colleagues see the wisdom and value in our request and respond appropriately by the end of the day.

CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW ACT RESOLUTIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, just a word on the majority's use of the Congressional Review Act. The window for using the CRA is closing this week. I heard the majority leader touting the 13 CRAs the majority passed this year. I want to make two points.

First, despite what the majority leader and the President claim, these CRAs are not a huge accomplishment. They simply overturned rules passed at the very end of the Obama administration. They hardly constitute a legislative agenda. In fact, the use of the CRA shows just how little this majority and this President have been able to accomplish in the first 100-plus days. The fact that they are bragging about these highlights how little else they have accomplished legislatively.

Second, the CRAs are designed to help special interests against the interests of working Americans, belying all the promises President Trump made when he campaigned. Let me give some examples. One of them is on foreign oil bribery. One of them is on a retirement rule. One of them is on stream protections. One is on mentally-ill access to guns. In each of these, it is a narrow special interest who pushed it, not a demand from the American people. Which Americans say "Make it OK for our companies to bribe foreign oil companies or pollute our streams" or "Give the mentally ill access to guns"? These are narrow interests in each case.

Let's be very clear about this. The CRAs Republicans passed are not rolling back burdensome regulations. Oh, no. They are giveaways to Big Oil, Big Gas, Big Coal, Big Mining, and wealthy special interests.

The most indefensible one of many is the one on a retirement rule. If localities or States want to set up systems whereby working people want to put money away for their retirement, why not? It doesn't hurt anybody. It doesn't require anybody to do anything. And these days where fewer and fewer Americans have pensions from their companies, it is what is needed. But

some banks didn't want competition. They didn't want it shown that maybe the cities or the States could run these retirement systems more cheaply and take less money out of the average American's pocket. So we undid this rule. I don't think a single average constituent in any part of America wanted this rule undone, just the big banks—some of them, not all of them. That is the kind of thing my colleagues on the other side of the aisle and President Trump are bragging about. It is nothing to brag about.

Let's be very clear about this. These are not the priorities the American people voted for in November, where a substantial majority of Americans said in exit polls that the economy was rigged against them. These CRAs rig the game even further for the wealthy special interests and are nothing to brag about or write home about.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CRAPO. 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.

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.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the Lighthizer nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Robert Lighthizer, of Florida, to be United States Trade Representative, with the rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.

CLOTURE MOTION

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomi-

nation of Robert Lighthizer, of Florida, to be United States Trade Representative, with the rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.

Mitch McConnell, John Cornyn, Mike Rounds, Orrin G. Hatch, Thom Tillis, Steve Daines, Mike Crapo, Pat Roberts, Thad Cochran, Luther Strange, John Thune, Richard C. Shelby, John Hoeven, John Boozman, Rob Portman, Jerry Moran, David Perdue.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Robert Lighthizer, of Florida, to be United States Trade Representative, with the rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), and the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SUL-LIVAN).

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

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. MCCASKILL) is necessarily absent.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 81, nays 15, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 126 Ex.]
YEAS—81

Alexander	Enzi	Menendez
Baldwin	Ernst	Moran
Barrasso	Feinstein	Murphy
Bennet	Fischer	Murray
Blunt	Flake	Nelson
Booker	Franken	Paul
Boozman	Gardner	Perdue
Brown	Graham	Peters
Burr	Grassley	Portman
Cantwell	Hassan	Risch
Cardin	Hatch	Roberts
Carper	Heitkamp	Rounds
Casey	Heller	Rubio
Cassidy	Hirono	Scott
Cochran	Hoeven	Shaheen
Collins	Inhofe	Shelby
Coons	Isakson	Stabenow
Corker	Johnson	Strange
Cornyn	Kaine	Tester
Cortez Masto	Kennedy	Thune
Cotton	King	Tillis
Crapo	Klobuchar	Toomey
Cruz	Lankford	Van Hollen
Daines	Leahy	Warner
Donnelly	Lee	Wicker
Duckworth	Manchin	Wyden
Durbin	McConnell	Young

NAYS—15

Blumenthal	McCain	Schatz
Gillibrand	Merkley	Schumer
Harris	Reed	Udall
Heinrich	Sanders	Warren
Markley	Sasse	Whitehouse

NOT VOTING—4

Capito	Murkowski
McCaskill	Sullivan

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 81, the nays are 15.

The motion is agreed to.

The Senator from Wyoming.

CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW ACT RESOLUTIONS

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, over the past few months, Congress has passed 14 different resolutions that are going to save the American people money and are going to make it a lot easier for our economy to grow. There have been 14 times since February that we have struck down unnecessary, burdensome, and costly regulations.

These were called "midnight regulations" because they came at the end of the Obama administration. Some came out, actually, after the Presidential election had been completed. The outcome was known, and, still, the outgoing administration tried to continue with what President Obama's Chief of Staff at one time called "audacious executive actions." Half of these 14 regulations—half of them—were actually put in place after the November Presidential election.

When one thinks about the election last year in November, President Obama said time and again during the campaign that his agenda was on the ballot. The American people rejected that agenda, and the President dumped these new rules on the American people as a parting shot. We wiped out 14 of these regulations—wiped them off the books.

In one resolution, we rolled back an important part of President Obama's war on coal. That was the so-called stream buffer rule. It was designed to shut down a lot of the surface coal mining in this country. It would have destroyed up to one-third of coal mining jobs in America. So we passed a resolution that will protect coal mining jobs and protect American energy independence.

There was another resolution we passed that restores the role of local land managers in deciding how best to use Federal land. Before the Obama administration, the local experts were the ones who would help decide how Federal land could be used in so many areas around the country. These are the people on the ground. They are the ones who know best what works there. They are the ones with the best sense of how to balance all of the different ways that land can be used. That could be things like recreation, energy production, and grazing.

Well, the Obama administration said it wasn't interested in hearing from the local experts anymore. It decided to put the decisions—all of those decisions—in the hands of unelected, unaccountable bureaucrats in Washington, DC. So Congress passed a resolution that says these are decisions that affect local communities and those communities should have the say—and a significant amount of say—in how decisions get made.

When we look at these 14 resolutions all together, they will save Americans over \$4 billion and more than 4 million hours of paperwork because not only are the regulations expensive, they are burdensome and time-consuming.

I can tell my colleagues this is just the beginning. These resolutions are just one tool that we have to strike down bad regulations. There is much more that Congress can do and will do, and there is much more that the Trump administration can do.

The administration has already made it clear that the bureaucrats in Washington are not in charge anymore. I plan to make sure the Trump administration keeps up the pace and tosses some of the worst regulations and rules into the garbage where they belong.

A good place to start would be for Ryan Zinke, the Secretary of the Interior, to throw out another rule that makes it more difficult to produce American energy. This regulation supposedly tries to reduce how much methane gets lost in oil and gas production. There is always some unprocessed natural gas that gets released at gas and oil wells. Energy producers try to gather up this gas and then ship it to a processing plant where, of course, it can be sold. It can be used by customers, and taxes are paid on it that go to State and local governments, as well as money that is raised by the sales for the companies themselves.

To do that, the producers need small pipelines. They need these small pipelines to collect the unprocessed gas from the wells and to get it to the processing plant. Here is the problem: We don't have enough of these gathering lines. Without the gathering lines, the only option is for that gas to get burned, and that extra natural gas will escape into the air.

So what do the bureaucrats in Washington say? They could have addressed the real reason this gas is being lost; that is, the fact that they haven't allowed enough of these gathering lines on Federal land. Instead, they decided to write a regulation that makes it tougher for us to produce American energy here in America. The Obama administration blocked the permits to build the gathering lines.

So this methane rule is a terrible regulation. It is redundant. It is unnecessary. I believe it is illegal, and it needs to go. Secretary Zinke should wipe the slate clean and get rid of this outrageous rule immediately. He should also order the bureaucrats who work for him to start approving more of these gas-gathering lines. That is what we really need. We need to make energy as clean as we can, as fast as we can, and do it in ways that do not raise costs for American families. We need to balance thoughtful regulation with a growing economy. We can have both.

The Obama administration absolutely failed to strike the right balance. The Trump administration and Congress have a lot more we can do to make sure we get the balance right.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I will be brief. I think the Senator from Oklahoma is going to go into some addi-

tional details, and the Senator from Wyoming did a great job of summarizing some of the positive results that have come from our actions. I want to refer to his resolutions of disapproval for regulations that we feel were an overreach.

When we went through the 14 votes—we actually had 15, but we were not able to succeed in 1 last regulation of disapproval yesterday—there were arguments put forth against our disapproving these regulations. It was as if we were completely deregulating the subject matter area that we were focused on, but that was not the case. What we were trying to do is eliminate the duplication and the costs associated with layering regulations on top of regulations.

We have a lot of discussion around here about tax reform, and we need to do that, but if we look at the regulatory burden on businesses and homeowners and State and local governments, there is a smart, right-size way to implement regulations, and there is a costly, complex, wrong way to implement regulations.

So I am proud we were able to get 14 resolutions of disapproval completed. I think they were regulations that were not necessary. They are obviously areas that if Congress ever needed to act, we could go back and implement regulations, if necessary.

What we ended up doing through this action over the past couple of months with the administration is reduce regulatory burdens by \$67 billion, and we have eliminated some 56 million paperwork hours. We are eliminating, we are cutting redtape, and that is a good thing.

I appreciate all the Members who worked hard on getting this together. I particularly appreciate my staff—Bill Bode and Torie Ness in particular—who worked hard with the other Senate offices to see what kind of support we could get for moving these regulatory disapprovals forward. I thank my fellow Members and the administration for working with us to fulfill our promise, which is to right-size government and get our economy going again.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, first of all, I appreciate the comments made by my colleague from North Carolina. It is even more meaningful to me because all during the time the regulations were coming on, I happened to be the one who was chairing the Environment and Public Works Committee, and we knew what was going to happen.

I am almost speechless when I think about the success. We went 20 years only taking up 1 CRA, and then we end up passing 14 of them—all but 1. That is a huge, successful record. My colleagues understand, this gives us the opportunity for people who are answerable to the public—people who are elected and have to stand for elections—to have a part in what is some-

times considered to be the action of an unelected bureaucrat.

We have had great opportunities here. I think the “midnight” regulations—a term that is used quite often—so that a party going out of office, such as President Obama, being very liberal—a very proud liberal, I might add—wanted to get as many of his rules in at the last minute. We were able to come in and pass these in the time required. We were able to pass 14 of these, in addition to the other regulations and other methods of doing regulations, which I want to address a little bit. It is just not something that we really anticipated would happen.

Now, I am particularly proud because mine was the first CRA to be passed in 20 years, and that was the very first one that came from what President Obama wanted having to do with the oil and gas industry, but the fact that nothing passed in that long period of time just shows now that people are recognizing that we who stand for election should be involved in this process of doing away with these regulations.

Now, the rule that I brought to the floor, which was the first one the President signed—we had a great signing ceremony and I enjoyed it very much—was the one that affected the oil and gas industry. It was an SEC ruling of the Obama administration that said that if you are a domestic producer of oil and gas—of course, that is the private sector—you have to release all of the information you are using in producing a bid against maybe another country. To use an example, in China, it is not in the private sector like it is in the United States. Their oil and gas business is in the public sector so they would have a distinct advantage. Quite frankly, it is consistent with what the previous President—President Obama—was doing in his war on fossil fuels. Fossil fuels are coal, oil, and gas, and he was very proud to be opposed to coal, oil, and gas, and frankly nuclear too.

I have often wondered—I go back to Oklahoma virtually every weekend that I don't have to be in one of the war zones or someplace like that. I go there really for my therapy because they ask questions that make sense. We don't get these questions in Washington. One of them I remember was in Shattuck, OK. When I was there, somebody said: Explain this to me. We have a President who wants to do away with fossil fuels and he wants to do away with nuclear energy. Now, we are dependent upon fossil fuels, coal, oil and gas, and nuclear energy for 89 percent of the power it takes to run this machine called America. If he is successful in doing away with it, how do we run this machine called America?

Well, I am proud to say that the war against fossil fuels is over. The particular CRA I sponsored came out of the Dodd-Frank Act.

By the way, overregulation is overregulation. When I talk to people back in my State of Oklahoma, if they are in

the banking business or the financial services business, they are concerned about the overregulation that comes from Dodd-Frank. If they are farmers, they are concerned about the regulation that would take the jurisdiction of regulating our water resources out of the States and putting it in the Federal Government. So that is what this is all about.

So I will tell you how serious this was. The CRA that I had was so significant that the Federal courts came in, in July of 2013, and said that the SEC made several errors in rushing this regulation through. They actually vacated the rule. That was a major accomplishment. I was very proud that I had the courts on my side, for a change.

Anyway, the SEC finalized the second rule under the authority of Dodd-Frank, section 1504, by making some—without any really substantial changes. Nonetheless, this is the one that he first signed.

So thanks to the Congressional Review Act, oil and gas companies are not at a disadvantage when they are competing with State-owned oil and gas companies such as we have in China.

We passed other critical CRAs because regulations tied the hands of our businesses and took local control away from the States. A lot of people in America—and I think a higher percentage of my people in Oklahoma—are really concerned about Second Amendment rights. Of course, we had one of the regulations that went through—in fact, Second Amendment rights, when we talk about the farmers and the ranchers and not just from my State of Oklahoma—we are a farm State—but throughout America, they will tell you that there are problems. Their No. 1 concern was—and I asked the Farm Bureau representative. He said the greatest problem facing farmers is not anything that is found in the ag bill, it is the overregulation by the EPA and specifically what they call the WOTUS bill. The WOTUS bill, which is the one I just mentioned, would take the jurisdiction away from the State and give it to the Federal Government.

I have to say this. When you talk about “liberals,” that is not a negative term. It is a reality. It is how much power should be in the hands of the Federal bureaucrats as opposed to individuals and the States. So we have a lot of these regulations. One of the things the CRA has done is, it has taken away an excuse that people will use—I am talking about people in this Chamber who are legitimately liberals and believe we should have more control in Washington—it takes the power away from the Federal bureaucrats because what they can do is go ahead and pass the regulations. Then you go back home and when people are yelling and screaming about being overregulated back in their home States, they say: Don't blame me, blame the unelected bureaucrats. A CRA takes away that excuse because it forces them to actually get on record.

So as chairman of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, we were involved with more of these regulations than any other committee because that is what we do for a living there. So I was very happy to see all of the successes we had.

Let me just mention because I don't think it has been mentioned before—and I will submit this for the RECORD. There are two ways of doing away with these regulations, and one is through Executive orders. I think everybody knows that. But they don't realize what has already been done. I think we have had a total of 30, 31 regulations that have been done away with either through Executive orders or through the Congressional Review Act. Some of the Executive orders, for example, are the WOTUS, the one we have been talking about; clean energy, something which repeals the Clean Power Plan and something which officially ended the war on fossil fuels, I might add; the Executive order on rebuilding the military; the Executive order on the Keystone and Dakota Access Pipelines—we are all familiar with that and the ongoing debate.

Some of the CRAs really aren't talked about too much, and we are talking about regulations that came from the Obama administration that now have been done away with through use of CRAs—the educational rule mandating Federal standards for evaluating teacher performance; the educational rule establishing a national school board, with an effort to get away from local control of the schools; the Interior rule that blocked Alaska from controlling their own hunting and fishing in that beautiful State; the Social Security rule that put seniors on a gun ban list—Second Amendment rights.

All of these things are very significant, and I am very proud, quite frankly, of this body. With the exception of one, we passed all 14 of the CRAs, and I can't think of any time that has been done in the past. So it is a great thing. It did put the power back in the hands of the people who are elected here, and I am very glad to have been a participant in that.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the complete list of the Congressional Review Act resolutions passed and the Trump Executive actions be printed in the RECORD.

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

CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW ACT RESOLUTIONS PASSED

SEC Rule requiring oil and gas companies to disclose their “playbooks” on how to win deals. Inhofe-CRA—first signed since 2001; Stream Buffer Zone rule that blocks coal mining; Education rule mandating federal standards for evaluating teacher performance; Education rule establishing national school board; Interior rule that blocked Alaska-control of hunting & fishing; Social Security rule that put seniors with “representative payees” on gun-ban list; OSHA rule that changed paperwork violation statute of limitations from 6-months to 5-years.

Defense rule that blocked contractors from getting deals if suspected (not convicted) of employment-law violations; Labor rule blocking drug-testing of unemployment beneficiaries; BLM rule blocking oil and gas development on federal lands. Federal Communications Commission rule that would have established 2nd regime of privacy rules in addition to Federal Trade Commission; HHS rule that would make it easier for states to fund Planned Parenthood; Department of Labor (DOL) rule forcing private sector employees onto government run retirement plans; DOL rule allowing states to bypass protections on retirement plans.

TRUMP EXECUTIVE ACTIONS

Regulatory reform: requires 2 regulations be repealed for each new regulation; WOTUS: directs EPA to rescind Waters of the United States Act; Energy: repeals clean power plan, other harmful regulations . . . ending War on Fossil Fuels; Mexico City: reinstates ban of fed funds going to NGOs that do abortions; Hiring Freeze: freezes federal hiring (exempted military); Military: rebuilds military; Approves Keystone XL pipeline; Approves Dakota Access pipeline.

Permit Streamlining: expedites infrastructure and manufacturing project permits; Immigration: 90 day suspension on visas for visitors from Syria, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen. 20 day suspension of U.S. Refugee Admission Program; Sanctuary Cities: blocks federal Department of Justice grants to sanctuary cities; Dodd-Frank: demands review of Dodd-Frank banking regulations and demanding roll-back; Shrink government: directs federal agencies to reorganize to reduce waste and duplication; Trade: evaluates policies to reduce trade deficit; Opioids: fed task force to address opioid drug crisis; Fiduciary rule: delays implementation of bad DOJ rule; Religious Liberty: Eases enforcement of Johnson Amendment and grants other protections for religious freedom; Offshore drilling: revises Obama-era offshore drilling restrictions and orders a review of limits on drilling locations; National Monuments: Directs a review of national monument designations.

Improves accountability and whistleblower protections for VA employees; Affirms local control of school policies and examines Department of Ed regulations; Reviews agricultural regulations; Reviews use of H-1B visas; Top-to-bottom audit of Executive Branch; Moves Historically Black Colleges and Universities offices from Department of Ed to White House; Obamacare: directs federal agencies to ease burdens of ACA; Establishes American Technology Council; Establishes office of Trade and Manufacturing Policy; Identifies and reduces tax regulatory burdens; “Hire America, Buy America”; Establishes a collection and enforcement of anti-dumping and countervailing duties and violations of Trade and Customs laws; Creates an order of succession within DOJ; Revokes federal contracting executive orders.

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

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

MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, I want to talk today about a topic that

I think is getting more attention now than it has gotten for some time—but still not the attention it deserves—and that is to talk a little bit in May, which is Mental Health Month, about mental health.

I was on the floor of the Senate the last day of October 2013, the 50th anniversary of the last bill that President Kennedy signed into law, which was the Community Mental Health Act. Through the Community Mental Health Act, you saw the facilities that were about to be closed, but the anticipated alternatives, in so many ways, never really developed. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, approximately one in five adults experiences mental illness in a given year, and one in five young people between the ages of 13 and 18 will experience severe mental illness sometime during their lifetime.

The National Institutes of Health says that one in four adult Americans has a diagnosable, and almost always treatable, mental health disorder, a mental behavioral health issue, and that one in nine adult Americans has behavioral health illness that impacts how they live every single day. So whether it is the statistic that relates to one in four or one in five or one in nine, this is an issue that affects the lives of lots of people.

Half of the children in that age group, 13 to 18, rarely get the help they need, and even fewer adults do. About 40 percent of adults who have behavioral health issues receive the treatment they need for that issue. I think we are beginning to make great strides on this. Certainly, the discussion has changed. The opportunity to treat mental health like all other health has changed.

In the 113th Congress, just a few years ago, Senator STABENOW from Michigan and I worked to get a bill passed; it was called the Excellence in Mental Health Act, and we now have eight States that have projects going on. In those eight States—in significant areas of all of those States—behavioral health is being treated like all other health.

The idea is really built on the federally qualified health centers idea, the reimbursement model, where anybody can go, and if you are covered by a government program, that is taken into consideration. If you are covered by private insurance, that is taken into consideration. If you are paying cash, there is a significant and rapidly declining amount of cash that you have to pay because your income gets smaller. But everybody in these States would have access to mental health care, just as they currently have access to other kinds of healthcare.

At the community mental health centers that meet 24/7 standards, that are available, that have the staffing needs, and in other places that have the staff the law requires and the access the law requires, people can go to those facilities, and those providers

will know they are going to be reimbursed for treating mental health like all other health.

I am certainly glad that my State of Missouri is one of the eight pilot States in that demonstration program. In our State, we have been—I think by any standard—forward-leaning on this issue for a long time, but not nearly as forward-leaning as we should be or as people who look at the pervasive character of behavioral health issues understand we should be.

When we passed the bill a couple of years ago, we really weren't sure how much interest we would get from States. There was some sense that, well, eight States would be all the States that would even want to do this, if every State that wanted to apply and could go through the application process did so. But, in fact, everybody in the mental health world was encouraged to see 24 States, which represented half of the population in the country, apply to be part of that pilot program—certainly, leading by example here, figuring out what happens.

Frankly, if you treat behavioral health like all other health, I think what many of these States will find—and they may all find—is that the other health costs are much more easily dealt with and, obviously, that not only is treating behavioral health like all other health the right thing to do, but it actually may save money to spend this money. People who have other health problems but who are seeing their doctor because their behavioral health issue is under control may be seeing two doctors. They are taking the medicine they need for behavioral health—if they need medicine for that—but because they are eating better, sleeping better, feeling better about themselves, they are also taking the medicine and getting to the appointments for any other health issue they have.

Early studies indicate that, actually, you save money by doing the right thing and understanding that mental health isn't a topic we don't talk about, but mental health is just another health issue we need to deal with.

We need to be sure that we have providers going forward. We don't have enough doctors in Missouri—or in other States—who are able to treat the increasing number of people who seek treatment. And as doctors retire in these fields, we are going to have an even greater shortage if we don't do something to encourage people to go into this field.

There is a particular shortage in care providers who deal with children. Children and youth who are in need of mental health services and who don't receive them run a greater risk of all kinds of other problems, including dropping out of school, not doing well in school, ending up in the criminal justice system—things that needlessly happen because we haven't stepped forward and viewed their behavioral

health problem as we would if they had some other problems.

I was glad Senator REED from Rhode Island and I were recently able to reintroduce a bill called the Ensuring Children's Access to Specialty Care Act. Pediatric medicine doesn't pay as well as other medicine for lots of reasons. One is that children don't have a lot of their own money to pay with, and often their parents don't have it either.

This bill that Senator REED and I introduced would allow physicians who want to specialize in, among other things, child and adolescent psychiatry to be eligible for the National Health Service Corps student loan repayment program. That program is generally not available now to doctors who go on and specialize on the theory that if you specialize, you are going to have more income than the general practice doctor might have. Those programs have always been focused on the general practice doctor, but if you specialize in children's health—whether it is, frankly, psychiatry or any other area of children's health—you are much less likely to financially benefit from deciding to do that. So this would allow those doctors to pursue that program as part of how they help get their loans paid back.

Whether it is physical or behavioral health, children have a unique set of health needs and often a lack of ability on their own to do what needs to be done. Medical residents who practice pediatric medicine require additional training. One of the barriers they cite for not getting that additional training is that they are going to have to have these additional student loans. Hopefully, we can allow ways for them to get into programs that other doctors get into, to see that they continue to be encouraged to be part of pediatric medicine and pediatric specialties.

Also, we are looking at another bill, the Advancing Care for Exceptional Kids Act, commonly referred to as ACE Kids. What ACE Kids does is treat kids who have serious medical problems as exactly that—to have a way to look at health needs and medically complex kids whom you wouldn't look at otherwise, seeing that these particular patients don't have to go through all kinds of barriers to find a doctor, fee for service. Medically complex kids really need help, and I think we could easily design a new and different way to deal with them.

Finally, talking about kids, I want to say one other thing, and that is just to mention that this particular week is Teacher Appreciation Week. I was a teacher after I got out of college, before I had a chance later to be a university president. I think teachers are always inclined to be teachers and try to tell the stories we need to hear. But when we are talking about mental health and teachers, healthcare, mental health, first aid are things that don't allow teachers to become child psychiatrists or mental health professionals but do allow teachers, as they

are watching the students whom they get to know so well, to identify what students need help and what students don't. Often teachers get the first chance outside the child's home to see that they are clearly challenged or may be challenged in ways that are easily dealt with, if they are dealt with, and are really troublesome if they are not dealt with at all.

So while we celebrate Teacher Appreciation Week at the very end of school and Mental Health Month, I hope we commit ourselves to look at these mental health issues for what they are. They are health issues. They need to be talked about. The right thing to do is to deal with them.

I think we are seeing new and better things happen there, but we are not nearly where we should be yet. As I said earlier, when Senator STABENOW and I could go to the Floor on the 50th anniversary of the last bill President Kennedy signed and 50 years later talk about how few of the goals set in that bill have been met in five decades by society, we really have a lot of catching up to do.

I believe and hope we are catching up, and I hope this is a month where people really think about telemedicine, contacts, opportunities, and excellence in mental health in ways we haven't before.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant Democratic leader.

MEDICAL RESEARCH

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, before the Senator from Missouri leaves the floor, I want to say a word about him and the topic he raised today about health and, in this particular case, children.

Senator BLUNT and I have adjoining States, Illinois and Missouri. We have joined up, as well, on the issue of medical research. I salute him. Even though he is my Republican colleague, I want to make clear that this is a bipartisan issue. He has made it a bipartisan issue. We had the good support of Senator ALEXANDER, Republican of Tennessee, and Senator MURRAY, Democrat of Washington.

The Senator from Missouri has done some amazing things. I want to say specifically for the Record that America owes him a debt of gratitude, as chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee that is responsible for the National Institutes of Health, the foremost leading medical research agency in the world.

Let me tell you, with his leadership, what we accomplished. For two straight years, Senator BLUNT has been able to raise the appropriations for medical research at the National Institutes of Health by \$2 billion or more. The net result of that is that a \$30 billion budget has grown to almost \$34 billion. What does it mean? It means that researchers don't get discouraged. They stay on their projects. They keep working to find cures.

Secondly, we are making dramatic advances in medicine because of it. His

leadership has been absolutely essential. If there is ever a bipartisan issue, this is it. The Senator has been quite a leader in this regard.

I want to salute you for that while you are on the floor on the topic of healthcare and children.

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, I appreciate my good friend's comments on this but also his commitment to seeing that we make this happen. As he mentioned, this is a bipartisan effort, but it is an effort that had about a 10-year lag, and we are doing our best to dramatically catch up with what is really an important time in healthcare research.

Mr. DURBIN. I thank my colleague from Missouri. I will tell you that he set a standard. I hope that both parties will agree that this is the starting point. For every year's budget, the starting point is at least a 5-percent real growth increase in medical research.

Thank you, Senator BLUNT, for your leadership.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Madam President, I also want to address an issue that came up in debate last week in the U.S. House of Representatives; that is, the question of the repeal of the Affordable Care Act. This is an issue where reasonable people can disagree about how exactly to run our healthcare system.

But at the end of the day, I hope that, as with medical research, we can all come together with some basic issues. Congress should not pass a law taking away health insurance coverage from Americans. Let's start there. Congress should work together on a bipartisan basis to find ways to reduce the cost of healthcare and health insurance premiums. I think we should agree on that too.

Third, we have to find a way to make sure that consumers and families across America are protected with health insurance that is there when they need it. Now, it was a little over a week ago when I became a statistic—not just a Senator but a statistic—in healthcare. I went through a heart catheter procedure in Chicago last week on Tuesday. After that procedure—which turned out just fine; thank you—I am a statistic. I am a person in America with a preexisting condition. I have to check that box that says I have had a heart procedure.

It used to be if you checked a box like that—diabetes, asthma, whatever you checked—it ended up having a direct impact on what you paid for health insurance or whether you could even buy it. There were people who survived cancer—children, adults—who could not buy health insurance because they were too big a risk for health insurance companies.

Well, we changed that. The Affordable Care Act changed that and said: Just because you have a preexisting condition—and one out of three Americans has one—you should not be denied coverage. Now, the House of Represent-

atives passed a bill that allows Governors literally to take away that requirement in health insurance plans. What are they thinking?

Do they think they are so darn lucky that they will never have an accident, never have a diagnosis where they end up with a preexisting condition? It can happen to anybody, and it does. So what the House of Representatives did in this regard is a step backward.

They also changed the Medicaid system. People have this image, when you say Medicaid: Oh, that is the same as Medicare. No, Medicare is for seniors and disabled people. Medicaid is a policy of health insurance that is available for people who do not have a lot of money. Well, who qualifies for that? Well, it turns out that the largest number of people who qualify for Medicaid are children and their moms.

In my State of Illinois, half of the kids who are born in the State are covered by Medicaid. So the moms, when they need prenatal care to make sure the babies are healthy, and the babies, when they need care after the hospital, rely on Medicaid. But that is not the most expensive thing when it comes to Medicaid. The most expensive thing in Medicaid are your moms, your grandmoms, and granddads who are in nursing homes. You know what happens? They reach a point where they need to be in a place where folks can watch them and help them.

They have medical issues and age is taking its toll. But many of them get there, and all they have is Social Security and Medicare, and it is not enough. So Medicaid steps in and supplements it so that your mom, your dad, or your grandmother can stay in that place, which is good for them, secure, safe, and with the right kind of healthcare. The other group that relies on Medicaid the most in their daily lives are disabled people, folks who are born with a disability or have acquired one in life and they need ongoing medical care they cannot personally afford.

Children and their moms, elderly folks in nursing homes, and disabled people depend on Medicaid. So what does the Republican bill that passed the House of Representatives do to the Medicaid Program across America? It ends up cutting over \$800 billion in coverage. What it means in Illinois is that 1 million people—out of our 12.5 million population—are likely to lose their health insurance because of the action taken by the House of Representatives.

Even my Republican Governor in Illinois came out publicly and said what they did in the House of Representatives is disastrous for our State. It has a significant negative impact on the cost of healthcare and the coverage of health insurance. So why would we want to do that? Why would we want to take health coverage away from the groups I just mentioned?

Do we want to put less money in prenatal care? Well, if we do, we run the risk that children will be born with problems and challenges that could

cost us a fortune and compromise their lives.

Do we want to put less money into supporting elderly people who are in nursing homes? Well, what are they going to do? What are they supposed to do? If they can't stay in a place that is good for them and with the right kind of care, does that mean the family now has to find a spare room for grandma or your mom? I hope not. These folks want to live in dignity, and they don't want to be in a situation where they have to look for charity or beg for help from their families.

The third group is disabled people. For goodness sakes, we are lucky. We have people with disabilities who are doing amazing things today. But many who are in lower income categories need the help of Medicaid.

I had a group of hospital administrators come in to see me this week from Illinois. They were from every part of the State. If you go down to our beautiful Southern Illinois area, there are some great towns. One of them is Anna, IL, right near Cobden, IL. It is down in the southern end of our State. It is a very rural area with smaller towns.

Then I had administrators in the same group from Quincy, IL, from Springfield, IL, my home town, and from the city of Chicago. They all came here to tell me the same thing: The bill that passed the House of Representatives last week is a disaster when it comes to Illinois hospitals. They estimate they are going to lose up to 60,000 people who are currently working in hospitals in Illinois, because of that bill, and they are also going to see closures and reductions in services at these same hospitals while we see the Medicaid cutbacks take place.

Now, why is that? Let's assume you have a small rural hospital in a town that you live in. If you do, you value it very much because that means there is healthcare there, right next door, when you need it. You don't have to drive 50 miles or more. You have it right there. You also know it is a great employer in your area. You also know, as well, that that is the way you keep a lot of businesses in your town and attract new ones.

So what these hospitals are telling us is that the bill that passed the House of Representatives to repeal the Affordable Care Act is a threat to the future of those hospitals. If the patients don't come in covered by Medicaid and pay for some of their services, the hospitals will still treat them, but they are charity patients, then, and the hospitals have to charge every other patient more because of it.

So that is a terrible way for us to approach healthcare reform in America. That is the reality of what we face today. I am troubled by the fact that this bill, which passed the House of Representatives by two votes—two votes—if two Congressmen had voted the other way, this bill would not have

passed. This bill was never reviewed by the Congressional Budget Office. Well, who cares? I care.

For everything we do that is supposed to be that important to affect the American economy, we are supposed to go to the nonpartisan experts and ask them: Well, what does this really do? We have been held to that standard—Democrats have and Republicans, too—until now. Now, we have this decision by the House of Representatives to pass this bill affecting America's healthcare system—one-fifth of our economy, I might add—and they never went for an analysis to the Congressional Budget Office.

That has never happened before. They did it anyway. You know why they did it? Because the first version of this bill was a disaster. They sent that bill in for an analysis—24 million Americans losing their health insurance over the next 10 years. It was a disaster. They were afraid they would get the same analysis on the second bill. So they never sent it in for the analysis. In 2 weeks, we are going to have the numbers.

But it really gives you fair warning that this bill could be very hurtful to a lot of people across America, and yet it passed the House of Representatives. So today people say to me in Illinois, when I have town meetings: Well, we are listening to you, Senator. But what do you want to do about healthcare today? What would you change in the current system? Well, let me tell you first. I voted for the Affordable Care Act. I believe in it. The number of uninsured people in America—the percentage—has been cut in half because of the Affordable Care Act. Is it perfect? Of course not. Does it need to be changed? Yes.

I can give you two or three specifics, and I will. First, we have to do something about the price of drugs in America—pharmaceuticals. You see what is happening. Hedge funds are buying the rights to drugs and raising the prices two, three, four, and ten times because they have an exclusive drug. There is a family I have come to know who has a young son who is in high school in Chicago. He has diabetes. He is an amazing kid. He is going to be a great success in life. He has fought diabetes for years and years. His mom and dad have stood behind him.

They came in to tell me: Do you know what has happened to the cost of insulin—insulin—which diabetics need dramatically? It has gone up two, three, four, and five times in the last few years for no reason other than that they can charge it. Of course, a person with diabetes may be dependent on that insulin even to survive.

So the first thing we ought to do when we look at the healthcare system is figure out how to make sure that we have reasonable pricing when it comes to pharmaceuticals. Of course, I want them to make a profit. Those pharmaceutical companies, with a profit motive, will keep doing research to find

the next drug. But do I want these hedge funds and others—investment bankers—to buy out the rights to those drugs and drive their prices through the roof? That is not fair. It adds dramatically to the cost of healthcare.

Blue Cross Blue Shield is one of the biggest insurers in America. It is the biggest in my State of Illinois. My wife and I have a plan with them. So the head of Blue Cross Blue Shield came to me, and she said: Senator, did you know that last year Blue Cross Blue Shield paid more for pharmaceuticals than they paid for inpatient hospital care? What? Inpatient hospital care, people who have to come in for surgeries and things—you paid more for pharmaceuticals?

Yes.

Well, there are things we can do about it. I have legislation that I have introduced that reviews the pricing on pharmaceuticals, holds the pharmaceutical companies accountable. I take a position on an issue that all of my colleagues don't share, but I want to share it with you. There are only two nations in the world—only two—that allow pharmaceutical companies to advertise on television. The United States and New Zealand.

Well, what difference does it make? Have you turned on the TV lately and tried to find a show that did not have ads about pharmaceuticals? Have you tried to write down the names of some of those pharmaceuticals so that you might remember them if it is something of interest? Have you tried to listen to the warnings that they give you about all of these pharmaceuticals?

Well, some of the warnings are amazing: If you have had a liver transplant, be sure and tell your doctor. Well, yes, that explains that incision. A liver transplant? Why do they do that? Why do they buy all of those ads on television? Real simple. If you have some condition, and they talk about it in one of those ads, you are going to ask your doctor about that drug, and it is likely, in many cases, that doctor, then, will end up prescribing that drug.

Is it necessary? It may not be. Is it the cheapest form of the drug? It may not be. So, then, why does the doctor write the prescription? Because it is easier to do that than a 10-minute stop in the office for him to sit down with you and patiently explain: You don't need this drug, or you can use a generic, or we ought to wait a while before we go into this.

The result of it is that more and more pharmaceutical companies have their drugs being prescribed and more and more profits coming their way. So I, for one, think that this direct consumer advertising is really hurtful in terms of the cost of healthcare in our country, and it is something we ought to deal with. I would make that part of the reform of the Affordable Care Act.

The second thing we need to do is to make sure, I believe, that in every place in America, if you so choose, you can choose a Medicare-type public plan

to cover your family. Right now, it is private health insurance companies. You may choose to stick with the private health insurance company. That should be your choice. But you also ought to have a Medicare-type plan.

Over 50 million Americans are covered by Medicare, and most of them—the overwhelming majority of them—are happy with Medicare. What if we had a Medicare-type plan, a public option, available to every American to choose if they wish? I think that could reduce the cost of healthcare, and I think it is an option we ought to consider.

The third point I would make is that when we are dealing with reforming the healthcare system, we have one group in particular who is giving us a real challenge: individuals who are buying health insurance. The vast majority of Americans get their health insurance through their employment and many others through Medicaid—a program I described earlier—and then there is that group out there buying insurance on the open market. They are the ones who are seeing the runup in premiums and costs and overruns that they have to face, seeing copayments going up and the like. We need to find a way to deal with this group to give them affordable health insurance. There are a lot of ways to approach that, but that ought to be a target of what we do for the ones who are facing the toughest increases in health insurance.

I will just say this too: The good news about this conversation in the Senate is that it is finally reaching a new level. Now there are 12 Republican Senators who are meeting with Senator MCCONNELL, and they are setting out to draw up a plan and try to pass it with just Republican votes. I hope that does not succeed, and I will tell you why. If we can do this on a bipartisan basis and sit down in good faith and work out these improvements to the Affordable Care Act, that is the best option for this country. Senator COLLINS of Maine and Senator CASSIDY of Louisiana are trying to start that conversation. I have said to them that if this is a good-faith effort not to repeal the Affordable Care Act but to repair it, I want to pull a chair up to the table.

Let's have this conversation. We may not agree, we may not be able to come up with the best solutions, but the bipartisan approach of solving the current problems with the current healthcare system is a much more sensible thing to do than to have an all-Republican bill trying to force its way through here. I hope that doesn't happen. It is far better to do this on a bipartisan basis, and I hope that is what will be done.

I will be going home, as I do regularly, to talk about the impact of the bill passed by the House of Representatives. I have just touched on some of the major points of it.

There is one thing I do want to mention, though. It has an age tax in it

that many people between the ages of 50 and 64 may not be aware of.

Currently the law says that there cannot be a disparity of difference in premiums charged of more than 3 to 1; that is, the most expensive premium charged to someone for health insurance, no matter what their health or condition, cannot be more than three times the lowest premium charged. That is current law. The bill passed in the House of Representatives changed that dramatically. It says: Instead of 3 to 1, let's make it 5 to 1. Who is going to pay the difference? Folks who are older and those facing chronic illness.

If you are between the ages of 50 and 64, watch out for your health insurance premiums under this measure that passed the House of Representatives. That is something which should not have been included. That is why the American Association of Retired Persons has come out against this bill. It is another reason we have to ensure that the bill that passed the House of Representatives does not become the law of the land. To have this discrimination against people because of their age is unfair, and I agree with the American Association of Retired Persons on that particular issue.

Let's hope we can find a bipartisan path to making healthcare even better in America. I don't care who takes the credit for it. If at the end of the day more families have peace of mind with health insurance that they can afford, that provides them quality care when they need it, that is something we need to achieve.

As I said earlier, I again learned this lesson last week. The lesson is simply this: If you go in for a diagnosis and learn that you need quality healthcare, you want to have health insurance. You want to have access to the best doctors and hospitals. Everyone in America wants that. That shouldn't be a privilege which is reserved just for the rich and lucky; that ought to be there for every single American.

I believe healthcare is a right, not a privilege. If we start off with that premise, we can build a healthcare system in this country that is still the envy of the world.

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, today I come to the floor in opposition to the nomination of Robert Lighthizer to be United States Trade Representative, USTR. After close examination of the confirmation process for Mr. Lighthizer, I have come to the conclusion that Mr. Lighthizer does not adequately understand the positive economic benefits the North American Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA, has had and will continue to have on Arizona and our Nation. His advocacy for protectionist shifts in America's trade policies, including his support for the withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, TPP, and the Trump administration's incoherent and inconsistent trade posture, have only solidified my opposition to his nomination to be USTR.

As I wrote in a February piece in the Arizona Republic, coauthored by my colleague Senator FLAKE and Arizona chamber president Glenn Hammer, NAFTA has delivered enormous economic benefits to the United States since its inception in 1994, especially for the citizens of Arizona. In just two decades, Arizona's exports to Canada and Mexico have increased by \$5.7 billion, or 236 percent. Mexico stands as Arizona's No. 1 trading partner, with bilateral trade accounting for 40 percent of our State's exports to foreign markets in 2015 and totaling \$9.2 billion. Arizona's trade relationship with Mexico also directly supports more than 100,000 Arizona jobs.

While I understand NAFTA could be strengthened and modernized, any efforts by this administration to withdraw from NAFTA or impose new restrictions or barriers on our ability to trade with Mexico and Canada will have serious consequences for Arizona, including massive job losses for workers and dramatically higher costs for consumers. Furthermore, I am troubled by the need for and the process by which Congress recently granted Mr. Lighthizer a waiver to serve as USTR given that he previously represented a Brazilian and Chinese client in trade litigation matters. As part of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995, Congress adopted my amendment to prohibit an individual from serving as U.S. Trade Representative or Deputy U.S. Trade Representative if that person has "directly represented, aided, or advised a foreign entity" in "any trade negotiation, or trade dispute, with the United States." Ultimately, the waiver was tucked in the must-pass omnibus spending bill, with no chance to debate or vote on such an important trade related policy.

As Senator SASSE and I recently wrote in a letter opposing Mr. Lighthizer, the administration's incoherent and protectionist message on trade "is especially troubling because confirming a USTR grants the Administration additional legal authority to negotiate trade deals that Congress must consider under 'fast track' procedures. Given these circumstances, granting the Trump Administration additional legal powers through your confirmation without understanding how you or the Administration intend to use those powers would be irresponsible."

I plan to vote against the nomination of Mr. Lighthizer, and I urge colleagues to join me.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam President, I support the nomination of Robert Lighthizer to be the United States Trade Representative.

Trade agreements should meet two tests: Does the agreement improve worker wages? And does the agreement add American jobs? For far too long, U.S. Trade Representatives have prioritized profits of large multinational organizations over the interests of the American people and our country as a whole.

The USTR should be someone who negotiates on behalf of the American worker and advances labor and environmental protections, and the USTR should be someone who works to enforce agreements. While I don't agree with everything in Mr. Lighthizer's resume, his record suggests that he will be a USTR who will approach trade policies in the ways I have outlined. I hope the approach he takes going forward will reflect the positions he has taken in the past. I expect him to ask: Does it improve worker wages? And does it add American jobs?

I believe that Mr. Lighthizer will bring fresh eyes to trade policy. I hope that he will focus on increasing transparency at the USTR. I hope that he will stand up for worker rights, both domestically and internationally. I hope that Mr. Lighthizer will work to enforce trade policies that protect the environment.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TRADE

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, I come from a State that in some ways is very similar to yours, the State of Kansas. You get to see firsthand the impact of trade and exports on the people, on jobs, and on the economic opportunity of my communities. Our State economy relies on our ability to sell the products we grow and manufacture to people around the globe.

Strengthening our trade relationships and expanding market access for exports abroad creates a greater opportunity for Kansans today and those who follow us. One of my goals has always been to make certain that communities across Kansas remain a place in which the young men and women who grow up there find it to be a place to raise their families. Our ability to do that, especially in a small, rural community with agriculture and agricultural exports, is so important. It is a way that we can really put America first.

If our goal is to have an America that has strength and prosperity, we ought to continue to focus on improving our Nation's economy. That is one of the things that I appreciate—we seem to be focused in such a significant way on our ability to grow an economy. I think we are poised for much greater things economically.

"Economics" may sound like just one of those words, but what that means is more jobs, better jobs, more secure jobs, jobs for our children so that maybe they can pay back their student loans. This country desperately needs the jobs in the commu-

nities across Kansas and around the country, and it is really what we call the American dream.

Trade, including our ability to sell the food and fiber we grow in our State, is a key part that drives our economy forward. Almost half of the wheat grown in Kansas is exported to foreign markets. What that means is, if you weren't doing that, nearly half of the acres planted in our State would be idle. That means the communities those farmers and ranchers live in and around would have half of the amount of economic activity that currently is occurring. American ranchers ship over 1 million metric tons of beef to consumers abroad. Thousands of acres of corn, sorghum, and soybeans being planted this spring across Kansas and the Nation will ultimately be exported.

Approximately 95 percent of the world's consumers live outside America's borders. To reach those consumers, our Nation must produce a trade policy that grows the existing export markets while continuously building and developing new ones. Without export markets, both production and prices would fall for farmers and ranchers, and rural communities supported by agriculture would disappear. The revenue generated by exports not only keeps family farmers and ranchers afloat, it drives rural economies and supports small businesses.

The aerospace industry, which is so important in Kansas, also relies on an integrated supply chain and strong trade policy. Wichita, KS—appropriately labeled the "Air Capital of the World"—manufactures more than half of the world's general aviation light aircraft and business jets. Without trade, aerospace and manufacturing facilities in Wichita and surrounding areas and Kansas City and surrounding areas would not exist and workers in those factories would be left without job opportunities.

It is critical that we protect these jobs, many of which depend upon the United States having a strong economic relationship with Canada and Mexico. The North America Free-Trade Agreement, which went into effect in 1994, plays a significant role in supporting trade with those two neighboring nations.

Of course, the world and technology have changed since 1994 when that agreement was entered into. There are areas of the agreement that can be improved and modernized. Many of those changes have been discussed and are issues that the United States, Canada, and Mexico agreed to during TPP negotiations, such as strengthening our intellectual property rights and new provisions for e-commerce.

If we work collaboratively with Mexico and Canada to address the issues with NAFTA, including the issues on which we strongly disagree, I am confident we can improve the agreement for all parties. But efforts to pull out of NAFTA completely or to weaken our trading relationship with Canada and

Mexico during renegotiations would cause significant damage to the American economy. We must have willing negotiators sitting across the table when discussing NAFTA, and that starts with treating our neighbors as trade partners and as friends. We need to treat these folks as friends, and we need to seize the opportunities we have.

Working together to improve NAFTA or building economic relations with other trading partners does not mean America should take a step back from enforcing the current rules. Oftentimes in the past, we have been too focused on striking trade deals and selling them to the public, but we haven't done enough to make sure other countries are playing by the rules that are negotiated. Nontariff barriers and unfair trading practices by foreign countries harm our producers, workers, and consumers.

We must make certain American producers are competing on a level playing field in a global market and that our jobs and wages are not being undermined by other countries' efforts to distort trade policies and trade agreements.

Many Americans have lost confidence in trade agreements, and I believe that is partly because the benefits of trade agreements have been oversold, while the enforcement of unfair trade practices have been insufficient. In promoting agreements, leaders had set expectations for increased jobs, higher wages, growth in exports, and many other metrics that were impossible to meet. When these exaggerated promises did not come to fruition, many people lost confidence in those trade agreements.

America should strengthen our commitment to holding other countries accountable in order to inspire greater confidence from the American public in our Nation's ability to reach a trade agreement that benefits us all.

Weakening our trade relations will cause Kansans to lose jobs. Farmers and ranchers will no longer be able to pursue their careers and lifestyle. But with strong leadership and smart negotiating, I am convinced that America can improve our trade relationships in the world and continue to build on the economic successes we have today.

A robust U.S. economy that provides market opportunities for farmers, ranchers, and manufacturers, and job prospects for workers is an essential pillar of America's strength and well-being. Strong trade relationships, particularly with Canada and Mexico, are primary drivers of our Nation's economy. We must protect those relationships and carefully consider changes in our approach to trade to be certain that Americans continue to benefit from economic opportunities that are created by a strong trade policy.

Madam President, our relationships with Mexico and Canada are important and in many ways determine the economic future of the people of my State at home.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Ms. HIRONO. Madam President, these are not ordinary times. It is not ordinary for a winning Presidential campaign to be under investigation for collusion with a foreign adversary to influence our 2016 election and undermine our democracy. It isn't ordinary for a President to fire the man responsible for conducting this very investigation. It isn't ordinary for a President whose campaign is under investigation for having ties to Russia to hold an Oval Office meeting with that country's Foreign Minister and only invite the Russian press. This meeting came only a day after firing the person in charge of the Russia-Trump investigation. Yet, here we are. The question is, What should we do next?

The events of the past 48 hours have been shocking and concerning. Firing FBI Director James Comey in this manner, under this pretext, and at this time is a total disservice to the American people.

President Trump hopes the American people will believe he fired Director Comey because of how he treated Hillary Clinton during the Presidential campaign. President Trump hopes, as his Deputy Press Secretary said on Tuesday night, that the American people think it is "time to move on." President Trump hopes his attempts to distract us from the importance of getting to the bottom of the Russia-Trump matter will succeed. President Trump's hopes are misplaced. If anything, President Trump's firing of Director Comey has resulted in an increased concern about the Trump team's connections to Russian interference with our 2016 Presidential election.

The country is asking, Mr. President, what do you have to hide?

We are learning practically on an hourly basis about how the President made this decision to fire Director Comey and why. This information does not square with the official line coming from the White House, which also changes.

Most recently, the Washington Post reported that Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein threatened to resign after the White House misrepresented his role in the decision to fire Director Comey. CNN reported that President Trump fired Director Comey because he would not provide "assurance of personal loyalty." Both CNN and the Wall Street Journal reported that the decision to fire Director Comey came after the FBI's investigation was accelerating. All of this information has emerged in the last 48 hours or so.

This kind of Presidential interference, through the firing of the FBI Director during an ongoing investigation, is unprecedented, suspicious, and deeply concerning. These revelations and those that are sure to come further argue in favor of appointing a special prosecutor to fully investigate the Russia-Trump matter. A special prosecutor with full autonomy can follow the evidence wherever it leads and prosecute as appropriate.

I call upon Republicans of conscience to stand up and join the call for a special prosecutor.

Over the past few days, a number of my Republican colleagues have spoken out against the way the President had fired James Comey. In particular, I would like to acknowledge Senators MCCAIN, SASSE, FLAKE, BURR, KENNEDY, BOOZMAN, and CORKER for speaking out. I hope, as more information about President Trump's decision to fire Director Comey emerges, our Republican colleagues will join in the call for a special prosecutor.

Leader MCCONNELL argued yesterday that appointing a special prosecutor would disrupt the ongoing work of the Senate committees that are conducting their own investigations. I disagree. The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and the Senate Judiciary Committee have important oversight responsibilities regarding the Russia-Trump matter, but neither committee has the power to convene a grand jury or prosecute any crimes that may have been committed. Therefore, I reiterate the need for a special prosecutor with the mandate and authority to follow the facts wherever they lead—free of political considerations.

In the coming weeks, President Trump will nominate a new Director for the FBI. This person must be above reproach and be someone whose independent judgment can earn the country's confidence. I have been disturbed by some of the names being floated as potential replacements, names like Chris Christie and Rudy Giuliani. We cannot allow President Trump to appoint one of his buddies to oversee the Russia-Trump investigation or to lead the FBI.

The investigation into the Russia-Trump matter cannot and should not be a partisan issue. We should all care that a foreign government has sought to interfere with our elections and with our democracy. This is not just about the election. This is really about protecting our democracy.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, there is a Chinese curse that reads: "May you live in interesting times."

To call the times that we find ourselves in right now "interesting" would be certainly an understatement. The fact is, we find ourselves and our country in a moment that is profoundly testing the rule of law here in America, profoundly testing the strength of our democratic institutions. We have a President who has now engaged in a pattern of removing individuals from office who are executing their responsibilities under the law.

First, on January 30, just 11 days into the Trump administration, it was Sally Yates, the Acting Attorney General, who warned the administration that Michael Flynn had been compromised by his connections to Russia—an incredibly responsible act for her to take, but she was fired.

On March 10, it was Preet Bharara, the U.S. attorney in New York, who was reportedly investigating whether Secretary Price had profited from his position in Congress. He had been told he would be retained by this administration when suddenly he was fired.

Then this week, Tuesday, the President fired James Comey, the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation; James Comey, who was leading the FBI's investigation into the possible collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia in the Presidential election and who was scheduled to testify before the U.S. Senate this week; James Comey, who had just recently asked for more funding and resources in order to appropriately and substantially investigate Russian interference in our elections and possible connections to the Trump campaign; James Comey, whose investigation just handed down its first round of subpoenas.

The firing of James Comey has more than a passing resemblance to Nixon's Saturday Night Massacre, the infamous incident in October of 1973, when President Nixon ordered the Attorney General to fire the special prosecutor who was investigating Watergate. Nixon wanted to derail that investigation. The Attorney General, Elliott Richardson, refused to do so and resigned. His deputy, William French Smith, refused to do so and resigned.

Day by day, we have seen more connections, bits and pieces, come to light—conversations involving Michael Flynn, former campaign manager Paul Manafort, Carter Page, and Attorney General Sessions.

The President insists there is no "there" there, but we have seen a pattern of conversations that we don't fully understand. Was there coordination between the Trump campaign and the Russians to interfere in the U.S. Presidential election? Was there collaboration? We don't know. We know there were a lot of conversations, but what was the substance of those conversations? And who instructed those meetings to take place? What is the full pattern of these events?

It is important that we get to the bottom of it because what every American understands is, if you conspire

with a foreign government to undermine the integrity of the American elections, you are conspiring to undermine the integrity of the American Government itself; that this is a terrible assault, a terrible crime against our country.

The President's team says this firing of Director Comey had nothing to do with the Russia investigation. They did so through a series of documents, including a letter from Attorney General Jeff Sessions to the President, a memo to Jeff Sessions from Rod Rosenstein, and the President writing a letter to James Comey saying you are fired. So the memo from Rosenstein to the AG, the AG's letter to the President, the President's letter saying you are fired, and all of this claiming the basis of the investigation was because they were dissatisfied with the way James Comey had treated Secretary Clinton.

Now, that doesn't really fit with the history we are familiar with. The President told audiences at a campaign rally in October: "I tell you what, what he did, he brought back his reputation."

He is referring to James Comey.

"He brought it back."

And then when the President talked to "60 Minutes," he said: "I respect him a lot," when he was asked about Director Comey in the context of the actions he had taken in regard to Secretary Hillary Clinton.

We remember the chants at his rallies: "Lock her up."

I don't think there is a single American—not a single Member of this body of 100 Senators—who believes for a moment—not for a microsecond—that the reasoning in this memo from the Deputy AG to the AG and the letter from the AG to the President and the President's memo to James Comey, that the arguments made here were the basis of his firing.

If you believe the President woke up and said: I am so concerned about the way James Comey treated Hillary Clinton that he just has to be dismissed, then I have some oceanfront property in Arizona I would be happy to sell you.

We know from the reporting of the last few days that there is quite another story—an accurate story—about why the President fired James Comey. We now know the President had become increasingly frustrated with Director Comey because he wouldn't go along with the story line the President wanted. The President wanted him to support his claim that the Obama administration had wiretapped Trump Tower, but Director Comey, caring about the integrity of his team at the FBI and the office, refused to do so. In fact, he clarified that there is absolutely no information that corroborates the President's claim that Trump Tower had been wiretapped by President Obama.

We know the President was frustrated that the Director was doing his job to explore—that is, to investigate—

Russia's actions in our campaign, in our Presidential campaign, and that he was frustrated that there was looking into potential ties between his campaign and the Russians. He didn't like a lot about the fact that Director Comey was asking for more resources to be able to do a thorough investigation.

Well, we know the result.

According to a report in the Washington Post this morning, President Trump made his final decision to fire the Director last weekend while he was golfing on his property in New Jersey. He then tasked the AG and the Deputy Attorney General to come up with a cover story.

This is an astonishing chain of events. What we have here is the President making a decision based on the appropriate efforts of the FBI to investigate a potential crime against the United States of America. What we have here is a President determining he wanted to derail that investigation, and he went to the AG and the Deputy AG to say: Help me do this. Help me derail this investigation. Give me a cover story I can sell to the American public. And Attorney General Sessions complied and Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein complied.

Now, that is quite different than what happened in the Saturday Night Massacre. In the Saturday Night Massacre, when the President said to the Attorney General: Get rid of that special prosecutor so I can derail the investigation, the Attorney General stood up and said: No way, and resigned—the Deputy Attorney General resigned, but that is not what we have here. We have now our AG agreeing to develop a cover story for the President.

Now, this memo from Attorney General Sessions reads as follows: "As Attorney General, I am committed to a high level of discipline, integrity, and the rule of law to the Department of Justice."

Let me ask this question, Where is the integrity in collaborating in a false story in order to derail an investigation, an important investigation to the very heart of the integrity of our system of government? Where, I ask the Attorney General, is the integrity in developing a cover story—a false story to cover up the action of derailing an investigation. That is the opposite of integrity.

To the Deputy, who also agreed to conspire in this deception of the American public, where is your integrity? Where was your commitment to justice?

So here we have events that are deeply disturbing not only in terms of the President's decision to falsely mislead the American public but also to the Attorney General's decision to collaborate in that and the Deputy Attorney General's decision to support it. How is this not obstruction of justice?

If anyone here thinks for a moment that the President is going to nominate a new head of the FBI and ask

that individual to conduct a robust investigation of Russia's entanglement in the U.S. elections, I have another thought for you: It is not going to happen. The President has deliberately, intentionally derailed this investigation, and the Justice Department has no intention of making it go forward again.

We need to hear from these top officials. We need to have these officials come to the U.S. Senate, to a committee of the whole, to tell us their story and answer these questions about what they have just done to violate the integrity of the Department of Justice.

We need to have a special prosecutor. We know the head of the FBI, when we have one again, is not going to be able to conduct a robust investigation. Therefore, we need a special prosecutor to get to the bottom of this. The American people deserve no less. The restoration of integrity of the U.S. Government deserves no less.

Lady Justice carries scales in her hands, and where is the blindfold? The whole point is that no one in America is above the law, no one—not Presidents or Vice Presidents, not AGs or Deputy AGs. Lady Justice is all about getting the facts, following the facts where they go, holding individuals accountable, when we get those facts, when we get that information.

That is what we need to do now. We need to get to the bottom of this. We need to have that special prosecutor. We need to make sure that if anyone did conspire with the Russians, they are held to the full account of the law because conspiring with a foreign country to undermine the integrity of U.S. elections is treasonous conduct. This is not a traffic ticket. This is a question of treasonous—conspiring with a foreign government, undermining the U.S. Presidential election.

I am deeply disturbed about this turn of events. I am deeply disturbed about the information we have. We need to get the full, full story, the complete story, and make sure justice is served.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following the remarks of Senator MURPHY, there be 20 minutes of postcloture time remaining on the Lighthizer nomination, equally divided between the chairman and ranking member of the Finance Committee; that following the use or yielding back of that time, the Senate vote on the Lighthizer nomination; and that, if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. RISCH. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I thank Senator MERKLEY for his remarks this week, as this body has been rightly focused on the firing of James Comey

and the imagined rationale that the President gave.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. President, secret meetings have been happening amongst our Republican colleagues to draft a healthcare bill that could have devastating consequences on the people we all represent. I know we are about to have a vote on the floor, but I wanted to come to the floor to simply remind all of my friends on both sides of the aisle of the promises that have been made about this process and this piece of legislation which emerged from the House last week with devastating consequences. Those consequences include 24 million people losing coverage and people with preexisting conditions being subjected to \$200,000 premium increases, potentially.

I just reference the words of the President of the United States, who told us repeatedly over and over again, during the campaign and after the campaign, that the result of this healthcare reform debate was going to be a healthcare system that was better. President Trump outlined that in a number of different ways.

Here is what he said on April 30, just a few weeks ago. He said:

The healthcare plan is on its way. Will have much lower premiums & deductibles, while at the same time taking care of pre-existing conditions!

That is not true. That is a lie. The healthcare bill that emerged from the House of Representatives did none of those things.

CBO has not come out with its final estimate. It is unbelievable that the House voted on a reordering of one-sixth of the American economy without a CBO estimate, but we can pretty much be sure that the first CBO estimate will hold, in that it will say that premiums are going to go up by 15 to 20 percent immediately for everybody, and then for the nonyoung healthy and wealthy, premiums are going to go up even higher.

It didn't take care of preexisting conditions. It did the opposite—allowed every State to be able to walk away from the protection of the Affordable Care Act, which makes sure people with preexisting conditions, which could be one-third of all Americans, can't be subject to higher rates, and it substituted that requirement with a high-risk pool which is dramatically underfunded to the point that it is laughable, in the opinion of many healthcare economists.

Here is what Donald Trump said earlier this year:

We're going to have insurance for everybody. People covered under the law can expect to have great healthcare. . . . Much less expensive and much better insurance for everybody.

CBO says 24 million people will lose their insurance, and that number might be higher when the new estimate comes out. This wasn't true. This was a lie.

Finally, the President said, during the campaign:

I was the first & only potential GOP candidate to state there will be no cuts to Social Security, Medicare & Medicaid.

No cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid—this is a giant cut to Medicaid. This is an \$880 billion cut to Medicaid being used to finance a giant tax cut for people making over \$200,000 a year. This wasn't true. This was a lie as well.

A lot of Democrats will be willing to talk about making our healthcare system better, but we want our Republican colleagues, as they are having these behind-closed-door meetings, to remember the promises that were made. They said nobody would lose insurance, premiums would go down—not up—and your benefit package wouldn't become worse. If Republicans can deliver on those promises, then there is a discussion to be had. But if anything looking like the House product emerges, it is a violation of the promises this President and many Republicans made over and over again.

Finally, I also want all my colleagues to remember what is happening as we speak. Leader MCCONNELL was on the floor talking about premium increases announced by Blue Cross Blue Shield in Maryland. What he failed to mention was the head of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Maryland came out and specifically said that a big part of the reason they were asking for major premium increases was because of the actions President Trump is taking right now to sabotage the Affordable Care Act. They were not sure the individual mandate was going to be enforced. Why? Because in an Executive order this President signed, he directed his agencies to undermine the Affordable Care Act and to withdraw many of the fees levied on Americans, such as that which comes if you don't get insurance. He stopped advertising for the exchanges for the last week. We were on target to have more people sign up this year than ever before; but then, in the last week, the President withdrew all the money for the exchanges. Right now, as we speak, this administration is bleeding out the money for insurers to help pay for cost sharing within the exchanges 1 month at a time, not telegraphing if there is going to be any certainty for that funding in the future.

The President is undermining and sabotaging the ACA every single day. The reason insurers are passing along premium increases or considering withdrawing from these exchanges is because of this sabotage the administration is undertaking of our entire healthcare system. I hope these behind-closed-door meetings take into account all of the promises this President and our Republican friends made that they would repeal the Affordable Care Act and replace it with something better. Everything we hear is that the product that emerged out of the House of Representatives—the product that may emerge out of the Senate—violates every single one of these promises.

We await the ability to work together, Republicans and Democrats, to

preserve what works in the healthcare system, to fix what doesn't work, and to hold our Republican friends and the President of the United States to their promises.

I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there are 20 minutes of postcloture time remaining, equally divided between the chairman and the ranking member of the Committee on Finance, prior to a vote on the Lighthizer nomination.

The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I thank my colleague and good friend, Chairman HATCH, for his courtesies. We have worked very closely together on this nomination. This was a challenging task, and I thank Chairman HATCH for his cooperation.

Mr. Lighthizer needed a waiver because he had represented foreign interests. It was extremely important that we work with Senator MANCHIN and other colleagues to address the enormous needs of the miners, and we had a whole host of Members with a variety of extremely important trade issues—matters like steel, aluminum, and digital goods in our part of the world; we also care about softwood lumber tremendously.

Chairman HATCH and I worked with all the members of the Finance Committee. It was a unanimous vote, and I thank him for his cooperation.

We have talked a little bit about trade and what a modern trade policy is going to look like. The Lighthizer discussion is the beginning of the debate on trade in this Congress, and I have tried to be clear about my agenda. My agenda is to create more red, white, and blue jobs in America—high-skilled, high-waged jobs. Very often, the trade jobs pay better than do the nontrade jobs because there is more value added in them; there is a higher level of productivity. So my view is, as we set out on this journey to get more high-skilled, high-waged jobs, look to Asia where there are going to be 1 billion middle-class people there in a few years. What we ought to do is focus on growing them in the United States, making them in the United States, adding value to them in the United States, and then shipping them somewhere. That is my idea of a modern trade agenda.

So far, the administration's trade agenda amounts to a muddle of 140-character tweets, mixed messages, and overhyped announcements that seem to be backed by not much substance. I think we are going to have to put together a coherent strategy quickly to promote our exports and fight back against trade cheats. That is not exactly what we have seen from the administration to date.

We can almost suffer whiplash from the reports about what happens with various trade deals. Late at night, it was reported that the President is about to pull the United States out of NAFTA; then suddenly there is another

report saying he has changed his mind after a conversation with the Canadians. Next, at a moment of extreme tension on the Korean Peninsula, it is reported that the President is threatening to pull out of the U.S.-Korea trade agreement. Then suddenly that threat is walked back. So the President has made some major statements with respect to trade deals on the books, but he has yet to give us much in the way of specifics on how he would like to bring that about.

If one is trying to run a business in Oregon or around the United States that exports to foreign markets, it is pretty hard not to feel rattled and confused by some of the President's statements and tweets about trade. One might even make the decision not to invest and not to hire additional workers. I hope the President will soon see that some of the uncertainty and confusion that has been stoked as a negotiating tactic is not a recipe for creating red, white, and blue jobs.

I do think Robert Lighthizer knows what the challenge is really all about, and I want to tell him I have appreciated our conversations. He is a real pro at this. I have appreciated his views, particularly on digital goods, which I think are so important to our burgeoning technology sector, and his views on Canadian lumber.

I would also like to state at this time that I think very highly of Secretary Ross. He has been very constructive in our conversations, particularly on Canadian softwood lumber.

Obviously, the U.S. Trade Representative will lead our country in trade negotiations, and that will be Mr. Lighthizer's role. The bulk of the expertise of trade does reside within his office. When Mr. Lighthizer is confirmed, as I hope he will be and expect he will be, this expertise will no longer be silent.

I will wrap up simply by way of saying that the United States may be the world's largest economy, but it represents only 4 percent of the world's consumers. Red, white, and blue jobs in the United States depend on our ability to sell to the other 96 percent. The number of middle-class households around the world is going to double over the next decade. This represents a lot of potential buying power for the American brand, the Oregon brand. The fact is, people all over the world love buying the goods and the services we make. It is going to take a lot of hard work to smash through the barriers that block American-made goods and fight back against trade cheats.

Lastly, the trade rules in many particulars are out of date, so we have a lot of work to do to promote labor rights, combat human trafficking, crack down on trade in illegally taking wildlife and endangered species, and get the trade system updated so it includes things like digital goods and small businesses that now have an international reach, which is especially important. The trading system has to

respond more quickly to countries that break the rules or are unfairly producing basic commodities, such as steel and aluminum. This is especially true with respect to China.

As policymakers, we must continue to take an honest look at the trade rules and fix what doesn't work so that American workers aren't left behind. It is long past time to invest more resources in monitoring, litigating, and enforcing our trading partners' obligations, including China's. The United States must respond more aggressively and more rapidly to threats to U.S. workers and businesses.

There was a recent example of how this is done right when the Commerce Department said "enough" to Canada's unfairly traded softwood lumber. The steps the Commerce Department took were undeniably warranted after mill towns in Oregon and many other States have been clobbered over the last few decades. My first preference is a long-term agreement with Canada, but if they are not going to come to the table, I will keep fighting for our mills and mill jobs, and I will insist the administration do the same.

The U.S. needs to carry that same steadfast approach across the board—getting trade enforcement right is not just a lumber issue. That means more resources for boots on the ground: investigators and enforcers. Not just at the office of the USTR but also at Customs and Border Protection and the Departments of Commerce, Agriculture, Labor, State, and Interior, where investigators are tasked with stopping trade in illegally taken wildlife. Bottom line, trade enforcement requires all hands on deck. If you boost trade enforcers at one agency only to wipe out the trade enforcers at another, you will fail to protect American workers from unfair or illegal imports.

So I will be looking closely at the budget that the President submits to determine whether he is serious about delivering real results on trade enforcement or whether the campaign rhetoric and dramatic tweets are just a bunch of hot air.

In recognition of the need for a new approach on trade enforcement, Congress recently passed new laws that give the President better tools to respond when trading partners don't follow the rules. It also passed legislation to strengthen domestic laws that enable the U.S. to unilaterally respond when American jobs are under threat, and it provided new direction should the President wish to negotiate new trade agreements or renegotiate past ones. In the coming months, I expect that those tools will not just sit and gather dust while the administration talks tough with respect to trade.

It takes consistency, strategy and a lot of hard work to get trade done right. I have confidence that Robert Lighthizer will work to pursue a trade agenda that is coherent, constructive, and will deliver for American workers, and I will support his nomination.

However, I want to express reservation on one issue pertaining to this nominee. During his confirmation hearing, Senator STABENOW asked Mr. Lighthizer how he would deal with situations in which he was conducting trade negotiations with a country in which the President has business interests. Senator STABENOW wanted to make sure that the President's personal financial interests wouldn't take precedence over the public interest. Mr. Lighthizer seemed surprised by the question, saying, quote, "the idea that this President would do anything untoward is . . . far out of the realm of possibility."

I would like to put Mr. Lighthizer on notice. This is a legitimate issue, and I share Senator STABENOW's concern. Never before has this country faced a circumstance in which our trade representative will be negotiating trade agreements with countries in which the President or his family have active business interests, whether it is trademarks, golf courses, or construction deals. I have introduced a bill requiring the President, when initiating trade negotiations, to disclose whether he has business interests in the country that we will be negotiating with. I intend to press this issue as trade negotiations move forward. Trade should be about fighting on behalf of American workers and businesses. It is not about the President's bottom line.

Finally, on an issue that has been closely related to this nomination, I want to commend several of my colleagues for working together to provide relief to retired mineworkers regarding their healthcare costs. Senator MANCHIN has been a crusader on behalf of the mineworkers. Hardly a week went by over the last several months when I didn't hear from JOE MANCHIN about how important it was to get the mineworkers the healthcare benefits they have earned. And he has worked hand-in-hand with Senators BROWN, CASEY, and WARNER, all of whom serve on the Finance Committee. Chairman HATCH deserves thanks for working with us to get this across the finish line as well.

I see that my good friend, Chairman HATCH, is here to make his remarks. I thank him for the cooperation he has shown. I think the interests of both sides in processing this nomination have been advanced.

A lot could have gone awry here. We had challenges with getting the waiver Mr. Lighthizer needed. We needed the space to make sure the miners were protected. Members had strong views.

I thank Chairman HATCH for the diplomacy and cooperation he showed me and our side. I think that is why there was a very large vote for Mr. Lighthizer in the committee.

I will be voting aye this afternoon and look forward to the Chairman's wrap-up remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I thank my colleague, who is an excellent person to work with. We enjoy each other and enjoy working together. We are getting a lot done, and I appreciate his kind remarks here today.

I rise today in support of the nomination of Robert Lighthizer to be the next United States Trade Representative. Mr. Lighthizer was reported out of the Finance Committee unanimously—Democrats and Republicans—and I hope he receives a similarly strong bipartisan vote here on the floor.

By statute, Congress has designated the USTR as the primary official for developing and coordinating U.S. trade policy, advising the President on trade, and leading international trade negotiations. The USTR must also report directly to and consult closely with Congress on a wide range of issues affecting international commerce. The USTR is Congress's first and most important point of contact when it comes to trade policy. Therefore, in order for Congress to have an effective voice in shaping our Nation's trade agenda, we need to have a fully staffed and functional USTR office.

For that reason, I have been very critical of the pointless and unprecedented delays we have faced in filling this vacancy, in filling this position, due to some unreasonable demands from some of my friends on the other side of the aisle. This delay has served only to weaken Congress's position in trade policy and has hampered our ability to provide the new administration with substantive input. Despite this ill-advised delay, I am pleased that Mr. Lighthizer's nomination has finally been brought to the floor, and I thank my colleagues for that.

Mr. Lighthizer's years of experience in public service, including as staff director for the Senate Finance Committee, as Deputy USTR during the Reagan administration, and in private practice, make him extremely well qualified to serve as our Nation's representative. Mr. Lighthizer's knowledge and experience will be vital to his service in this position and vital to our country.

Put simply, growing our economy and creating better paying jobs for American workers require increased U.S. trade. Toward that end, I have spoken to Mr. Lighthizer about the importance of removing trade barriers for American businesses, workers, consumers, and, where those barriers have already been removed, maintaining the status quo.

I know there is quite a bit of discussion going around about potential changes to the North American Free Trade Agreement. As I told Mr. Lighthizer, there are definitely opportunities to update and improve NAFTA, but it is important that the administration follow the spirit of the Hippocratic Oath: First do no harm.

Mr. Lighthizer and I have also discussed the importance of protecting

U.S. intellectual property rights around the globe through strong enforcement and better rules in trade agreements. I believe he recognizes the importance of this priority, and I will work to ensure that this issue plays a prominent role in our future trade negotiations.

I have also made clear to Mr. Lighthizer that I believe consultation on trade policy between Congress and the administration is essential, particularly if our agreements are going to adhere to the standards Congress put forward in the Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act of 2015, the statute that included the most recent reauthorization of trade promotion authority.

On this key point, I believe Mr. Lighthizer and I are in agreement. As U.S. Trade Representative, Mr. Lighthizer will have the task of holding our trading partners accountable, ensuring that Americans don't pay more for the products their families need and helping American businesses and workers sell more of their goods and services around the globe.

This is not an easy job, but I am confident that Mr. Lighthizer is up to the task. As chairman of the Senate committee with jurisdiction over our Nation's trade policy, I am committed to working with him to ensure that we advance a trade agenda that will grow our economy, create more jobs, and expand market access around the globe for America's farmers, ranchers, and manufacturers.

Mr. President, I suggest we vote on Mr. Lighthizer.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All postcloture time has expired.

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

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 Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), and the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SULLIVAN).

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

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

The result was announced—yeas 82, nays 14, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 127 Ex.]

YEAS—82

Alexander	Booker	Cardin
Baldwin	Boozman	Carper
Barrasso	Brown	Casey
Bennet	Burr	Cassidy
Blunt	Cantwell	Cochran

Collins	Heitkamp	Peters
Coons	Heller	Portman
Corker	Hirono	Risch
Cornyn	Hoeven	Roberts
Cortez Masto	Inhofe	Rounds
Cotton	Johnson	Rubio
Crapo	Kaine	Scott
Cruz	Kennedy	Shaheen
Daines	King	Shelby
Donnelly	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Duckworth	Lankford	Strange
Durbin	Leahy	Tester
Enzi	Lee	Thune
Ernst	Manchin	Tillis
Feinstein	McCaskill	Toomey
Fischer	McConnell	Udall
Flake	Menendez	Van Hollen
Franken	Moran	Warner
Graham	Murphy	Wicker
Grassley	Murray	Wyden
Hassan	Nelson	Young
Hatch	Paul	
Heinrich	Perdue	

NAYS—14

Blumenthal	McCain	Schatz
Gardner	Merkley	Schumer
Gillibrand	Reed	Warren
Harris	Sanders	Whitehouse
Markey	Sasse	

NOT VOTING—4

Capito	Murkowski
Isakson	Sullivan

The nomination was confirmed.

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

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, there is a saying, an old adage, that history doesn't repeat, but it rhymes.

Over the past week, the dramatic firing of James Comey has recalled past events—history that involved one of the major scandals in our Nation's past—the Watergate scandal.

In Watergate, the saying originated—another very common saying—that the coverup is worse than the crime. The danger now in the United States—the greatest country in the history of the world, with the most effective and fair justice on our planet—is that, in fact, there may be a coverup, and that the truth will be stifled, and people who should be held accountable will not be. That is the danger.

In this instance, in comparison to Watergate, actually, the crime is extraordinarily serious. In Watergate, there was a two-bit break-in or burglary, and the coverup, in fact, involved obstruction of justice. What we have here is a deliberate, purposeful assault on our American democracy by the Russians through a cyber attack that involved, really, in effect, an act of war—a combination of cyber, propaganda, and misinformation spread deliberately; it involved hacking into both major parties and the spread of the results of that hacking for one of those parties—possibly influencing the outcome of the election.

The issue of whether and how the outcome of that election may have

been influenced will be discussed and contended through the annals of history. Regardless of your point of view on what the impact was, the fact is, the criminal action by the Russians interfering with our election must be investigated aggressively and impartially, and the Russians, and anyone who aided and abetted them, must be held accountable. That is what the American people want. They want the truth uncovered, and they want to hold accountable anyone who colluded with the Russians in this attack on our Nation, anyone who aided and abetted or assisted them, anyone who bears a responsibility and should be held criminally culpable.

The Watergate scandal was eventually successfully prosecuted. It took years to do so. The appointment of a special prosecutor was key to that effort. In fact, Elliott Richardson was not only requested, he was required to appoint a special prosecutor as a condition of his confirmation. He was specifically directed by the Judiciary Committee of the U.S. Senate, and he agreed to do so. Archibald Cox was appointed, and then President Nixon fired Elliott Richardson as well as his deputy, William Ruckelshaus, because they refused to dismiss Archibald Cox.

The principle here—the rhyming of history if not its repeating—is that sometimes investigations come so close to power and the truth about the power that there is an effort to stifle them.

Watergate involved a two-bit burglary. This crime involves the theft of our democracy by the Russians and by others who may have colluded with him. So a successful investigation here goes to the fundamental principle that our elections will be free and credible, that they will be honest, without foreign interference or meddling by anyone.

The firing of James Comey as FBI Director is reminiscent of what happened with the dismissal of two Attorneys General and then a special prosecutor because it raises the possibility that an investigation will be catastrophically compromised and undermined by the President of the United States.

Just last week, I asked James Comey whether the President of the United States might currently be a target of the criminal investigation. Director Comey would not and could not rule out that possibility because he cannot speak about targets freely and openly, but we know some of the individuals implicated are close associates of the Trump campaign, including Michael Flynn, Carter Page, Roger Stone, and Paul Manafort. Each had different roles; for example, Paul Manafort was a leader of the campaign.

We know that subpoenas have been issued from a grand jury in the Eastern District of New York for materials relating to Michael Flynn and to his associates. We know that then-Deputy Attorney General Sally Yates went to the White House and warned that he

might be vulnerable to blackmail because he had lied to the Vice President.

We know also that very possibly he lied to the FBI. He deceptively omitted from materials or responses he gave in his security clearance information about payments to him from the Russians and the Turkish Government and that he may have committed other very serious violations of criminal law, punishable by years in prison. That investigation is ongoing now.

As I speak on the floor of the U.S. Senate, my hope is that agents of the FBI are doing their work, as they have done for decades, with integrity and determination and dedication. I know the work the FBI does, having worked with them as the U.S. Attorney in Connecticut. It is not only one of our premier law enforcement agencies, there is none finer in the world. I have confidence that they will continue this investigation successfully, meaning that they will achieve a just result, if there is the right leadership.

That is why I believe now there is no question that an independent special prosecutor must be appointed. There is no longer any doubt that an independent special prosecutor is necessary for the appearance and credibility, the appearance of integrity, and the credibility and objectivity of this investigation.

The different contradictory stories surrounding the firing of James Comey emphasizes this point. Initially, the decision was made by Rod Rosenstein as Deputy Attorney General, but of course it involved also the Attorney General, Jeff Sessions, who never should have been involved because he was recused from the investigation. The reason given by Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein involved the Hillary Clinton emails and statements made by Jim Comey 10 months ago—an explanation that defied belief, a pretense that was laughable and especially unfortunate—even tragic—from a career professional prosecutor like Rod Rosenstein.

Well, that explanation now has been supplanted; in fact, as recently as this morning, in an interview the President gave to Lester Holt of NBC, acknowledging that he made the decision because he had lost faith in Jim Comey. Never mind that he reaffirmed that faith shortly after his inaugural. Never mind that he praised Jim Comey on the campaign trail. His reasons for dismissing Jim Comey also defy belief.

This set of incidents shakes to the core the trust all of us should have in our justice system, in the integrity of our public officials, in the capability of that system to uncover the truth and hold accountable anyone who has violated the law.

President Trump has now fired not one but two high-ranking Justice officials after they told him about suspicions that he or his associates have broken the law; first, Sally Yates and now Director Comey.

Attorney General Sessions has shown through his role in the Comey firing

that even after he has recused himself from an investigation, he will help the President punish Justice Department officials who are pushing that investigation forward.

Maybe most disappointing, Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein—the man now responsible for the Trump-Russia investigation—has permitted himself to become a pawn in President Trump's game. His credibility and integrity may well have been irredeemably sacrificed. The only way for him to restore it now is to appoint a special prosecutor. That power is his alone. The rules and regulations of the Department of Justice not only permit it, in my view, the standards of ethics require it because he now is irrevocably conflicted.

President Trump, Attorney General Sessions, and Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein want Americans to believe Comey was fired because he publicly discussed his investigation into Hillary Clinton. That kind of statement betrays contempt for the intelligence of the American people because we remember President Trump applauding Director Comey's decision to discuss the Clinton investigation. He even used his letter firing Director Comey to publicly discuss the details of an FBI investigation, saying he has been told three times that he is not under investigation—albeit details I find very hard to believe.

He has called this investigation a charade. He has called the allegations of Russia meddling and Trump associates' collusion with it a hoax. He has belittled and demeaned not only the judges of our Federal bench, but, by implication, the hard-working men and women of the FBI who are doing an investigation which he says is “a taxpayer-funded charade.” That statement is a disservice to the FBI—a non-political, nonpartisan law enforcement agency without superior in the world. They deserve and need a special prosecutor who can lead them in this moment of crisis.

Make no mistake, we face a looming constitutional crisis. The case of *United States v. Nixon*, which involved enforcement of subpoenas against the President, is no longer a matter of idle speculation; it is a real possibility.

What the FBI also needs now are resources to make sure this investigation is conducted fairly, impartially, objectively, and independently, with sufficient agents, staff, and other support. In fact, in my view, one of the precipitating factors in the firing of James Comey was his going to the Deputy Attorney General and asking for more resources. As a prosecutor, I know resources are the lifeblood of a successful investigation. An investigation deprived of resources cannot reach a just result; it will be strangled, stifled, and stopped. And that is clearly the purpose of some in this administration, perhaps because it is coming close to people whom they want to protect.

Congress can and must use every tool at our disposal to make sure the investigation of the Trump administration's and campaign's ties to Russia and the potential ongoing coverup of those ties is affirmed. The true and independent special prosecutor is the only one who can assure. Our Intelligence Committees can produce findings and recommendations. An independent commission, which I support, can hold hearings in public and also produce a report. But only a special prosecutor can bring criminal charges and hold accountable anyone and everyone who should bear a price.

On both sides of the aisle, we have said the Russians must pay a price or they will do again in 2018 what they did in 2016, but so should the people who aided and abetted and colluded with them. If they fail to pay a price, they will do it again, too, corrupting our system, undermining the rule of law, and imperiling our democracy.

If the President continues to object to an independent investigation or special prosecutor, people of good will on both sides of the aisle must stand up to him and demand one. I am encouraged by some of what my Republican colleagues have told me over the last 24 hours.

I believe we are at a rhyming moment when the integrity of our justice system and our democracy is at stake. People, regardless of their political affiliation, owe it to our democracy to come forward, to recognize the gravity of this moment, and to stand up and speak out. I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will do so.

We may disagree about a lot of things, but on this point, we should agree fundamentally. Part of our obligation is to call before us Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein and, separately, Attorney General Jeff Sessions, as well as former FBI Director Jim Comey, to hear from them their views of this tragic and terrifying episode in our history. This firing must be a subject for our investigation. We owe it to the American people.

I thank my colleagues in advance for proving that this investigation is no charade. It is no hoax. It is deadly serious, and the failure to appoint an independent prosecutor could be deadly to our democracy.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, before us as the Senate right now, aside from issues Mr. BLUMENTHAL referred to, is the repeal and replacement of the Affordable Care Act.

I am a physician, and I have been practicing in hospitals for the uninsured for the last 25 years. I would like to in one sense say that gives me special standing to speak about this issue, but in reality, it does not.

Senator MORAN from Kansas spoke up the other day at our lunch. He said that healthcare is like no other issue.

He spoke of a friend of his approaching him at church with tears rolling down her face. Her mother had a preexisting condition, and she was so concerned that we get this right.

I don't need to say I have special standing, being a physician. We all have special standing from living, having families and friends who—sooner or later, healthcare will affect the family.

The Affordable Care Act for many is not working. Premiums are going sky high.

Two or 3 days ago, I had communication with someone from San Francisco. Her young family has a \$20,000-a-year premium, a \$6,000 deductible for each member of the family—in San Francisco, already paying so much for housing, food, and transportation, and \$20,000 on top of that for a family of relatively modest income.

Then I spoke to someone in Washington, DC. His family's premium is \$24,000; they have a \$13,000 deductible. He said: I am out \$37,000 before my insurance kicks in. I reassured him that his colonoscopy would be for free. I don't think he thought that funny.

Then a friend of mine who last year in Louisiana—his quote for a policy for himself and his wife, 60 and 61, was \$39,000 for 1 year—\$39,000 for 1 year—with a deductible.

Now we are being told there will be premium increases this coming year. In Connecticut, they just announced they are going to be 15 to 35 percent higher. In my own State, I have been told they may approach 30 to 40 percent higher, although that is not definite.

The reality is that premiums have become unaffordable. President Trump campaigned on this. There were four things he told the American people. He said he wanted to cover all, care for those with preexisting conditions, eliminate the Affordable Care Act mandates that people hate so much, and lower premiums.

I would like to say I think it is part of President Trump's intuitive genius. Whatever you say about the fellow, he certainly has an intuition sometimes about how things work. Of course, the way you would lower premiums is that you would cover all, and by covering all, you expand the risk pool, which then lowers premiums for those with preexisting conditions but keeps them lower for the rest of us.

Folks ask how you can do that without mandates, and I say you can do it through the mechanism of the Cassidy-Collins plan, the Patient Freedom Act, which is to say you have an auto-enrollment feature.

By the way, here is President Trump. He said it many times, but here he is in the Washington Post on January 15, 2017, just before he takes the oath of office:

"We're going to have insurance for everybody," Trump said. "There was a philosophy in some circles that if you can't pay for it, you don't get it. That's not going to happen with us."

You cannot have a stronger statement from a fellow who is about to rise

to be inaugurated and gives a speech in which he speaks passionately about the forgotten man and the forgotten woman. President Trump pledged to remember them.

The question is, How do you lower premiums? How do you fulfill President Trump's goals?

There are several ways to lower premiums. I just described one, where you fulfill the other parts of his contract with the voter, which is you cover all, and by doing so, you increase the size of the risk pool, and therefore you lower premiums. There is another mechanism. You can put in price transparency and do other things to lower the cost of medical care, which in turn lowers the cost of healthcare premiums. But there is one way which is not so good. One way that you can lower cost is to have a crummy policy that hardly covers anything. You think you are getting a deal in the front end because premiums are low, and then you or someone in your family gets sick, and it is not such a great deal after all.

I was asked about this on a Sunday morning show and spontaneously came up with something called the Kimmel test. Jimmy Kimmel, the late-night comedian, spoke of his son being born. We can all imagine—this happened 2 weeks ago—his child was born. I suspect somebody is videoing it. It is going to be a moment of celebration. As the child emerges and everybody wants to lean forward and hand the child to the mother and the father to hold and cuddle, instead, the doctor and the nurse notice that the child is blue—"blue" meaning he is not getting enough oxygen. It is quickly realized that something is profoundly wrong. Instead of mother and father hugging and bonding with the child, they are pushed to the side. They hear a code blue call, which means this child will die if something is not done immediately.

I was not there, but I have been in similar situations.

They are being asked to sign forms which would allow this child—their child whom they have not yet held—to be transported by helicopter across Los Angeles to have emergency surgery that day and being told that if they do not sign this form, that child will die.

Now, Jimmy Kimmel pointed out that he is a millionaire, he could afford it, but he also pointed out: Others, not so much.

I think that brings us back to what President Trump said. President Trump said:

"We're going to have insurance for everybody. There was a philosophy in some circles that if you can't pay for it, you don't get it. That's not going to happen with us."

The Jimmy Kimmel test: We will protect those with preexisting conditions, but we will do it by lowering premiums and not by giving crummy coverage but, rather, by having adequate coverage. So if our approach passes the Kimmel test, then we feel it is a way to go.

Now, how do we go from here?

We can recognize that premiums are too high for middle-class families. They can no longer afford it, and that is before the premium increases, which are about to occur.

I will also say that as to the way the Affordable Care Act was passed—not blaming or praising anyone—that only one party was engaged is not the path forward. History says that any time there is significant social legislation that has an enduring effect in the United States, both parties engage.

I want this to change. I would challenge my Democratic colleagues to become engaged. Some have said: Oh, my gosh, Republicans are doing this through reconciliation; isn't that terrible?

I would say it presents opportunity. We don't need 12 Democrats; we don't need 8 Democrats. We could have three Democrats or four Democrats. Anyone who cares enough about the people in their State and their premiums, which are rising 20 to 40 percent a year, will put aside all the pressure from a political base and say: The people of my State are more important than the political pressure I may feel. They will step forward to influence the final product.

We know that if folks come in from the other side of the aisle, we will have a different product than if it is only among Republicans. If Republicans had participated in the passage of the Affordable Care Act, we would have had something perhaps a little different than the Affordable Care Act.

I am not pointing fingers. I am just observing that it would only take three or four Democrats to break ranks, to step across the aisle, and to ask for what they would need. This is not: You come to us, and you don't get it—no. We have a meeting of the minds so that we can come to the policy that fulfills President Trump's pledge—his pledge to cover all, caring for those with preexisting conditions, eliminating mandates, and lowering premiums.

We have an incredible opportunity before us to bring relief to those middle-class couples struggling with premiums that they can no longer afford and deductibles that they will never meet. If they don't meet and can't afford them and if they do not purchase the insurance, they are being fined and are accumulating resentment toward Washington because they are stuck with this. We can address that issue and at the same time fulfill President Trump's pledge that all will have coverage.

Some said you can't get it if you can't pay, but that is not going to be the case with us. It will provide them that coverage with something that passes the Kimmel test. I look forward to working with our Senate to come to this solution.

I yield back.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. Kaine. Mr. President, I am proud to take the floor, and I am espe-

cially proud to take the floor after my colleague from Louisiana, whom I believe has offered a very good-faith proposal, both in the specifics of the bill that he has introduced but also in his encouragement that Democrats should participate together with Republicans as the Senate takes up the House-passed American Health Care Act. I do applaud my colleague, and I find much in his presentation to support. I find some points of difference, which I will get into, but much to support.

I am strongly opposed to the House-passed American Health Care Act, TrumpCare. I found that one of the sets of reasons really crystalized yesterday. The Democrats had a hearing, and we invited patients to come from around the country to talk about their healthcare experiences.

There were six witnesses in the hearing. One was a Virginian, a man named Michael Dunkley, from Alexandria. His story was a common one but a tough one. He has been the caretaker for his wife, who has had multiple sclerosis for many years and then got diagnosed with cancer. He talked about trying to deal with being a full-time caregiver for a wife with multiple sclerosis and dealing with cancer before the Affordable Care Act and the unsustainable cost that it led to with his family. But after the Affordable Care Act, he was able to afford coverage for himself and his wife.

We heard from a mother from Indiana whose daughter was born with Down syndrome and how the medical bills connected to her child's treatment forced her, first, to stop working because she needed to be a full-time caregiver. She described the pain of cuddling her newborn in her arms and going to the mailbox and pulling out a \$64,000 bill and knowing that this is what the rest of my life is going to be like and the rest of my child's life. Then she talked about how her family got relief because of the Affordable Care Act.

We heard from a witness who has multiple sclerosis, a woman who is now a substitute teacher. Because the State she lived in, Texas, didn't expand Medicaid, she had to move to another State because she couldn't afford health insurance to deal with a medical problem. So she chose to move to a State that had done Medicaid expansion, Maryland.

We heard other stories as well. These were painful stories.

(Mr. CASSIDY assumed the Chair.)

I say to the Presiding Officer, I give you credit for modesty. You are too modest. You do have an expertise in this. You do understand this. You have heard these stories before, and I had heard some of them, too, even without a medical expertise. What I found so troubling—and during the testimony of this mother from Indiana about her child with Down syndrome, I could feel tears rolling down my face—was this. I had heard stories like this before, but what struck me was that the House

voted on this bill without caring about any of these stories, without listening to any of these stories, without allowing a process to address any of these stories. I blurted out: The folks who voted for this bill in the House don't care about the challenges you are facing. They don't care about this or they would have listened to you.

I beg my Senate colleagues to treat this differently, to treat it seriously, to take these stories seriously, and to work together. I hope the Senate takes a different course on this.

Let me explain what I mean when I say the House Members who voted for this didn't care about these people and the challenges they were facing. When the House bill was taken up, there was a version of the bill taken up before March 24, and there were three hearings held. At those hearings—at two of the hearings—no patients were invited to speak. Nobody representing patients was invited to speak.

One of the hearings had one witness from the American Cancer Society and one witness who was a State insurance commissioner. Now, that bill came to nothing on March 24, and the bill was rewritten.

It was the rewritten bill that was passed by the House. There were no hearings on the rewritten bill. There were no hearings. There were no opportunities for patients to talk about the bill and what it would mean to them. There were no Democratic amendments that were accepted. No patients or providers were given any opportunity to share their concerns in a hearing or in formal discussion about the bill. No expert witnesses were allowed to testify about the bill.

The House rushed to pass the bill without a CBO score—the Congressional Budget Office—which would have said what would have been the premium effect on people, how many people would have lost insurance, and were folks with preexisting conditions going to be covered or not. The House rushed to pass it before the score came about.

When they passed it by the narrow margin of 217 to 213, they boarded a bus and went to the White House and had a big celebration. It was the kind of celebration that happens at the White House when they invite the Super Bowl winning team or the NCAA football champions to come to the White House. It was a celebration.

Imagine if you are the mom with a kid with Down syndrome and you are getting a \$64,000 bill in the mail and you are saying: This is what the rest of my life is going to be like. And the House passes a bill without listening to you, that by some estimates could take health insurance away from 24 million people and could reimpose deep penalties on folks if they have preexisting conditions. And you watch people celebrating that—celebrating it like it is a sports victory?

This is what I found so very troubling during the hearing yesterday—these

folks' stories, which are not the only stories to be told about the Affordable Care Act. There are good stories. There are challenging stories. But the stories weren't even important enough for the House to even listen to them.

I do think the Senate process should be different.

Where I am going to disagree slightly with the comments you made is that I am going to compare that process in the House to the process that was undertaken in Congress before the Affordable Care Act was passed in 2010, because sometimes it is said: Well, that was just a one-party thing.

Actually, that is not the case. In 2009, before the Affordable Care Act passed, the Senate Finance Committee held not one or two hearings. No, 53 hearings on health reform were held. The committee spent 8 days marking up the legislation, which is the longest markup in 22 years, and it considered 135 amendments.

In the Finance Committee, the then-Democratic chair, Senator Baucus, worked for months with a bipartisan group of three Democrats and three Republicans trying to find a compromise on healthcare reform. While they couldn't find a compromise ultimately on the floor vote, Democrats and Republicans wrote the bill together and considered amendments in that committee offered by both Democrats and Republicans.

The HELP Committee, where you and I serve, was every bit as active. They had an additional 47 bipartisan hearings, roundtables, and walk-throughs on health insurance. HELP considered hundreds of amendments during a monthlong markup, which is one of the longest in congressional history, and many Republican amendments were accepted as part of the process.

When the bill came from the two committees to the Senate floor in 2010, the final Senate bill that was passed in this Chamber included not one or two, not a few dozen but 147 amendments that were proposed by Republicans. This bill, the Affordable Care Act, was shaped by the Republicans.

The Republicans decided, for their own reasons, to vote against the final product, but they offered amendments in good faith—147 of them were accepted. The Senate spent 25 days consecutively in session on healthcare reform, the second longest consecutive session in history.

The House did something similar in 2009: bipartisan hearings, 100 hours of hearings, and 181 witnesses from both sides testifying. Some 239 amendments were considered, and 121 by both Democrats and Republicans were adopted.

Again, in the House on the floor, there were no House Republican votes, but the bill was shaped by Republicans, amended by Republicans. There was a process that included two parties.

I would suggest to you that the difference in the processes—an ACA process that included hearings, hearing

from patients, the opportunities to have committee hearings, the opportunities for both parties to amend—led to a situation in 2010 where many stakeholder groups supported the Affordable Care Act: the American Medical Association, the AARP, the American Hospital Association, and numerous other groups, providers, consumers, businesses, and other groups.

Compare that to what is the level of support for the bill as it passed out of the House. Patients oppose this bill: the American Association of People with Disabilities, AARP, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, the American Diabetes Association, the American Heart Association, the American Lung Association, the American Public Health Association, the American Society of Hematology, the Children's Defense Fund, Families USA, the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, the National Breast Cancer Coalition, the Muscular Dystrophy Association, the National Disability Rights Center, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, and the National Organization for Rare Disorders. All of these groups represent patients. All of these groups oppose the House bill that contained no input from patients and no meaningful bipartisan process.

Doctors and nurses oppose the House bill: the American Medical Association, the American Nursing Association, the American Osteopathic Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American College of Physicians, the American College of Rheumatology.

Hospitals oppose the House bill: America's Essential Hospitals, the American Hospital Association, and the Federation of American Hospitals.

There are groups fighting for women's health access: the National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association and Planned Parenthood.

All of these groups oppose the bill that came out of the House without patient input, without a meaningful committee process, without the ability of Democrats to offer amendments.

Mr. President, I think that points us to a lesson, and I do think it is the same lesson that you spoke about a few minutes ago. Democrats have called for a transparent and bipartisan process to engage in fixes to the Affordable Care Act. I had been on the committee with you no less than a week. I have been trying to get on the HELP Committee since I came into the Senate. I finally achieved my goal in January, and within a week or 10 days of being on committee, I led a group of 13 Democrats. We wrote to our chair, LAMAR ALEXANDER, the Finance chair, ORRIN HATCH, and the Senate majority leader, MITCH MCCONNELL, and said that we are ready to sit down and talk about improvements and fixes.

I say to the Presiding Officer, my heart soared when I read your com-

ment last week: Any final bill must fulfill President Trump's promises to lower premiums, maintain coverage, and ensure protection for those with preexisting conditions—the same items that you put up on your board just a few minutes ago—because that is the same set of three goals I have. That is the same set of three goals, I think, all my colleagues have.

If we can hold that up as the standard, we will work on a bill together, and the bill should meet three promises: to maintain coverage so people don't lose, to maintain costs so people don't pay more, and to maintain compassion so those with preexisting conditions aren't kicked to the curb. If we can find that bill, we will do it as Democrats and Republicans. We will do it in a way that we can build something that will last. I agree with you on this point.

But I deeply believe this: No bill will achieve those aims if it is purely done by one party. No bill will achieve those aims if it is cooked up and put on the floor without a meaningful committee process in HELP and Finance, without hearing from expert witnesses, without hearing from stakeholders, without hearing from patients, without hearing the kinds of stories we heard yesterday. If we wall ourselves off from the public presentation of this kind of information as we are grappling with the most important spending decision anyone ever makes in their life, as we are grappling with the largest sector of the American economy, if we just rush to get this to the floor and try to make it a one-party product, we will not achieve the three pillars that you and I share and that President Trump has promised to the American public.

So this is my hope. We want to work together, and the right way to work together is this: Send the House bill or a preferable bill, if you have it—your bill or a consensus bill that the group of 12 on the Republican side has. Put that bill in the two committees. Why not have this bill in the HELP Committee and the Finance Committee? Why not hear from patients and doctors and hospitals and nurses and insurance companies and small businesses that struggle to buy insurance for their employees? Let's hear from some expert witnesses about what they like about the status quo or like about the new proposals, what they don't like about them, and how we can fix them. Give us the opportunity to ask some questions. Give us the opportunity to offer some amendments, hopefully some bipartisan amendments, to make this better. Let's treat this at least with the seriousness it was treated in 2009.

You are right to critique that the final vote—save the vote of Arlen Specter, who at the time he voted was a Democrat—that the final vote was partisan. You are right to critique that. We would want to go beyond that, but we can't go backward. We can't eliminate the opportunity for public input, eliminate the opportunity for committee action and amendments. We

should be doing that in a full and robust way.

So I just stand on the floor today to say amen to the boards that you put up there—amen to those three pillars that should be the test of the work that we do in this body—and to pledge that if you put this in the committees where we serve and we have the opportunity to work together, that is the most natural place for us to work in a transparent and bipartisan way.

To ask Democratic Members just to cross the aisle to work on something that will be rushed to the floor with no committee process—that is not really engagement; that is not really meaningful. But putting it in committees, where we can do our work in the light of day and hear from people like Michael Dunkley and the mother from Indiana and do it with the American public watching—now that is engagement. I guarantee if we do that, we will get to a better result, a result that will be better for people, a result that will be more likely to meet your criteria and mine, and a result that will be more likely to last.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

ALL-SENATORS BRIEFINGS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, before the Senate adjourns for the weekend, I wish to address a few things related to the dismissal of FBI Director James Comey.

The story coming out of the White House about why Mr. Comey was fired continues to change and there are no good explanations for the change.

For 2 days, the White House implied that the decision to fire Mr. Comey either originated or was largely influenced by the recommendations from the Deputy Attorney General and the Attorney General. The Vice President of the United States spoke to reporters here on Capitol Hill and said that it was the President's "decision to accept the recommendation of the Deputy Attorney General and the Attorney General to remove Director Comey."

Those accounts, by the spokespeople of the President and the Vice President himself, were just blatantly and completely contradicted by the President himself on national television.

President Trump told NBC News that it was his decision to fire Mr. Comey, and he had made up his mind to do so before hearing from either the Attorney General or the Deputy Attorney General, in direct contradiction to what his own Vice President and his own press people were saying.

Well, which one was it? Did the Vice President mislead the public or did the

President? When was the decision made to fire Mr. Comey, and what was the reason? And why did it take so long for the White House to get its story straight?

These are all critical questions, and the American people deserve answers. We need to understand the true nature of the events that led to Director Comey's dismissal, why it happened, and what it means for the investigation into the potential collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia as we move forward.

This morning, I made a request of the majority leader to call an all-Senators briefing with Attorney General Sessions and Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein. Given the events of this week, and particularly after what the President said this afternoon, a briefing from these two officials before the whole Senate, where Senators from both parties can ask and get answers to the serious questions hanging over us, is imperative for this body and for the American people. The all-Senators briefing with the Attorney General and the Deputy Attorney General should be separate and partially classified, if necessary.

The need for these briefings is even greater now than it was this morning, given what the President said this afternoon. The rule of law, the separation of powers, and their strength—hallmarks of American democracy—are at stake.

Now, I have just heard from the majority leader that he will invite Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein to an all-Senators briefing next week. I asked the majority leader to do the briefing early in the week. It is a good first step, and I thank the majority leader for consenting to this request.

Mr. Rosenstein was here on the Hill today meeting with Members. He requested to meet with me, and I said I wanted to meet with him along with my 99 colleagues so Members of both parties were given the opportunity to question him. I am glad he has a willingness to come talk to Congress, and I hope he will accept our bipartisan invitation from Leader McConnell and from me to brief the entire Senate next week.

My caucus still believes that Attorney General Sessions must be made available to the Senate in a similar capacity, given his reported role in firing Director Comey and helping select his replacement. Considering his recusal from the Russia investigation, his close involvement in these events warrants the Senate's questioning as well, but I thank the majority leader for trying to set up the briefing with Mr. Rosenstein. It is very likely, I believe, that it will happen, just pending Mr. Rosenstein's consent, and I hope the majority leader soon comes to the right decision and grants our request to question Mr. Sessions as well.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

REMEMBERING LEO THORSNESS

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, I am speaking tomorrow at an Air Force ROTC commissioning ceremony at the University of Arkansas. As I have been preparing my remarks, I have been thinking a lot about the airmen who have left more than contrails behind them—the men and women who served with such distinction that we still remember them to this day, those great Americans, the heroes of the sky.

The first name that came to mind, the name that resounded louder than almost any other is the great Leo Thorsness, so you can imagine how saddened I was to hear about his passing last week. Whenever you hear such a legend has left the Earth, it is like a sudden crack of thunder in the dead of night. It wakes you up. It sobers you. It reminds you of what we have lost because Leo Thorsness was an American classic.

Born in Walnut Grove, MN, his childhood sounds as idyllic as his hometown. He joined the Boy Scouts and later rose to become an Eagle Scout. He met his wife Gaylee in the freshman registration line at South Dakota State College. They married 3 years later and had one daughter, Dawn. He joined the Air Force, went to flying school, and became a pilot.

Soon, he was a fighter pilot in both the Strategic and Tactical Air Commands. Looking back on his life, we can see Leo Thorsness was part of an era—those burly, self-confident, middle-class families who, after the Great Depression and the greatest of wars, put down roots and built the booming America of the mid to late 20th century.

Of course, Leo was not simply a part of his generation; he inspired it with his courage and self-sacrifice. For many Americans, the only number they remember from the Vietnam years is their draft number. But for Leo Thorsness, there are two numbers that stick out: 88 and 93.

It was on his 88th mission for the Air Force that he performed the noble deeds for which he would later receive the Medal of Honor. He was flying an F-105 Thunderchief with his weapons specialist, Harold Johnson. They were escorting fighter bombers targeting a North Vietnamese army barracks. They shot down a MIG, roughed up another, and hit two missile batteries. They were low on ammo and fuel, but they fought on. He continued to scare off MIGs and instructed a tanker plane to refuel another fighter. When he finally landed 70 miles south in Thailand, the fuel tank was on empty. It was a stunning act of bravery.

It was on his 93rd mission, just seven shy of completing his tour of duty,

that Leo Thorsness was shot down. He was captured and spent 6 years in the “Hanoi Hilton”—6 years in the darkness. It was there that he met his cellmate, our colleague and future Senator, JOHN MCCAIN.

Imagining 6 days in such a terrible place is more than most people can handle, never mind 6 years. But Leo Thorsness endured; he saw the mission through. When he returned in 1973, it was to an astonished and grateful nation, but the man himself was unfazed. He called his wife after being released and said: “I would have called sooner, but I’ve been all tied up.”

He later went on to serve in the Washington State Senate and run for other offices. But his legacy is not one of the titles he won; it is the example he set.

He was quite a man, Leo Thorsness. And though we have lost him, we will keep his memory for a good long time to come.

Leo Thorsness, rest in peace.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

NOMINATION OF MARK GREEN

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, as ranking member of the Appropriations Subcommittee on the Department of State and Foreign Operations, I welcome the nomination of Ambassador and former Member of Congress Mark Green to be the next Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Ambassador Green brings a wealth of experience to this important position. He has been president of the International Republican Institute since 2014. In 2013, he was president and chief executive officer of the Initiative for Global Development, and before that, he served as senior director at the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition, a network of 400 businesses, nongovernmental organizations, policy experts, and others supporting the role of development in U.S. foreign policy. He served as the U.S. Ambassador to Tanzania from 2007 to 2009. While there, he led a mission of more than 350 Americans and Tanzanians and was ultimately responsible

for some of the largest U.S. overseas development programs. Prior to his serving as U.S. Ambassador, Mark Green served four terms in the U.S. House of Representatives, representing Wisconsin’s 8th District.

Ambassador Green also served on the board of directors of the Millennium Challenge Corporation, after being appointed to that position by President Obama. He is currently on the Human Freedom Advisory Council for the George W. Bush Institute and cochairs the Consensus for Development Reform, a coalition of policy and business leaders devising new principles for making development policy more effective and growth-oriented. He is a board member of WorldTeach and a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Since 1989, as either chairman or ranking member of the subcommittee that provides the funding for USAID’s operations and programs, I know the critical role that it plays in promoting and protecting U.S. interests around the world. Its field missions are its greatest strength, and countless lives have been saved, conflicts avoided, and government institutions strengthened, thanks to the global health, social and economic development, and democracy programs administered by USAID. These programs are not charity. They are essential and complementary to the roles played by our diplomats and soldiers.

President Trump has talked about “America First.” We all want this country to be the best it can be, but slogans are not a substitute for effective policies. Creating jobs at home is not, by itself, a foreign policy. The United States cannot remain a leader in the global economy, where the gravest security problems we face can only be solved by working with other countries, if we reduce our engagement with the world. The vacuum we leave will quickly be filled by our competitors, and it will be difficult if not impossible to recover lost ground.

At a time when OMB is proposing to slash USAID’s budget and downgrade its overseas presence, the nomination of Ambassador Green is a positive signal. If confirmed, I look forward to working with him and subcommittee Chairman GRAHAM, as well as with our House appropriations subcommittee counterparts Chairman ROGERS and Ranking Member LOWEY, to ensure that USAID has the resources it needs to continue and expand its presence and impact around the world.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mrs. MCCASKILL. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for today’s vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the nomination of Robert Lighthizer to be U.S. Trade Representative, with the rank of Ambassador. I would have voted yea.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I intend to object to any unanimous consent request at the present time relat-

ing to the nomination of Courtney Elwood of Virginia to be the general counsel of the Central Intelligence Agency.

I will object because the CIA has still not responded to my letters from April 14, 2014; and April 5, 2017, requesting declassification of two congressional notifications, CNs, about whistleblower communications. In 2014, the inspector general of the Intelligence Community issued two CNs about whistleblower communications. The first, sent on March 28, 2014, had the unclassified subject line “Whistleblower Communications.” The second, sent on March 31, 2014, had the unclassified subject line “Whistleblower Communications—Clarification.” Both documents were classified Secret/NOFORN. I requested that the CNs be declassified as soon as possible. More than 3 years have passed since my initial request, and I still have not received declassified versions of the documents or an explanation of why the documents have not been declassified.

The information contained in the two CNs raises serious policy implications, as well as potential Constitutional separation-of-powers issues. The CNs do not appear to contain any information about sources or methods, and there is a strong public interest in their content. As a matter of respect, for a co-equal branch of government, my declassification request should have been processed in a timely manner. Moreover, under the executive branch’s own regulations, there are time limits that apply to processing declassification requests and classification challenges that the CIA has failed to meet.

In addition, I have requested copies of the CIA’s PPD-19 procedures and policies which allow CIA whistleblowers to seek relief from reprisal, but the CIA has refused, stating that the documents are classified and for CIA’s internal use only. PPD-19 was largely codified by the Intelligence Authorization Act, and so the CIA is also required by law to implement such a policy. It is now at issue in a Federal lawsuit challenging the CIA’s failure to adhere to its own procedures under the Administrative Procedures Act.

My objection is not intended to question the credentials of Ms. Elwood in any way. However, the CIA must recognize that it has an ongoing obligation to respond to Congressional inquiries in a timely and reasonable manner.

NATIONAL NURSES WEEK

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the invaluable work of nurses. With 3 million nurses nationwide, these men and women make up the largest providers of healthcare in the country. I am proud to acknowledge the talents and successes of these caregivers as we recognize National Nurses Week.

These dedicated health professionals provide quality care to patients every

single day. Their dedication and passion to caregiving is constantly on display, often during critical and stressful situations. The work they do helps save lives and gives reassurance to patients facing questions about their health. While on the front lines of healthcare delivery they are also frequently the first line of communication when health problems arise. These healthcare heroes wear many hats.

Providing nurses with the resources they need to deliver quality care needs to be a priority. Last week, members of the Emergency Nurses Association from Arkansas shared with me one legislative fix to improve patient care. Amending the Controlled Substance Act to allow paramedics and other emergency medical services professionals to continue to administer controlled substances like pain narcotics when allowed by State law would improve emergency outcomes, particularly in rural areas where a medical facility may be miles away. That is why I cosponsored legislation to amend the Controlled Substance Act.

Nurses are taking on more responsibilities in our evolving healthcare system in order to meet the needs of our aging population. They are being asked to do more with less and still provide the quality patient care they are known for.

If you are like me and have been cared for by a nurse, you understand the important work they do. I am grateful for the care they provide and proudly support nurses as a cosponsor of the Senate resolution recognizing National Nurses Week.

70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LISTER-KNOWLTON VFW POST 9389

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States traces its roots to 1899, when veterans returning home after the Spanish-American War joined together to support each other and to advance the ideals of our Nation. Nearly a half century later, on May 11, 1947, veterans returning to my hometown after World War II joined together for the same noble causes. Today I wish to commemorate the 70th anniversary of Lister-Knowlton VFW Post 9389 in Caribou, ME.

The name of Post 9389 signifies a fundamental purpose of the VFW: to honor those who gave their lives for freedom. Private Evan Lister and CPL Edward Knowlton were both born in Caribou, both served in the U.S. Army during World War II, and both made the ultimate sacrifice when they were each just 23 years old. Neither will ever be forgotten. Nor will we ever forget those who returned home but who have since passed into history. It is sobering to note that today there is just one living charter member of the Caribou post, WWII veteran David O. Michaud, and we honor him for his service.

In 2003, the Northern Maine Veterans Cemetery was dedicated in Caribou.

This final resting place for our heroes was the result of many years of hard work and determined advocacy by committed citizens, with our VFW post leading the way. My father, Donald Collins, a decorated World War II veteran, was among those who made that enduring tribute possible.

A defining quality of America's veterans is that they continue to serve long after their service in uniform ends. Members of the Caribou VFW and the auxiliary are part of a vast network that assists the patriots serving today, fellow veterans, and their families. They generously support a wide range of community projects, charitable endeavors, and youth programs. One of the most important contributions made by the VFW is its focus on educating our young people on American values. Each year, more than 175,000 high school and middle school students nationwide join in the VFW's Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen essay competitions. That wonderful level of participation is always matched by the quality of the submissions. Last year, at the State VFW convention, I was delighted to congratulate the two Maine winners, including Corrine Corbin of Caribou, sponsored by our hometown VFW.

I am proud to be a life member of the Caribou VFW Post auxiliary, which was also chartered in 1947. Working side by side, the VFW and auxiliary honor America and the men and women who defend us. It is a pleasure to congratulate the Lister-Knowlton VFW Post 9389 on this landmark anniversary.

Mr. KING. Mr. President, today I wish to honor the Caribou VFW on their 70th anniversary. The Caribou VFW, known as the Lister-Knowlton VFW Post 9389, was founded on May 11, 1947, by veterans returning home from World War II. The post was named after two brave Caribou natives, Private Evan Lister and CPL Edward Knowlton, who served their country during World War II and made the ultimate sacrifice when they were only 23 years old. Their dedication and service to our country will never be forgotten.

I also want to recognize the ladies auxiliary, who will celebrate their 70th anniversary on June 19. The ladies auxiliary was formed by women who were mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters of veterans who served in our Armed Forces and whose service made them eligible for the Veterans of Foreign Wars. In addition, the auxiliary includes female veterans who served abroad in times of war.

While I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge all of the veterans for their service, I want to make special note of David O. Michaud. David is a World War II veteran and the sole surviving charter member of the Lister-Knowlton VFW Post 9389. I would also like to honor Josephine Bell, an original charter member of the VFW Ladies Auxiliary in Caribou who is still with us today.

These 70th anniversaries, of both the Lister-Knowlton VFW post and the ladies auxiliary, provide occasion to celebrate the storied tradition of service, both past and present, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars represent. Each of us is forever indebted to those members of the VFW who served in the protection of the United States and to their families for the care and support they have provided. We are also grateful to the VFW for their continued service, supporting those veterans who have returned, advocating on their behalf at all levels of government, and organizing a variety of community building projects.

In closing, I am glad to join with the members of the VFW and the ladies auxiliary in Caribou in honoring this 70th year of working on behalf of veterans, the State of Maine, and our great Nation.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNIZING THE RUTGERS UNIVERSITY-NEWARK DEBATE TEAM

• Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the Rutgers University-Newark senior debate team of Nicole Nave and Devane Murphy as they celebrate back-to-back national championships with their victories at the National Debate Tournament, NDT, and the Cross Examination Debate Association National Tournament this year.

Last year, I stood on this floor to recognize Rutgers University-Newark's victory at the National Debate Tournament at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. This year, I am extremely proud to be here once again congratulating Rutgers-Newark on another collegiate National Debate Tournament championship. This is truly an impressive and historic accomplishment. It is only the second time in collegiate debate history that the same team has won both national championships in a single year.

In addition to the national championship, Nicole Nave and Devane Murphy were also honored individually at the National Debate Tournament this year. Devane was named the NDT's top speaker, and Nicole received the NDT second place speaker award. At this year's Cross Examination Debate Association National tournament, Nicole earned a record-shattering five perfect scores out of eight. Nicole and Devane, the two best collegiate debaters in America, use their life experiences to shape their uniquely Rutgers-Newark debate style, one which has led the Rutgers University-Newark team to remain ranked as the No. 1 team in the Nation.

The Rutgers University-Newark debate team, founded in 2008, is sponsored by the school of public affairs and administration and the office of the chancellor, Newark. Under the leadership of

Rutgers University–Newark chancellor Nancy Canton, debate director Christopher Kozak, and debate team head coach Willie Johnson, the team has been ranked first in the Northeast for 4 consecutive years. In the 2014–2015 year, the team was ranked 14th nationally. Nicole, Devane, and the rest of the Rutgers University–Newark debate team have brought pride to my beloved city of Newark and to the entire State of New Jersey. I am honored to join with these outstanding students, their families, and the Rutgers University–Newark community in celebrating another landmark achievement in the Rutgers University–Newark debate team's history.

Thank you.●

TRIBUTE TO JACK YOUNG

● Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, this week, I have the distinct honor of recognizing Jack Young, a U.S. Army veteran and teacher at Harlem Public Schools. Whether serving our Nation inside an Abrams tank or serving his local community at the front of a classroom, Jack has represented the character of the Treasure State in both settings.

After graduating from high school, Jack enlisted in the Army. He served our Nation on Active Duty for 4 years and completed two overseas assignments. Not long after finishing his military service, Jack attended Montana State University—Northern and trained to become a teacher. In 2006, he began teaching at Harlem Public Schools. Since arriving in Blaine County, he has grown into a fixture in the local community. Jack has taught history and government to both high school and junior high school students. During the warm months, you will find Jack in the classroom teaching summer school, helping students rise to the next level academically. For the past 4 years, he has taught government courses at the Aaniiih Nakoda College. Earlier in his teaching career, Jack was an assistant coach for the Harlem Wildcats football team. Through all seasons and across multiple academic levels, Jack has served his fellow Montanans by teaching the historic context and hard-earned value of our constitutional system of government.

Jack has excelled in his transition from a tanker to a teacher. The best part of Jack's story is he loves what he does and plans to continue doing it for a long time. Montanans are grateful for folks like Jack who make our communities stronger. Thank you, Jack, for your service, and I wish you the best in the years to come.●

TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL "MIKE" MUNOZ

● Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, today I recognize the hard work of my Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee law clerk Mike Munoz. Mike hails from Avon, CT, and will

soon graduate from Georgetown University Law Center. As a law clerk on the Commerce Committee, Mike assisted the Consumer Protection, Product Safety, Insurance, and Data Security Subcommittee. He is a dedicated worker who has been committed to getting the most out of his clerkship. I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to Mike for all of the fine work he did for the committee and wish him continued success in the years to come.●

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF HELLS CANYON PRESERVATION COUNCIL

● Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the 50th anniversary of the Hells Canyon Preservation Council. Without the council and its courageous work, there might be multiple dams despoiling one of the deepest gorges in North America rather than the wondrous Snake Wild and Scenic River flowing through the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area and Hells Canyon Wilderness.

The story of the creation of the council begins in 1967 as a conflict simmered for a long time over damming Hells Canyon, an 85-mile gorge on the Oregon-Idaho border. That fight appeared to solely turn on the question of who would get to build the dam in Hells Canyon, not whether to build the dam on what is often called the Grand Canyon of the Snake River. Washington Public Power Supply System, WPPSS, delivered public power and Idaho Power Company was a private power supplier. In 1964, the Federal Power Commission ruled in favor of the private power, WPPSS appealed, and their dispute went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

On June 5, 1967, Justice William O. Douglas read the Court's majority opinion from the bench. The Supreme Court ruled neither for public power nor for private power. Instead, it remanded the entire case back to the Federal Power Commission with instructions to consider whether the best dam in Hells Canyon might be no dam at all. The Supreme Court ruled that the case wasn't about public versus private power. Instead, Justice Douglas said: "Nor is the test solely whether the region will be able to use the additional power. The test is whether the project will be in the public interest. And that determination can be made only after an exploration of all issues relevant to the 'public interest,' including future power demand and supply, alternate sources of power, the public interest in preserving reaches of wild rivers and wilderness areas, the preservation of anadromous fish for commercial and recreational purposes, and the protection of wildlife."

Within 2 months, the debate over the best use of Hells Canyon shifted from what entity would dam it, to the core question of whether to dam it. Six members of the Idaho Alpine Club met in a Boise living room and formed the

Hells Canyon Preservation Council. Joining that group was a young Seattle lawyer and Sierra Club attorney named Brock Evans.

Brock soon fell in love with Hells Canyon and northeastern Oregon and vowed that the Snake River would not be dammed. The Hells Canyon Preservation Council soon grew to have more than 2,000 members in all 50 States. Its chapters included one in the little town of Enterprise in Wallowa County, home to half of Hells Canyon. The national attention attracted media personality Arthur Godfrey and folk singer Pete Seeger, along with national environmental groups who wanted to save the great gorge.

Their efforts also attracted the attention of Oregon Senator Bob Packwood. From his first day in office, Senator Packwood championed the preservation of Hells Canyon.

It took 8 years of hard work by Brock, assisted by Doug Scott, a native Oregonian who replaced Brock as the Sierra Club's Northwest Representative—and so many others inside and outside of Congress; yet that sweat equity paid off in 1975 when Congress passed the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area Act.

I am proud to say that Brock and his wife, Linda, have recently returned to Oregon, having moved to La Grande, near his beloved Hells Canyon.

Oregonians and all Americans are indebted to the Hells Canyon Preservation Council and its allies, including Senator Packwood and many other fine Oregonians, for their tireless advocacy for preserving wild nature for the benefit of all of us today as well as future generations.

Thanks to their work, we Oregonians today consider the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area, the Hells Canyon Wilderness, and the Snake Wild and Scenic River to be an irreplaceable part of our priceless natural legacy, and we would no more think of damming Hells Canyon than of draining Crater Lake.●

RECOGNIZING FISHERS JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

● Mr. YOUNG. Mr. President, I wish with great pride today to honor Fishers Junior High School of Fishers, IN, for their impressive victory in the We the People National Invitational held in Washington, DC, on April 28 through May 2, 2017. In light of Indiana's proud tradition of civic engagement, it gives me great pleasure in honoring these students and future leaders of our communities. These individuals embody the fundamental purpose of the Constitution and live by its principles both inside and outside the classroom.

The We the People National Invitational comprised of eight teams from across the United States. The qualified contestants included middle and high school groups from Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Maine, Ohio, Oregon, Virginia, and of course Fishers Junior High

School, representing the Hoosier State. To be in the running for the national invitational, student contestants must display their knowledge, as well as current political awareness and constitutional acumen by holding mock or simulated congressional hearings at the local and State level during the current school year. Once qualified, during the final competition in DC, similar to the simulated congressional hearings held at the local level to be one of the eight finalists, each class went before a group of judges. Teams were allocated a 4-minute introductory statement and then faced pressing questions pertaining to existing constitutional subjects as well as past from the judges. The winning team must show an exceptional understanding of constitutional principles applicable to historical and current issues.

For the record, I want to acknowledge each student of the Fishers Junior High School team who participated in achieving first place in the We the People National Invitational: Makenna Adams, Izzy Alexander, Addi Arena, Blake Backes, Jackson Bakle, Mackenzie Boyer, Milan Colzani, Joe Conde, Kamryn Dean, Grace DeLong, Sydney Doyle, Madison Ewart, Faith Farrell, Maya Fotedar, Abby Funk, Ray Gao, Abigail Garrison, Meg Gibson, Liberty Hayes, Morgan Joiner, Braden Kirkendall, Shea Koley, Ben Lilley, Tatiyana Lockridge, Olivia Lux, Ali Mohamed, Cassidy Robertson, Gracey Scholl, Kara Van Dyke, Jonah VanDer Kamp, and Bailey Wilson. Furthermore, I would like to recognize Mr. Mike Fassold for his efforts to teach and implement a passion for constitutional and civic engagement in his students.

Again, congratulations to the Fishers Junior High School team for their extraordinary victory, and thank you for representing your fellow Hoosiers. It is truly an honor to have brilliant students in the State of Indiana who inspire others with their knowledge, hard work, and dedication.●

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

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.)

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. THUNE, from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, without amendment:

S. 174. A bill to amend the Communications Act of 1934 to consolidate the reporting obligations of the Federal Communications Commission in order to improve congressional oversight and reduce reporting burdens (Rept. No. 115-61).

By Mr. GRASSLEY, from the Committee on the Judiciary, without amendment:

S. 139. A bill to implement the use of Rapid DNA instruments to inform decisions about pretrial release or detention and their conditions, to solve and prevent violent crimes and other crimes, to exonerate the innocent, to prevent DNA analysis backlogs, and for other purposes.

S. 583. A bill to amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to authorize COPS grantees to use grant funds to hire veterans as career law enforcement officers, and for other purposes.

By Mr. ALEXANDER, from the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute:

S. 934. A bill to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to revise and extend the user-fee programs for prescription drugs, medical devices, generic drugs, and biosimilar biological products, and for other purposes.

By Mr. ALEXANDER, from the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, without amendment:

S. 1028. A bill to provide for the establishment and maintenance of a National Family Caregiving Strategy, and for other purposes.

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. RUBIO (for himself, Mr. TESTER, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. NELSON, Mr. MCCAIN, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. MORAN, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. HELLER, and Mr. FLAKE):

S. 1094. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the accountability of employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. BURR (for himself and Mr. TILLIS):

S. 1095. A bill to ensure that the Secretary of the Interior collaborates fully with State and local authorities and certain nonprofit entities in managing the Corolla Wild Horse population on Federal land; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

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

S. 1096. A bill to amend and enhance certain maritime programs of the Department of Transportation, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. DAINES:

S. 1097. A bill to postpone the deadline for the completion of the conversion of certain military technician (dual status) positions to positions of civilian employment by the Federal Government, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mr. FLAKE:

S. 1098. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to prohibit the Secretary of Veterans Affairs from employing individuals who have been convicted of a felony and medical personnel who have had their medical licenses or credentials revoked or sus-

pended, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. CARPER (for himself, Mr. GRASSLEY, and Mrs. McCASKILL):

S. 1099. A bill to provide for the identification and prevention of improper payments and the identification of strategic sourcing opportunities by reviewing and analyzing the use of Federal agency charge cards; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Ms. BALDWIN (for herself and Mr. CASSIDY):

S. 1100. A bill to amend title 46, United States Code, to authorize appropriations for the program to provide assistance for small shipyards and maritime communities through fiscal year 2020, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. CASEY (for himself, Mr. HELLER, and Mrs. SHAHEEN):

S. 1101. A bill to eliminate discrimination and promote women's health and economic security by ensuring reasonable workplace accommodations for workers whose ability to perform the functions of a job are limited by pregnancy, childbirth, or a related medical condition; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. MARKEY (for himself, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. MERKLEY, Ms. WARREN, Mr. REED, Mr. BOOKER, and Mr. BROWN):

S. 1102. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for an investment tax credit related to the production of electricity from offshore wind; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. JOHNSON (for himself and Mrs. McCASKILL):

S. 1103. A bill to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to require the Secretary of Homeland Security to issue Department-wide guidance and to develop training programs as part of the Department of Homeland Security Blue Campaign, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. MANCHIN (for himself, Mr. WICKER, Mr. SCHATZ, Mrs. FISCHER, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. PETERS, and Mr. MORAN):

S. 1104. A bill to require the Federal Communications Commission to establish a methodology for the collection by the Commission of information about commercial mobile service and commercial mobile data service, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. MANCHIN (for himself, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. BROWN, Mr. CASEY, Mr. WARNER, Mr. FRANKEN, Mrs. McCASKILL, Mr. NELSON, Ms. WARREN, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. KAINE, Mr. DONNELLY, Ms. HEITKAMP, Mr. PORTMAN, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. HEINRICH, Mr. BURR, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. BOOKER, and Ms. DUCKWORTH):

S. 1105. A bill to amend the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 to transfer certain funds to the 1974 United Mine Workers of America Pension Plan, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. MERKLEY (for himself and Mrs. CAPITO):

S. 1106. A bill to designate the same individual serving as the Chief Nurse Officer of the Public Health Service as the National Nurse for Public Health; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. COONS (for himself, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. NELSON, Mr. CARPER, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, and Mr. HATCH):

S. 1107. A bill to amend title 28, United States Code, to authorize the appointment of

additional bankruptcy judges, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. TESTER (for himself, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. MORAN, Mr. UDALL, Mr. CARPER, and Mr. GARDNER):

S. 1108. A bill to amend title 4, United States Code, to provide for the flying of the flag at half-staff in the event of the death of a first responder in the line of duty; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. MERKLEY (for himself, Mr. BURR, Ms. BALDWIN, and Ms. COLLINS):

S. 1109. A bill to amend title VIII of the Public Health Service Act to extend advanced education nursing grants to support clinical nurse specialist programs, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Ms. DUCKWORTH (for herself, Mrs. FISCHER, and Mrs. MCCASKILL):

S. 1110. A bill to amend title 49, United States Code, to provide for private lactation areas in the terminals of large and medium hub airports, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mrs. SHAHEEN:

S. 1111. A bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to improve the provision of services and benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs for veterans who experience domestic violence or sexual assault, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Ms. HEITKAMP (for herself and Mrs. CAPITO):

S. 1112. A bill to support States in their work to save and sustain the health of mothers during pregnancy, childbirth, and in the postpartum period, to eliminate disparities in maternal health outcomes for pregnancy-related and pregnancy-associated deaths, to identify solutions to improve health care quality and health outcomes for mothers, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

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

S. 1113. A bill to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to ensure the safety of cosmetics; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN (for herself, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. MARKEY, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Ms. HARRIS, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. BOOKER, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. COONS, Mr. BENNET, Mr. MERKLEY, Ms. HASSAN, Mr. REED, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. DURBIN, and Mr. LEAHY):

S. 1114. A bill to nullify the effect of the recent Executive order laying a foundation for discrimination against LGBTQ individuals, women, religious minorities, and others under the pretext of religious freedom; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mrs. MCCASKILL, Mr. COTTON, and Mr. FRANKEN):

S. 1115. A bill to improve access to prescription drugs; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

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

S. 1116. A bill to amend the Native American Business Development, Trade Promotion, and Tourism Act of 2000, the Buy Indian Act, and the Native American Programs Act of 1974 to provide industry and economic development opportunities to Indian communities; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

By Mr. TOOMEY (for himself, Mr. MANCHIN, Mr. ROUNDS, and Mr. MENENDEZ):

S. 1117. A bill to protect the investment choices of investors in the United States, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

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

S. 1118. A bill to reauthorize the North Korea Human Rights Act of 2004, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

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

By Mr. LANKFORD (for himself, Mr. COONS, and Mr. RUBIO):

S. Res. 162. A resolution reaffirming the commitment of the United States to promoting religious freedom, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 59

At the request of Mr. CRAPO, the name of the Senator from Alabama (Mr. STRANGE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 59, a bill to provide that silencers be treated the same as long guns.

S. 109

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from Alabama (Mr. STRANGE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 109, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for coverage under the Medicare program of pharmacist services.

S. 139

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the name of the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 139, a bill to implement the use of Rapid DNA instruments to inform decisions about pretrial release or detention and their conditions, to solve and prevent violent crimes and other crimes, to exonerate the innocent, to prevent DNA analysis backlogs, and for other purposes.

S. 340

At the request of Mr. CRAPO, the name of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 340, a bill to clarify Congressional intent regarding the regulation of the use of pesticides in or near navigable waters, and for other purposes.

S. 394

At the request of Mr. ROUNDS, the name of the Senator from Iowa (Mrs. ERNST) 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. 422

At the request of Mrs. GILLIBRAND, the name of the Senator from Colorado

(Mr. GARDNER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 422, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify presumptions relating to the exposure of certain veterans who served in the vicinity of the Republic of Vietnam, and for other purposes.

S. 479

At the request of Mr. BROWN, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 479, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to waive coinsurance under Medicare for colorectal cancer screening tests, regardless of whether therapeutic intervention is required during the screening.

S. 534

At the request of Mrs. FEINSTEIN, the names of the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) and the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN) were added as cosponsors of S. 534, a bill to prevent the sexual abuse of minors and amateur athletes by requiring the prompt reporting of sexual abuse to law enforcement authorities, and for other purposes.

S. 540

At the request of Mr. THUNE, the name of the Senator from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 540, a bill to limit the authority of States to tax certain income of employees for employment duties performed in other States.

S. 583

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the names of the Senator from Iowa (Mrs. ERNST) and the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY) were added as cosponsors of S. 583, a bill to amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to authorize COPS grantees to use grant funds to hire veterans as career law enforcement officers, and for other purposes.

S. 654

At the request of Mr. TOOMEY, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 654, a bill to revise section 48 of title 18, United States Code, and for other purposes.

S. 682

At the request of Mrs. MURRAY, the name of the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. MCCASKILL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 682, a bill to amend title 31, United States Code, to require the Secretary of the Treasury to provide for the purchase of paper United States savings bonds with tax refunds.

S. 782

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the names of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) and the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) were added as cosponsors of S. 782, a bill to reauthorize the National Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Program, and for other purposes.

S. 829

At the request of Mr. MCCAIN, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 829, a bill to reauthorize the Assistance

to Firefighters Grants program, the Fire Prevention and Safety Grants program, and the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response grant program, and for other purposes.

S. 867

At the request of Mr. DONNELLY, the names of the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL) and the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) were added as cosponsors of S. 867, a bill to provide support for law enforcement agency efforts to protect the mental health and well-being of law enforcement officers, and for other purposes.

S. 870

At the request of Mr. WICKER, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. 870, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to implement Medicare payment policies designed to improve management of chronic disease, streamline care coordination, and improve quality outcomes without adding to the deficit.

S. 872

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HEINRICH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 872, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to make permanent the extension of the Medicare-dependent hospital (MDH) program and the increased payments under the Medicare low-volume hospital program.

S. 926

At the request of Mrs. ERNST, the names of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON) were added as cosponsors of S. 926, a bill to authorize the Global War on Terror Memorial Foundation to establish the National Global War on Terrorism Memorial as a commemorative work in the District of Columbia, and for other purposes.

S. 993

At the request of Mr. LEE, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 993, a bill to prohibit the Federal Communications Commission from reclassifying broadband Internet access service as a telecommunications service and from imposing certain regulations on providers of such service.

S. 1034

At the request of Mrs. FEINSTEIN, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1034, a bill to improve agricultural job opportunities, benefits, and security for aliens in the United States, and for other purposes.

S. 1055

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1055, a bill to restrict the exportation of certain defense articles to the Philippine National Police, to work with the Philippines to support civil society and a public health approach to substance abuse, to report on Chinese

and other sources of narcotics to the Republic of the Philippines, and for other purposes.

S. CON. RES. 12

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. GARDNER) was added as a cosponsor of S. Con. Res. 12, a concurrent resolution expressing the sense of Congress that those who served in the bays, harbors, and territorial seas of the Republic of Vietnam during the period beginning on January 9, 1962, and ending on May 7, 1975, should be presumed to have served in the Republic of Vietnam for all purposes under the Agent Orange Act of 1991.

S. RES. 156

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the names of the Senator from Wisconsin (Ms. BALDWIN) and the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 156, a resolution recognizing National Foster Care Month as an opportunity to raise awareness about the challenges of children in the foster-care system, and encouraging Congress to implement policy to improve the lives of children in the foster-care system.

S. RES. 161

At the request of Mr. DONNELLY, the names of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HEINRICH) and the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 161, a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate that defense laboratories are on the cutting-edge of scientific and technological advancement, and supporting the designation of May 18, 2017, as "Department of Defense Laboratory Day".

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. DAINES:

S. 1097. A bill to postpone the deadline for the completion of the conversion of certain military technician (dual status) positions to positions of civilian employment by the Federal Government, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Armed Services.

Mr. DAINES. 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. 1097

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 "Armed Forces Reserve and National Guard Dual-Status Review and Modernization Act".

SEC. 2. POSTPONEMENT OF DEADLINE FOR COMPLETION OF CONVERSION OF CERTAIN MILITARY TECHNICIAN (DUAL STATUS) POSITIONS TO POSITIONS OF CIVILIAN EMPLOYMENT BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following findings:

(1) A September 2013 study conducted by a federally funded research and development center found that 21 percent of the military

technician (dual status) positions are administrative in nature—the largest category as a percentage of military technician (dual status) positions. The study recommends investigation on whether "some Dual Status MilTech positions supporting general administration functions could be converted to Title 5 Federal civilian full-time support positions without compromising unit readiness". The study further recommends investigation on whether "it is more appropriate to use military full-time support for other reasons (such as currency in military operations and training and augmentation)".

(2) Section 1053 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016 directs the conversion of not fewer than 20 percent of all military technician positions to positions of Federal civilian employment under title 5, United States Code, by January 1, 2017. Section 1084 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 extends the deadline for that conversion from January 1, 2017, to October 1, 2017.

(3) The Department of Defense submitted a report on the management of military technicians in December 2016 that finds that 12.6 percent of the military technician (dual status) positions were administrative in nature, and recommended a conversion of 4.8 percent of such positions to positions of Federal civilian employment.

(4) The Chief of the National Guard Bureau testified before Congress in April 2017 that a conversion of 20 percent of military technician (dual status) positions to positions of Federal civilian employment would degrade readiness, but that a lower number could be converted with minimal impact. The Chief of the National Guard Bureau also testified that the Department of Defense had not conducted an analysis of the associated costs and benefits of a conversion of 20 percent of military technician (dual status) positions to positions of Federal civilian employment.

(b) POSTPONEMENT OF DEADLINE FOR COMPLETION OF CONVERSION.—Notwithstanding the deadline otherwise specified in paragraph (1) of section 1053(a) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016 (10 U.S.C. 113 note) for the completion of the conversion of military technician positions as described in that subsection, the deadline for the completion of such conversion shall be 180 days after the date on which the Secretary of Defense transmits to Congress under paragraph (6) of subsection (c) the report of the working group required by paragraph (5) of that subsection.

(c) WORKING GROUP ON FULL TIME SUPPORT OF THE RESERVE COMPONENTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—There shall be established in the Department of Defense a working group to be known as the "Working Group on Full Time Support of the Reserve Components" (in this subsection referred to as the "working group").

(2) CO-CHAIRS.—The co-chairs of the working group shall be the following:

(A) The Director of the Army National Guard.

(B) The Director of the Air National Guard.

(C) The Chief of the Army Reserve.

(D) The Chief of the Air Force Reserve.

(3) MEMBERS.—The members of the working group shall include the co-chairs of the working group and such other personnel of the Department of Defense as the Secretary shall appoint from among organizations and elements of the Department with an interest in full time support of the reserve components of the Armed Forces, including the National Guard Bureau and the Adjutants General of the States.

(4) DUTIES.—The working group shall undertake a comprehensive review of full time

support of the reserve components of the Armed Forces, including the following:

(A) An identification of the missions, purposes, and objectives of military technicians (dual status) in support of an operational reserve force.

(B) A review of the posture of current military technician (dual status) positions, and of their current role in meeting the objectives identified pursuant to subparagraph (A).

(C) An analysis of potential restructurings of the workforce of military technicians (dual status) in order to identify a restructuring that fully aligns military technician (dual status) positions with objectives for full time support of the reserve components.

(D) An identification of the military technician (dual status) positions whose conversion to positions of Federal civilian employment under title 5, United States Code, would best ensure the achievement of objectives for full time support of the reserve components.

(E) An assessment of the impact on the readiness of the National Guard for domestic operations of the conversion of positions identified pursuant to subparagraph (D) as described in that subparagraph.

(F) An assessment of costs and potential savings associated with the conversion of positions identified pursuant to subparagraph (D) as described in that subparagraph.

(5) REPORT TO SECRETARY OF DEFENSE.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the working group shall submit to the Secretary of Defense a report on the comprehensive review undertaken pursuant to paragraph (4). The report shall include the following:

(A) A comprehensive description of the review and the results of the review.

(B) The percentage of military technician (dual status) positions whose conversion to positions of Federal civilian employment under title 5, United States Code, would best ensure the achievement of objectives for full time support of the reserve components of the Armed Forces as an operational reserve.

(C) A transition plan for implementing a new force structure for full time support of the reserve components, including for the conversion of positions as described in subparagraph (B) which mitigates any risks to readiness identified pursuant to paragraph (4)(E).

(D) Recommendations for the reform of personnel management policy for military technician (dual status) positions that address—

(i) the eligibility of military technicians (dual status) for civilian retirement upon retirement from the Armed Forces; and

(ii) the process for appealing employment decisions.

(E) Recommendations for reforms of compensation and benefits policies for military technician (dual status) positions in order to provide military technicians (dual status) with parity in compensation and benefits with other Federal civilian employees of the Department of Defense under title 5, United States Code.

(6) TRANSMITTAL OF REPORT TO CONGRESS.—The Secretary shall transmit to the congressional defense committees the report of the working group under paragraph (5), together with such discussion and recommendations in connection with the report as the Secretary considers appropriate. The Secretary shall publish the report, and any such discussions and recommendations, in the Federal Register at the time of transmittal.

(7) CONGRESSIONAL DEFENSE COMMITTEES DEFINED.—In this subsection, the term “congressional defense committees” has the meaning given that term in section 101(a)(16) of title 10, United States Code.

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, under current law, twenty-percent of our military dual-status technicians in the National Guard, Army Reserve, and Air Force Reserve will become federal civilians on October 1st. This will leave the state Governors to respond to wildfires, floods, and other natural disasters with twenty-percent fewer people. The benefits of this conversion are unclear. In fact, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau testified that no formal analysis has been conducted as to whether there is any benefit at all. It seems prudent to me to take a pause, bring all of the affected stakeholders together, and figure this problem out before we take any irreversible action. Today, I'm introducing the “Armed Forces Reserve and National Guard Dual-Status Review and Modernization Act,” to do exactly that.

As I've studied this situation, I understand there are a number of valid concerns involved. The current statutory construct for dual-status military technicians is nearly 50 years old and the role of the Reserve components has changed dramatically just in the past 15 years, let alone the last half-century. I agree we should update the statute to better meet the needs of the total force and my bill addresses this concern. Similarly, many Guardsmen and Reservists feel that personnel management practices under this aging construct doesn't fit the needs of a 21st century workforce. My bill addresses those concerns as well.

Most importantly, the bill ensures that there is no adverse impact to the Guard's ability to respond to domestic emergencies on October 1st, by postponing that date until Department of Defense leadership conducts a thorough, comprehensive review on the requirements of a 21st Century total force, and how our current structure should be aligned to meet those requirements. This will allow Congress to make an informed and measured judgement on how to update current law. I urge my colleagues to give this matter their full consideration and support.

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

S. 1113. A bill to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to ensure the safety of cosmetics; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, today I am introducing a bill to improve the safety oversight of products that affect every single family on a daily basis. Whether it's shampoo or shaving cream, lotion or make-up, hair dye or deodorant, personal care products are a part of our everyday lives. I thank Senator COLLINS for her support and hard work on this important legislation.

However, even though our bodies absorb many chemicals in these products through our skin and even our nails, their ingredients are largely unregulated. It's time to modernize our safety

oversight and correct this problem. Most people assume these products have up-to-date federal oversight, but in reality the Food and Drug Administration's authority to do so is sorely outdated—in fact, it's based on a law from the 1930s that has changed little over the past eight decades. There are questions about the safety of some ingredients in these products, which not only leads to health concerns but also causes uncertainty for companies working to innovate and expand domestically.

Over the last several years, Senator COLLINS and I have worked with a wide group of stakeholders that represent both industry and consumer groups. Those stakeholders include small and large companies, doctors, consumer advocates, patient advocates, scientists, and the Food and Drug Administration. Together, we have drafted bipartisan legislation that puts commonsense measures in place and has the support of both industry and consumer and health organizations.

The Personal Care Products Safety Act sets up a process for reviewing the safety of ingredients in personal care products. The bill requires manufacturers to register so consumers know who produces personal care products sold in the United States.

The legislation also modernizes authority for the Food and Drug Administration so the agency is better equipped to deal with public health concerns, such as being able to recall contaminated products if companies choose not to do so voluntarily. The updated system is completely paid for by industry fees. Companies will provide information about the ingredients in their products to the Food and Drug Administration, and attest to their safety. Many companies manufacturing in the United States currently follow strict voluntary standards for manufacturing under proper conditions, but the lack of federal standards leaves this to chance. Under this legislation, the agency sets Good Manufacturing Practice guidelines to ensure companies meet minimum requirements. Companies will also need to report adverse health events related to their products to the Food and Drug Administration.

Last year, we heard about WEN shampoo, a product that was causing significant hair loss. Among those affected were children, including a little girl named Eliana who lost all of her hair after using WEN. She shared her story with my office and several of my colleagues. What's shocking is that the company received more than 20,000 reports of this happening, but under current law WEN had no legal obligation to tell the Food and Drug Administration. Under this legislation, companies would be required to do so.

Another example of concern is the ongoing use of formaldehyde, also called methylene glycol when mixed with water, in the popular hair treatment called a Brazilian blowout. Formaldehyde is released into the air during

this beauty treatment. It can cause shortness of breath, headaches, and dizziness in the short-term. Over the long-term, formaldehyde has been linked to cancer.

I am also greatly concerned about the effect on the health of salon professionals who are constantly exposed to a variety of chemicals daily. In addition to reviewing the safety of chemicals they may be exposed to, this legislation also ensures that the salon products they use are properly labeled with ingredients and warnings.

The Food and Drug Administration will be required to evaluate at least five ingredients per year for safety and use in personal care products. In addition to reviewing the latest scientific and medical studies, the agency will consider how prevalent the ingredient is, the likely exposure, adverse event reports, and information from public comments. Public input will be critical to the review process. There will be opportunities for companies, scientists, consumer groups, medical professionals, and members of the public to weigh in on, not only the safety of particular ingredients but also, which ingredients should be a priority for review. After review, the Food and Drug Administration may deem an ingredient safe, unsafe, or safe under certain uses or under certain conditions. The agency will also have the authority to require warning labels as needed for certain ingredients and limit the amount of an ingredient that may be used in personal care products. For example, some ingredients may only be safe for use by adults or when used by professionals in a salon or spa setting.

The Personal Care Products Safety Act is the result of many diverse groups working together with the common goal of modernizing the federal oversight system to ensure the safest products possible are on the market. We have worked closely with small businesses to ensure that the legislation recognizes their needs and supports their growth. This legislation incorporates changes to increase flexibility for small businesses, particularly those making low-risk products. The bill recognizes the unique nature of the handmade cosmetic industry and meets their needs to encourage growth and innovation.

I am pleased that the major organizations representing these small businesses (Handmade Cosmetic Alliance, Coalition of Handcrafted Entrepreneurs, Handcrafted Soap and Cosmetic Guild), have said that the provisions within this legislation “afford producers in the handmade cosmetic industry the opportunity to continue to innovate, grow, create jobs and produce safe, quality handmade products in communities across the nation.”

I am pleased to have the support of a broad coalition, including Environmental Working Group, Society for Women's Health Research, Endocrine Society, National Alliance for Hispanic

Health, Au Naturelle, Coalition of Handcrafted Entrepreneurs, Handcrafted Soap and Cosmetic Guild, Handmade Cosmetic Alliance, Herbal Lifestyle, The Honest Company, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, Babo Botanicals, Goddess Garden Organics, Caregiver Action Network, March of Dimes, EO Products, Eclair Naturals, Juice Beauty, National Psoriasis Foundation, and the following major companies that together represent over 99 brands of products: The Estee Lauder Companies, Johnson and Johnson, Procter and Gamble, Revlon, Unilever, and L'Oreal.

I urge my colleagues to join us in supporting this much needed legislation to modernize our outdated regulatory system for personal care products, and I hope the Senate will pass this long overdue legislation this year.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN (for herself, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. MARKEY, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Ms. HARRIS, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. BOOKER, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. COONS, Mr. BENNET, Mr. MERKLEY, Ms. HASSAN, Mr. REED, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. DURBIN, and Mr. LEAHY):

S. 1114. A bill to nullify the effect of the recent Executive order laying a foundation for discrimination against LGBTQ individuals, women, religious minorities, and others under the pretext of religious freedom; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President. I rise today to join with my colleagues in introducing a rescission bill to nullify President Trump's Executive Order 13798, titled “Promoting Free Speech and Religious Liberty.” Unfortunately, this Executive Order does not live up to its title. Instead, it furthers the aim of this administration to diminish critical protections for women, minorities, and LGBT Americans.

I am deeply troubled by Section 3 of the Order, which paves the way for the Trump administration to roll back protections to preventive health services under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), especially for women and LGBT individuals. Through new regulations issued pursuant to this Order, companies could use “conscience-based” objections to deny their employees coverage for preventive services that they have a right to under the ACA. This means that because of their employers' moral objection, women could lose access to contraception, and those in the LGBT community could lose access to essential services, including cancer screenings or counseling for domestic violence.

I respect that we all have religious and moral convictions, but it is wrong to put employers' religious views above individuals' rights to access basic health care. I also note that this section of the Order invites members of the President's Cabinet to eliminate an accommodation President Obama ad-

ministration made allowing religiously affiliated nonprofit employers, including large universities and hospital systems, to opt out of providing their employees with contraception coverage based on religious objections.

Importantly, women working for objecting employers can receive contraception coverage directly through their insurance companies. Seven federal courts of appeals have upheld this accommodation in the face of religiously based challenges. But with this Order, the President signals that his administration is likely to do away with the accommodation, which would deny contraception access to women whose bosses want to make this important and intimate decision for them.

The Order also directs the Attorney General to issue guidance to all agencies on “religious liberty protections in Federal law.” This language is concerning as it opens the door for the Attorney General to eliminate protections in federal rules and regulations for LGBT individuals and minorities. The Attorney General's duty is to enforce and protect the civil rights and constitutional freedoms of all Americans. This Order's direction for guidance that could change the implementation of critical rules affording equal treatment for all in America is a disturbing step backward. For example, there are rules protecting same-sex spouses' ability to visit their partners in the hospital and ensuring that LGBT individuals have equal access to federally funded emergency housing. Under this provision, however, new religious exemptions may be implemented to weaken these protections. Shelters could turn LGBT families away because of who they love. As the Human Rights Campaign has described, this provision opens the door to a “license to discriminate” even where basic services funded with government dollars are at stake.

This Executive Order opens the door to weakening the enforcement of longstanding tax laws against individuals, houses of worship, and other religious organizations engaging in political campaign speech. Notably, the Johnson Amendment was proposed by Lyndon B. Johnson in 1954 and is part of our tax code. It prohibits 501(c)(3) tax-exempt entities, including churches, from engaging in political campaign activity on behalf of candidates. The Johnson Amendment does not bar nonpartisan voter education and registration activities, which are important to a strong democracy, nor does it prohibit speech on moral issues.

The President has promised to repeal the Johnson Amendment. Doing so could have a significant impact on political campaign fundraising and would change the current tax consideration for certain political contributions. While repeal of the Johnson Amendment is something only Congress has the power to do, this Executive Order clearly indicates the administration's intention to undermine the separation

between tax-exempt charities and religious organizations and political campaign activity in the tax code.

It remains to be seen whether the President and the administration will implement this Order in ways that will realize our worst fears about the kind of discrimination it could enable. But we know for certain that this Order represents a disturbing statement of principles and values. Instead of seeking even greater protections from discrimination, this administration has set the stage to undermine protections, especially for women and LGBT individuals. That is not what our country stands for.

Mr. President, I strongly urge my colleagues to join me in supporting the bill I am introducing today to nullify this troubling Executive Order.

Thank you. I yield the floor.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 162—RE-AFFIRMING THE COMMITMENT OF THE UNITED STATES TO PROMOTING RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Mr. LANKFORD (for himself, Mr. COONS, and Mr. RUBIO) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 162

Whereas the United States Congress has a proud history of promoting internationally recognized human rights;

Whereas religious freedom is a fundamental human right of all people;

Whereas the free exercise of religion must stand for the right to practice any faith or to choose no faith at all;

Whereas every individual's rights to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion is guaranteed under the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted at Paris December 10, 1948, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted at New York December 16, 1966, which recognize, "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.";

Whereas, during his 1941 State of the Union address, President Franklin D. Roosevelt noted the "Four Freedoms" that the world should be founded upon, including the "freedom of every person to worship God in his own way—everywhere in the world";

Whereas, according to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), abuses committed by governments and non-state actors has increased and the incarceration of prisoners of conscience remains widespread;

Whereas, according to the latest Pew Research Center's Study of Global Restrictions on Religion, which surveyed 2015, an estimated 79 percent of the world's population lives in countries where freedom of religion and conscience is highly restricted, either by the government or social groups;

Whereas the 2017 report produced by USCIRF recommended that the Department

of State designate the following countries as Countries of Particular Concern: Burma, Central African Republic, China, Eritrea, Iran, Nigeria, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam;

Whereas, in the same report, USCIRF categorized as Tier 2 violators, meaning violations engaged in or tolerated by the government are serious and characterized by at least one of the elements of the 'systematic, ongoing, and egregious' Country of Particular Concern standard, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Cuba, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Laos, Malaysia, and Turkey;

Whereas USCIRF also recommended that the Department of State designate the following non-state actors as entities of particular concern: the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the Taliban in Afghanistan, and al-Shabaab in Somalia;

Whereas, according to the Pew Research Center Study, the two geographic regions with the highest government restrictions continue to be the Middle East-North Africa and the Asia-Pacific;

Whereas Congress has recognized that Christians, Yezidis, Shi'a, Turkmen, Shabak, Sabeen-Mandean, Kaka'i, and other religious and ethnic minorities in Iraq and Syria have faced genocide and other crimes against humanity perpetrated by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and that ISIL seeks to eradicate the communities of these minorities;

Whereas Egyptian Coptic Christians have been repeatedly targeted and their aggressors have gone unprosecuted, including two suicide bombings conducted by ISIL that killed 44 people at Coptic churches on Palm Sunday 2017 and an attack in December 2016 that killed 29 and injured numerous other Coptic worshippers, many of whom were women and children;

Whereas, according to USCIRF, Rohingya Muslims and other religious and ethnic minorities, including Christians, in Burma have faced ongoing persecution from state and non-state actors for decades, including incidents of intimidation and violence; the forced relocation and destruction of religious sites; violent attacks by mobs and the military; sexual violence and trafficking in persons, and an ongoing campaign of coerced conversion to Buddhism;

Whereas, according to USCIRF's most recent annual report, conditions for freedom of religion or belief in China continue to decline, with authorities targeting anyone considered a threat to the state, including religious believers, and Chinese authorities arrested Christians for displaying the cross in their homes and printing religious materials, threatened parents for bringing their children to church, and blocked them from holding certain religious activities;

Whereas, according to USCIRF, the Government of Eritrea continues to target Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians and Jehovah's Witnesses, suppresses the religious activities of Muslims, dominates the internal affairs of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Eritrea, and has engaged in the torture of religious prisoners;

Whereas apostasy and blasphemy laws are routinely used across the Middle East and North Africa to intimidate and punish minority faiths and those who would leave Islam;

Whereas, according to Human Rights Watch, in Pakistan, Christians, Hindus, and Ahmadis are often the victims of violent extremists; forced conversion and marriage of Christian and Hindu girls and young women remains a systemic problem; and blasphemy laws are often used as an excuse to settle personal scores or stir up religious animosity

against marginalized religious minorities, resulting in a climate of fear and a chilling effect on religious expression;

Whereas, according to the Department of State's 2015 International Religious Freedom Report, the Government of Iran continues to repress religious minorities, including Bahá'ís, Christians, Sunnis, Sufis, Yarsanis, and Zoroastrians, by raiding religious gatherings services, arresting and imprisoning worshipers and religious leaders, imprisoning educators, confiscating properties, and executing dissidents;

Whereas, according to the Department of State's 2015 International Religious Freedom Report, the Government of Sudan has systematically targeted the Christian community, prosecuting Christian pastors on trumped-up charges, confiscating Christian-owned properties, banning the construction of new Christian houses of worship, destroying numerous religious facilities throughout the country, and targeting human rights defenders for legally representing the Christian community;

Whereas, according to the February 2014 report of the United Nations Commission of Inquiry on the Human Rights Situation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), there is "an almost complete denial of the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion," and the Government of the DPRK "considers the spread of Christianity a particularly serious threat" and enforces severe punishments for the practice of Christianity;

Whereas the global religious freedom crisis we are experiencing today has created millions of victims and undermines liberty, prosperity, and peace in places vital to United States national interests—posing direct challenges to United States interests in the Middle East, Russia, China, and sub-Saharan Africa;

Whereas the absence of fundamental human rights, including religious freedom, contributes to persecution of minorities, religious extremism, terrorism, and instability;

Whereas there is greater peace, political and social stability, economic development, democratization, and women's empowerment when human rights, including religious freedom, are protected and advanced; and

Whereas Congress recently recognized, with broad bipartisan support, in the Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act (Public Law 114-281), enacted on December 16, 2016, that because the promotion of international religious freedom protects human rights, advances democracy abroad, and advances United States interests in stability, security, and development globally, the promotion of international religious freedom requires new and evolving policies, and diplomatic responses that are drawn from the expertise of the national security agencies, the diplomatic services, and other governmental agencies and nongovernmental organizations, and are coordinated across and carried out by the entire range of Federal agencies: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) reaffirms the commitment of the United States to promoting religious freedom as a fundamental human right and calls on the President and the Secretary of State, in accordance with the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-292), as amended by the Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act (Public Law 114-281), to strengthen United States foreign policy on behalf of individuals persecuted in foreign countries on account of religion;

(2) calls on the President, the Secretary of State, and the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom to develop an action plan on international religious

freedom and to integrate that plan into United States diplomatic, development, and national security strategies;

(3) in accordance with section 106 of the International Religious Freedom Act (22 U.S.C. 6415), calls on the President, in collaboration with the Secretary of State, the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, and the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, to develop a strategic plan to direct grants funded by the United States Government towards civil society that are implementing innovated programs in key countries to train and work with local religious leaders of all religious communities, including minorities, on the importance of pluralistic societies, rights guaranteed under international law, and reporting mechanisms available to them within international institutions;

(4) urges the Secretary of State to implement the requirements of section 103 of the Frank Wolf International Religious Freedom Act (Public Law 114-281) and develop a training curriculum for all American diplomats in international religious freedom policy;

(5) urges the President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and other relevant agencies to develop a comprehensive response to protect the victims of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes and to provide humanitarian, stabilization and recovery assistance to all individuals from religious and ethnic groups so effected in Iraq and Syria;

(6) calls on the President and the Secretary of State to reestablish the Religion and Foreign Policy Working Group within the Department of State's Federal Advisory Committee established by the previous administration, bringing together experts from government, universities, religious and other nongovernmental organizations to develop an effective multiyear plan to address religious persecution globally and protect and promote international religious freedom; and

(7) calls on the President, the Secretary of State and the United States Trade Representative to ensure that trade negotiations include religious freedom conditions as mandated by the Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act of 2015 (title I of Public Law 114-26).

NOTICES OF INTENT TO OBJECT TO PROCEEDINGS

I, Senator CHUCK GRASSLEY, intend to object to proceeding to the nomination of Courtney Elwood, of Virginia, to be General Counsel of the Central Intelligence Agency, dated May 11, 2017.

I, Senator RON WYDEN, intend to object to proceeding to the nomination of Sigal Mandelker, of New York, to be Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Crimes, dated May 11, 2017.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I have 8 requests for committees to meet during today's session of the Senate. They have the approval of the Majority and Minority leaders.

Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committees are authorized to meet during today's session of the Senate:

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY

The Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, May 11, 2017 at 9:30 a.m., in 328A Russell Senate Office Building, in order to conduct a hearing entitled "Pesticide Registration under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act: Providing Stakeholders with Certainty through the Pesticide Registration Improvement Act."

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The Committee on Armed Services is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, May 11, 2017, at 9:30 a.m., in open session, to receive testimony on Cyber Policy, Strategy, and Organization.

COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING AND URBAN AFFAIRS

The Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, May 11, 2017 at 10 a.m. to conduct a hearing entitled "The Status of the Housing Finance System After Nine Years of Conservatorship."

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

The Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions is authorized to meet in executive session during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, May 11, at 9:30 a.m. in SD-106.

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

The Committee on the Judiciary is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate, on May 11, 2017, at 10 a.m., in SD-226 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS

The Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate Thursday, May 11, 2017 at 10:30 a.m. in 428A Russell Senate Office Building to conduct a hearing entitled "Nomination of Althea H. Coetzee to be Deputy Administrator of the Small Business Administration."

COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence is authorized to meet during the session of the 115th Congress of the U.S. Senate on Thursday, May 11, 2017 from 10 a.m., in room SH-216 of the Senate Hart Office Building to hold an open hearing entitled "Worldwide Threats."

COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence is authorized to meet during the session of the 115th Congress of the U.S. Senate on Thursday, May 11, 2017 from 1:30 p.m., in room SH-219 of the Senate Hart Office Building to hold a closed hearing.

PROVIDING FOR STAYS DURING A PERIOD THAT THE MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD LACKS A QUORUM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Com-

mittee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be discharged from further consideration of S. 1083 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The clerk will report the bill by title. The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1083) to amend section 1214 of title 5, United States Code, to provide for stays during a period that the Merit Systems Protection Board lacks a quorum.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The bill (S. 1083) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 1083

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. STAYS BY MSPB DURING PERIODS WITH NO QUORUM.

Section 1214(b)(1)(B) of title 5, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by inserting "(i)" before "The Board may"; and

(2) by adding at the end the following: "(ii) If the Board lacks the number of members appointed under section 1201 required to constitute a quorum, any remaining member of the Board who was appointed, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, shall, upon request by the Special Counsel, extend the period of any stay granted under subparagraph (A)."

ORDERS FOR MONDAY, MAY 15, 2017

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 3 p.m., Monday, May 15; further, that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and morning business be closed; further, that following leader remarks, the Senate proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the Rosen nomination; further, that the time until 5:30 p.m. be equally divided in the usual form; finally, that notwithstanding the provisions of rule XXII, the pending cloture motions ripen at 5:30 p.m., Monday.

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

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL MONDAY, MAY 15, 2017, AT 3 P.M.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate,
at 5:50 p.m., adjourned until Monday,
May 15, 2017, at 3 p.m.

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

DAVID J. KAUTTER, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT
SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY, VICE MARK J. MAZUR.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

BROCK LONG, OF NORTH CAROLINA, TO BE ADMINIS-
TRATOR OF THE FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
AGENCY, DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY, VICE
WILLIAM CRAIG FUGATE, RESIGNED.

CONFIRMATION

Executive nomination confirmed by
the Senate May 11, 2017:

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

ROBERT LIGHTHIZER, OF FLORIDA, TO BE UNITED
STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE, WITH THE RANK OF
AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY.

NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by
the Senate: