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Senate

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

PRAYER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Today's opening prayer will be offered by T.F. Tenney, bishop emeritus of the United Pentecostal Church International in Alexandria, LA.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Mr. President, Members of the Senate, may the Lord be with you. Let us bow our heads in reverence to His presence.

God, our help in ages past, be our comfort still. Thank You for this great, great Nation and its foundation of "one Nation under God, indivisible." Thank you, Lord, that we can emphasize "indivisible."

Thank You for the liberty, justice, and freedoms that we enjoy. We pray for all who walk these hallowed Halls where life-changing and world-changing decisions are made.

Bless this austere gathering of men and women chosen by You and the American people to serve us all. Give them wisdom to acknowledge You first in all they do.

Give them grace, as has been extended to them. Guide them, O Holy Spirit. Guide them, O Holy Spirit. Fill them and this Chamber with Your presence and fill these Halls with Your glory.

When they leave today, may they say we have not just been in the presence of men, but we have been in the presence of God.

Now, in the Name of the One I trust, Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, fill this place, Holy Spirit. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Repub-

lic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). The Senator from Louisiana.

WELCOMING THE GUEST CHAPLAIN

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, may I briefly acknowledge and thank Pastor and Bishop Tenney for being here.

Today is his 83rd birthday. As he told me, he has been pushing 80, but now he pulls it. He has blessed many people. He is an anointed man of God whom many others have looked toward for guidance, as a man who by his life and by his words guides them to a deeper relationship with God.

On behalf of our entire Senate, I extend our thanks to Bishop Tenney for being here today. Thank you.

I yield back.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

LEGISLATION BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday the Senate voted overwhelmingly to take the next step in the 21st Century Cures Act, bipartisan legislation to bolster medical innovation.

This legislation promotes critical investments in research and treatment development. It helps cut through unnecessary regulations that would hinder the development of cures while also protecting safety. It builds upon the progress of innovative therapies and regenerative medicine.

This legislation puts patients first, it helps strengthen the kind of research and treatments needed to cure the most devastating diseases, and it includes provisions to help enhance mental health programs and to provide funding to help fight opioid abuse.

I have heard from health professionals across my State who have expressed the impact this legislation can make, from the Kentucky Hospital Association to the University of Kentucky, our State's largest research university.

This bill, the U.K. president says, reflects the "growing support from Congress for increased investment in research that addresses the compelling questions of our day." I will be pleased to welcome U.K. President Capilouto to the Capitol this morning. He says Cures is one example of how the university will be better equipped "to improve the lives of those in our Commonwealth."

We know this bill wouldn't have been possible without Chairman ALEXANDER's ceaseless efforts, alongside Ranking Member MURRAY, to drive it forward.

We thank them both, as well as Members such as Senator CORNYN, Senator HATCH, and Senator CASSIDY, who have all endeavored to make the bill the strongest it could be.

I also recognize my friend Vice President BIDEN—who joined us yesterday—for his efforts to include his Cancer Moonshot issue in the package. This is an issue that hits close to home for the Vice President, as we all know. He has been a leading voice in supporting efforts to strengthen cancer research and to find a cure. I am pleased we will pass this legislation soon so we can begin to put its provisions to work on behalf of American families.

On the other important issues before the Senate, I have spoken with the Speaker on a number of occasions about an issue facing coal miner retirees, such as those I represent in Kentucky, and have insisted that the CR include a provision to address that issue so these retirees don't lose their health care benefits at the end of the year. We hope to have a final bill to share with Members soon, and we look

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



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forward to turning to it as soon as possible after House action. I will have more on that later.

We are also working to wrap up a number of conference reports, including for the Defense authorization bill and the Water Resources Development Act.

Last night I took the next step on the Defense conference report so we can pass it this week. This legislation will provide more of the tools service-members need to take on national security challenges, help strengthen our military posture, and support our men and women in uniform with the benefits and pay raises they have earned.

I hope the Senate will also take the next step soon on the Water Resources Development Act conference report. This water resources conference report will invest in our Nation's waterways infrastructure, enhance commerce, and support safe and reliable water sources to prevent future situations, such as the one we saw in Flint, MI. To that point, this bill also includes assistance for families such as those in Flint who have already been impacted by lead poisoning.

TRIBUTE TO DAN COATS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, we all remember where we were on September 11, 2001. The man we honor today certainly does. He was in Berlin. He had only just begun his second day as Ambassador to Germany, and then everything changed.

Planes smashed into the World Trade Center. Terrorists attacked the Pentagon, where his son-in-law worked. Thankfully, his family emerged unbroken that day. Others were not so fortunate.

Ambassador COATS found himself thrown into a role he couldn't have foreseen a day earlier, a role in which he would excel but one that would forever change him. Those who know DAN COATS say that day in September affected him profoundly. It shook him as a father, it sharpened him as a policymaker, and it clarified the stakes and his sense of responsibility.

He may not have known it then, but he would feel the tug of that responsibility many years later and answer the call.

Senator COATS had enjoyed a successful congressional career when he decided to retire in 1998. He earned a reputation for working hard, getting things accomplished, becoming an indispensable member of his conference. In fact, after DAN announced his decision not to seek reelection, then-Majority Leader Trent Lott rang him up and said: "You can't leave," Lott recalled saying. "I can't go forward in the Senate without you."

DAN's success was no accident. He learned the legislative ropes working for an up-and-coming Congressman named Dan Quayle. He applied that knowledge as he progressed from Quayle's staffer to Quayle's successor, first in the House, then in the Senate.

This was evident whether DAN was refocused on rebuilding the military after the Cold War, bringing opportunity to low-income families and children, even dissecting the finer points of American garbage policy—yes, garbage policy.

Toward the beginning of DAN's time in the Senate, Hoosier landfills were filling with New Jersey trash, and Hoosiers were fed up. So in came DAN with a war cry—"Don't dump on us!"—and just the right blend of determination, legislative know-how, and humor to capture the attention of colleagues and the hearts of constituents.

Some were unamused in DC or Trenton, but back in Indiana, Hoosiers were over the Moon. For many, their first introduction to this plucky new Senator came through his famous Senate trash ad, the Coats for Senate commercial, which featured a cigar-chomping garbageman from Jersey, earned DAN a place in the hallowed halls of campaign legend—and perhaps a ticket back to the Senate.

While Senator Lott may not have been able to persuade DAN to run for reelection 8 years later, he did offer this prophetic statement as he bid him farewell:

[Dan Coats] is leaving the Senate, but he is not leaving us.

I have a feeling that he is going to have a real influence in many ways for the rest of his life, and he is going to stay close to all of us.

How right he was.

Fast forward to just over a decade later, former Senator COATS looked out and saw a country in crisis, adrift on the world stage, stagnant at home, and sliding into despair. DAN was deeply unsettled. He shared his concerns with his wife Marsha. He realized he had two choices. He could sit back and watch or he could do something.

DAN COATS chose to do something. His election was hardly a sure thing. He pulled through anyway. When he returned to the Capitol, he put his head down and he got right to work. DAN can be a man of few words. He doesn't always feel the need to speak up, but when he does, people pay attention. It is a true mark of distinction in a body such as this with its big egos and sharp elbows.

People listen to this former Ambassador when he explains the ins and outs of foreign policy. People listen to this veteran of previous health care debates when he dissects the problems of ObamaCare.

When this fiscal expert shares his waste of the week, people pay attention. It is how we learned taxpayer dollars were being spent on Swedish massages for bunny rabbits. It is how we discovered taxpayer money was being wasted to determine whether "hanger," that is "hunger" plus "anger," is a real thing.

Senator COATS knew he wasn't going to solve all of our Nation's problems as one Senator in one term, but he understood the important contributions he

could make. He also recognized his responsibility to make them. In the process, he cemented a legacy that will long outlast him in the Senate. It will certainly continue on in my office. My own chief of staff, Sharon Soderstrom, is a Coats alum. Speaker RYAN's chief of staff, Dave Hoppe, is another Coats alum. The list of Coats staffers who have gone on to achieve great things—from former White House chief speechwriter Michael Gerson to incoming Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb—is as long as it is impressive.

I know DAN is looking forward to spending more time at Wrigley Field after he retires. Here is the tweet DAN sent out last month: "A century in the making, we finally made it. What a great day to be a Cubs fan."

It is hard to overstate the importance of the moment for him. I mean, this is a guy who spent part of his honeymoon—his honeymoon—at Wrigley Field. So I wonder if maybe, just maybe, he was able to see a little of himself in his favorite team—maybe in a guy like fellow Indiana University Hoosier Kyle Schwarber—a standout player who stepped away from the game for a season and then came back and picked right up where he left off without a hitch, knocking it out of the park just when his team needed him most.

DAN promises he is not coming back a third time. We will see. It is obvious DAN never needed the office or the title—not the first time, not the second time, not a third time.

That said, I know DAN isn't going to stop caring. I know he isn't going to stop working. So we are going to keep the DAN COATS "bat signal" plugged in. Should the people call out for a hero yet again, I hope our friend will suit up one more time because, if nothing else, we are really going to miss him.

So let us recognize and congratulate Senator COATS for his many years of service. Let us wish him well in his latest retirement, and let me personally thank him for his wise counsel and trusted friendship.

I will miss you, my friend.

TRIBUTE TO MARK KIRK

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, Senator MARK KIRK has never been one to be intimidated by a challenge. He is willing to work hard even when the going gets tough. He never shies away from a tough debate, and he always comes prepared. He has been defying the odds for a long time and inspiring others along the way.

Nearly 5 years ago, Senator KIRK suffered a debilitating stroke—one that threatened to end his Senate service nearly as soon as it had begun. In the blink of an eye, KIRK went from juggling constituent meetings and committee hearings to lying in a hospital bed wondering if he would ever walk again or talk again or read again.

If Senator KIRK had decided to just quit the Senate and focus on his recovery, no one would have blamed him.

But he didn't do that. He never lost hope. He never gave up. He set his sights on getting back to work for the people of Illinois and the Nation. That is exactly what he did.

We were there to witness his triumph several months later. Cane in hand, a smile on his face, JOE MANCHIN to one side, JOE BIDEN to the other, one foot in front of the other, Senator MARK KIRK climbed and climbed and climbed. He ascended each of those 45 Capitol steps to the top of this Chamber as we all cheered him on.

MARK could rest assured no one was going to let him fall that day. And Senator MANCHIN could rest assured that he wouldn't have to go another day waiting for his buddy to return.

Days after MARK's stroke, Senator MANCHIN hopped on a flight to Chicago to check on his friend in person. He saw firsthand the many challenges KIRK had to overcome in recovery. But he never doubted MARK's will, determination, or desire to get back to work.

KIRK, he said, is like the Energizer Bunny. He just keeps going and going and going.

MANCHIN and KIRK might seem like an unconventional pair. One is a Democrat, the other a Republican. The West Virginian is an outdoorsman, the Illinois Senator is a gamer. Senator MANCHIN is a mountaineer, and Senator KIRK ascends skyscrapers.

But as the senior Senator from West Virginia put it, they "just clicked from day one" and quickly became the best of friends. Now they go boating together. They meet for lunch nearly every Thursday. And they support each other. The support of good friends like Senator MANCHIN has been critical to Senator KIRK's dramatic recovery.

He has found support in other places, too, including the mailbox. A few weeks after his stroke, Jackson, a 9-year-old fellow stroke survivor from Illinois, wrote Senator KIRK to share his own story and some words of encouragement. "Do not give up on yourself," Jackson wrote. "All the hard work is worth it."

"P.S.," he said, "I think kids should get paid to go to school."

The pair quickly became pen pals and even picked up a new joint sport of tower climbing in their rehabilitation.

Senator KIRK calls Jackson his personal hero. Last year, he invited him to visit Washington and be his guest at the State of the Union. To hear KIRK tell it, he may have never made it back for that address at all without Jackson's support and kind words.

I know the support he received from his fellow home State Senator didn't go unnoticed either. After MARK's stroke, Senator DURBIN visited KIRK's staff, offering to help out however he could.

Senator KIRK's story reminds us that the Senate can be more than just a place of work, it can actually be a family. In his own words, "The things that divide us in politics are infinitesimal

compared with the dignity of our common humanity." It is a powerful message, and I think it is one we can all learn from.

Senator KIRK said that America's men and women in uniform represent "the greatest force for human dignity on Earth." He is right. And the work he has done to help us meet the obligation our Nation has to military families and our veterans will endure beyond his term.

MARK KIRK, a veteran himself, understands the sacrifices our servicemembers and their families make each day on our behalf. He knows they deserve our full support, not only when they are on Active Duty but also after their tours are complete.

That is why he has worked to help guarantee the quality of health care that our heroes are counting on. It is why he has worked to help eliminate corruption within the VA so that our veterans receive timely care as well.

He has proven himself as a leader on national security issues too. He understands the value of our alliances and worked to strengthen them, especially with Israel.

He has a clear-eyed view of our adversaries too and has never been afraid to speak out or take action, from North Korea to Iran. When it comes to Iran specifically, Senator KIRK was the tip of the spear on this issue, bringing attention to the threat of Iran's aggressive behavior and pushing for legislation to help hold Tehran accountable.

He has long been an advocate for critical Iran sanctions like those extended just this past week, even when the administration pushed back and even when Democratic colleagues pushed back too. He doesn't back down, and thanks to efforts like his, we were able to see the legislation through.

So, yes, Senator KIRK may be leaving the Senate, but he has cast a long shadow here. And he is not done yet. We know he will not stop looking out for our country. We know he will not stop advocating for stroke survivors. We know he is not going to stop. He will just keep going and going and going as he always has.

Senator KIRK reminds each of us that it is possible to persevere through even the most difficult of obstacles life presents. So, today, we thank him for the impact he has made on this body, for the inspiration he has been to so many, and for the years he has dedicated to serving the people of Illinois.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip is recognized.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, has the Chair announced the business of the Senate?

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

TSUNAMI WARNING, EDUCATION, AND RESEARCH ACT OF 2015

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the House message to accompany H.R. 34, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

House message to accompany H.R. 34, an act to authorize and strengthen the tsunami detection, forecast, warning, research, and mitigation program of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and for other purposes.

Pending:

McConnell motion to concur in the amendment of the House to the amendment of the Senate to the bill.

McConnell motion to concur in the amendment of the House to the amendment of the Senate to the bill, with McConnell amendment No. 5117, to change the enactment date.

McConnell amendment No. 5118 (to amendment No. 5117), of a perfecting nature.

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

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

DEPARTING SENATORS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, let me say at the outset that I took the floor last week and said a few words in tribute and friendship to my colleague, Senator KIRK. I am glad to hear the majority leader's statement this morning. It was spot-on, and it captured his public spirit, as well as his personal strength, that has brought him to this moment in history. I have been honored to serve with him for the last 6 years.

I would say to my colleague Senator COATS from Indiana: We served together in the House, in the Senate, and I actually visited him when he was an ambassador representing the United States in Germany. It is an amazing public career on his part, and I wish him the very best for whatever the future holds for him.

DACA

Mr. President, I wish to tell a story about an extraordinary young woman whom some of you may know. Her name is Laura Alvarado. When she was 8 years old, Laura was brought to the United States from Mexico. She grew up in Chicago in my home State of Illinois.

In high school, she was an extraordinary student and was involved in extracurricular and volunteer activities. She was a member of the National Honor Society. She played soccer, tennis, basketball, and was a member of student government, the school newspaper, the chess club, the yearbook club, and many more. She decided to go to Northeastern Illinois University. She worked two jobs while she was going to school because she didn't qualify for any Federal assistance to go to college.

In 2006, she graduated with honors from Northeastern. Her major was justice studies. But then she was stuck

again. Her ambition in life was to become a lawyer, but she couldn't pursue her dream. It took her 6 years. In 2012, President Obama established DACA, an Executive action which said to Laura and thousands just like her: You are in a special category. You were undocumented in America, but you were brought here as a child. You didn't make the decision to come to this country; your family did. So we are going to give young people like Laura a chance, on a temporary basis, if they will pay a filing fee of almost \$500, submit themselves to a criminal background check to make certain they are no threat to anyone in this country, we will give them a 2-year status where they cannot be deported and they can work in America.

Laura applied. There were people who were cautioning her: Be careful. If you identify yourself as undocumented to this government, somebody might use it against you someday. But Laura, who aspired to be a lawyer, decided to follow the law, register, pay her fee, go through the background check, and try to get the status of DACA. She received it. And because of it, she was allowed to apply and be accepted at Southern Illinois University School of Law at Carbondale.

In law school, she was an outstanding student again. She won the moot court competition. She was selected for the Order of Barristers, a legal honor society.

This spring, 10 years after she graduated from college, Laura received her law degree. Over the summer she passed her bar exam, and just last month she received her Illinois law license, which she is holding here proudly.

Laura never gave up on her dream of becoming a lawyer, but it is a dream that never would have happened were it not for President Obama's Executive action, the Executive action that didn't give her a free pass to law school—just the opposite. It said to her: If you are accepted into law school, the government will not pay you a penny to help with your education. You have to go out and work for it. She did.

Now we face a question with a new President coming in who says he wants to abolish the DACA that made Laura eligible to go to law school. He wants to abolish the status where these young people, brought as babies, toddlers, into this country are not subject to deportation and can work for a living. If that is abolished, then Laura, despite all of her hard work, all of her education, all of her achievements in life, faces deportation from this country.

Laura said she wants to use her law degree to help people who don't have a fighting chance without lawyers who are more focused on service than on money. We are better if Laura is here as a lawyer practicing in America. We are certainly better in Illinois to have someone with a law license willing to give back to our State.

Now the choice is up to Congress. Are we going to step in and give Laura the chance she asked for to prove herself again as she has so many times in her young life? I am glad to say that LINDSEY GRAHAM, the Senator from South Carolina, and I are joining in an effort to draw up legislation to achieve that goal and at least to give these DACA-eligibles a temporary reprieve so that if there is an elimination of this Executive action, we don't eliminate the protection that keeps them here in the United States and where they cannot be deported and they have a chance to work. That is something we need to do—not just for Laura but for 744,000 other young people as well who grew up in this country and just deserve a chance to make this a better nation.

TRIBUTE TO BARBARA MIKULSKI

Mr. President, I join my colleagues in saluting the public life of Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI. Before I do that, I want to thank a woman who is not here. She was a Catholic nun and the debate coach for Senator MIKULSKI when she was in high school at the Institute of Notre Dame, an all-girls Catholic high school in Baltimore, the same school NANCY PELOSI graduated from.

As a young BARBARA MIKULSKI was preparing to debate a particularly tough opponent, this nun, her debate coach, told her: "You can do it, Barb—get out there and roll those Jesuit boys!"

I went to a Jesuit college and law school, and I am proud and relieved to report that I never had to face BARBARA MIKULSKI in that kind of debate. I have rarely found anybody who can stand up to her in a debate. She can still "roll those Jesuit boys," or anyone else who tries to stand in the way of helping women, children, seniors, or advancing fairness.

BARBARA MIKULSKI has been my colleague for 20 years, my friend, the chairwoman of my Appropriations Committee and the ranking member, and so many times an inspiration.

As most of my colleagues know, my first job was working in the Senate as an intern, myself, in the office of Senator Paul Douglas of Illinois. Like BARBARA MIKULSKI, Paul Douglas was a champion for the underdog, and he was a pit bull when it came to protecting the American taxpayers.

Every year, the University of Illinois chooses a leader of uncommon decency and courage to receive the Paul H. Douglas Award for Ethics in Government. This year, I was honored to present that award on behalf of the University of Illinois and in the name of Paul Douglas to BARBARA MIKULSKI of Maryland. I know Senator Douglas would have been thrilled that she is carrying on that same public service tradition.

Some day—and I hope and trust I will live to see it—the ultimate glass ceiling will break, and there will be a woman elected President of this country. When that historic day comes, we

can be sure that Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI will have had a hand in bringing it about.

Many of my colleagues have spoken about the long list of times she has already broken glass ceilings herself: BARBARA MIKULSKI, first woman ever elected statewide in her beloved State of Maryland; BARBARA MIKULSKI, first Democrat elected to both the U.S. House and the U.S. Senate; BARBARA MIKULSKI, first woman to ever serve as head of the powerful Senate Appropriations Committee.

But as BARBARA, very self-deprecating, has often said: She has never been interested in simply being the first. She wants to be "the first of many," and she has been.

When Maryland voters sent BARBARA MIKULSKI to this Senate in 1986, there were two women in the entire body: Nancy Landon Kassebaum of Kansas, a Republican, and BARBARA MIKULSKI of Maryland, a Democrat—two women in this Chamber out of 100 Senators. Today, there are 20 women Senators, and after they are sworn in on January 3, there will be 21. That is great progress, but not nearly enough by BARBARA MIKULSKI's standards.

Senator MIKULSKI also had the brainchild of making sure the women in the Senate became an even more powerful force. Her bipartisan, women Senators-only dinners were a rare display of bipartisanship in an institution too often divided. The discoveries of common cause, common trust, and common purpose resulting from those dinners have made a big difference on the floor of the Senate.

BARBARA ANN MIKULSKI is the proud granddaughter of Polish immigrants. Her parents owned a small grocery store in Baltimore. She, her parents, and her two younger sisters lived across the street in one of the famous Baltimore row houses. As a young girl, Barbara thought about becoming a Catholic nun. She changed her mind because, as she put it, "that vow of obedience kind of slowed me down a bit." So she found other ways to practice the social gospel of justice.

She was a driving force behind the first bill signed by President Barack Obama, the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. I was there that day. The President signed the bill, and he took the first pen from the first bill he was signing and handed it to BARBARA MIKULSKI because he knew that she had been a champion for equality in the workplace for women throughout her career.

There are two stories that I always think of when I think of Senator MIKULSKI.

In October 2002, the Senate voted on whether to authorize the war in Iraq. Only 23 of the 100 Senators then serving voted against the Iraq war resolution. Of those 23 Senators, only 8 still remain in the Senate today: BARBARA BOXER, who is leaving at the end of this Congress, PATRICK LEAHY, PATTY MURRAY, JACK REED, DEBBIE STABENOW, RON WYDEN, BARBARA MIKULSKI, and

myself. This is a woman who has always been willing to risk her career to follow her conscience.

One of her great heroes is Dorothy Day, founder of the Catholic Worker Movement. The reason, BARBARA MIKULSKI says, is that Dorothy Day was always “trying to find the hopes of people,” rather than preying on people’s fear and anger.

I saw BARBARA MIKULSKI’s instinctive appeal to hope on that infamous sad day—September 11, 2001. As dust was settling on that heart-wrenching, heartbreaking day, most of the Members of the Senate gathered on the steps of the Capitol. The hope was that there would be a demonstration by Members of both parties to the Nation and to the world of solidarity. Suddenly—unplanned, unscripted—BARBARA MIKULSKI started singing “God Bless America.” Everyone joined in. In one of America’s darkest hours, BARBARA MIKULSKI brought us together. That is what a real leader does.

I and so many in the Chamber and so many untold millions of Americans are going to miss her presence in the Senate. We take consolation in knowing that, while she is leaving the Senate, she is not leaving the fight. She will never leave the fight.

Those of us who are returning in the next Congress have learned from Senator MIKULSKI, and we will continue to fight the good fight to invest in life-saving, job-creating medical breakthroughs at the National Institutes of Health—or, as BARBARA MIKULSKI calls it, the “National Institutes of Hope.” We will continue the good fight she has fought with such pithiness and passion to make our Nation safer and make our economy fairer for all Americans. I know that she will continue that fight as well.

BARBARA MIKULSKI may be leaving the Senate, but no one ever has, and I doubt anyone ever will, think of Baltimore’s BARBARA MIKULSKI as “retiring.”

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.

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

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

HONORING NEBRASKA’S SOLDIERS WHO LOST THEIR LIVES IN COMBAT

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I rise today to continue my tribute to this generation of Nebraska heroes. They are the men and women who have given their lives defending our freedom in Iraq and Afghanistan. Each one has a different story, and each Gold Star Family has the same request: that we remember the sacrifice of their loved one. By telling these stories of their service here on the Senate floor, we can honor that family’s request.

SERGEANT GERMAINE DEBRO

Mr. President, today I honor the life and service of Germaine Debro, a man who seemed destined for military service. Germaine’s father, Alvin Debro, was a career Air Force technical sergeant. At a young age, Germaine even picked up a nickname: “G.I. Joe Maine.” Even then, family and friends saw qualities that would make Germaine a great soldier. Because of his military service, Alvin and his wife Priscilla and their three boys moved often.

Germaine attended Benson High School in Omaha, NE, for a year before his family moved to Arkansas. There, Germaine graduated high school in 1991. Later, he and his family returned to Nebraska. For a time, Germaine worked as a manager at the local Burger King.

In 1994, G.I. Joe Maine followed his calling and he enlisted in the Army. In 1997, he joined the Nebraska National Guard. During those years, Germaine became known for his genuine personality and for developing a great camaraderie with his fellow soldiers. According to SPC Shawn O’Neil, Germaine was the “nicest guy you could ever meet.” He would walk into a room and it would light up. To his battle buddies, SPC Germaine Debro was affectionately known as DB. His dedication to his fellow soldiers was obvious. Being single, Germaine volunteered for assignments so that married soldiers might remain at home with their families.

Germaine deployed to Kuwait in 2001 and to Bosnia in 2002. In 2005, he learned that his unit, the 1st of the 167th Cavalry of the Nebraska Army National Guard, would deploy to Iraq. Germaine would be assigned to Troop B. Germaine’s family was anxious about him deploying again, but Germaine would not let his Army brothers go without him. In the end, his family supported his decision.

In explaining how his fellow soldiers felt about Germaine, SGT Josh Graft put it simply: “He was like a Dad to all of us.”

After a year of training, the 1st of the 167th Cavalry arrived in Iraq in early 2006. That is when the Sunni-Shia civil war erupted. In February, the al-Askari mosque was bombed and Iraq was plunged ever deeper into sectarian violence. American forces had come to enforce peace; they found themselves engaged in intense wartime operations. Germaine’s unit was right in the thick of it. Enemy attacks were frequent. Tensions were high.

On September 4, 2006, a 20-truck convoy headed out from a site 30 miles north of Baghdad. In the United States, Americans were celebrating Labor Day with barbecues, sporting events, and family gatherings. In Iraq, Germaine was driving a humvee, providing advanced security for the convoy. Thirty miles outside of Baghdad, Germaine’s humvee struck an improvised explosive device. The vehicle was spun several

times before erupting into flames. SGT Josiah Warren, riding in the right seat, tried unsuccessfully to pull Germaine free. Germaine Debro died on September 4, 2006.

At Iraq’s Camp Anaconda, members of the Nebraska Army National Guard assembled to honor the man who had cared so deeply for them.

On September 18, 2006, the Morning Star Baptist Church near downtown Omaha was filled with people paying a final tribute to Germaine Debro. Outside, 110 patriot riders stood guard.

Germaine’s brother, Maurice, read from a letter Germaine had written to him. In it, his brother offered some advice: “If you don’t take a risk, then you’ll never know what happened.”

“That was my brother,” said Maurice. “He was a loving, caring person.”

Germaine Debro was promoted posthumously to the rank of sergeant. His military decorations included a Bronze Star and a Purple Heart. SGT Germaine Debro is survived by his father Alvin, his mother Priscilla, and his brothers, Alvin, Jr., and Maurice. He is a true Nebraska hero. I am honored to tell his story.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FLAKE). The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 20 minutes as in morning business.

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I rise today for my 151st “Time to Wake Up” speech on climate change. I have covered many topics during these speeches—from pulling back the veil on the fossil fuel industry’s web of denial to sharing my visits to States from New Hampshire to Florida to Utah to see the effects of climate change there firsthand. But one recurring theme of my speeches and in the scientific literature has been the warning that the effects of climate change will hit home first and hardest along our coasts.

The oceans have soaked up more than 90 percent of the excess heat that has been trapped in the atmosphere by greenhouse gasses. That is a lot of heat. The Associated Press has compared the ocean heat we have added since 1997 to a, “Hiroshima-style bomb being exploded every second in the ocean for 75 straight years.”

That excess energy is warming our oceans at alarming rates, and by the principle of thermal expansion, we know that when water warms it expands. That, coupled with the melting ice sheets, is driving up sea levels worldwide. For my Ocean State that is a big deal. Warming and rising seas carry real consequences for coastal economies.

New England is being hit particularly hard on this front. The Gulf of Maine is warming faster than almost any other part of the ocean in the world. Narragansett Bay, in my home state of

Rhode Island, has already seen a nearly 4-degree Fahrenheit increase in winter water temperatures since the 1960s. Since measurements started in 1930, sea level is up nearly 10 inches at the tide gauge at Naval Station Newport.

Now, 10 inches may not sound like an enormous amount, but if you do a little mathematics and take that 10 inches and you multiply it by the 147 square miles that Narragansett Bay occupies, that adds nearly 100 million cubic meters of water offshore—throw weight for when the next storm comes.

Now, we don't model storm surge very well yet. But there is a lot of potential harm for Rhode Island. If you look not just at Narragansett Bay but at Rhode Island State waters, it is more than 500 million cubic meters, which is more than 500 million metric tons of potential storm surge.

Earlier this year, researchers published in *Nature* an updated estimate of global sea level rise. With new estimates of how melting Antarctic sea ice will contribute to sea level rise, the scientists were able to paint a more accurate picture of what lies ahead. It is not good news.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change had previously estimated sea level rise to reach between 1.7 and 3.2 feet by 2100. The new study doubles that estimate, putting global sea level rise over 6 feet by the end of this century.

To complicate matters more, as Antarctica loses ice and consequently mass, it will actually also affect the gravitational pull of the Antarctic on the oceans. With Antarctica's gravitational pull reduced, other continents will proportionately carry more gravitational clout, drawing even more ocean water away from the South Pole to their coasts.

Ben Strauss, the director of Climate Central's sea level rise program, recently told the *Washington Post*:

[T]he 22nd century would be the century of hell. There would really be an unthinkable level of sea rise. It would erase many major cities and some nations from the map.

A study published in the "Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences" last month looked at the effects of rising seas on more than 100 coastal cities around the world. The study predicts that we will hit 2 degrees Celsius of average global warming, which scientists say brings catastrophic and irreversible climate effects, sometime between 2040 and 2050.

When that happens, over 90 percent of the world's coastal areas will experience almost 8 inches of further sea level rise. On the Atlantic coast of the United States, it is estimated to be more than 15 inches. If we continue emissions unabated and hit 5 degrees Celsius warming by 2100, New York City could see over 3½ feet of seawater swamping its streets.

The year 2040 is not that far away. If you buy a house on the coast today, 2040 would fall well within your typical 30-year mortgage. As you might imag-

ine, the real estate business is starting to take notice. Zillow, the online real estate marketplace, has looked at how 6 feet of sea level rise by 2100 would affect over 100 million U.S. homes in its database. Around 1 in 50 homes in the United States, or just under 2 million properties, would find their ground floors underwater by 2100.

Thirty-six U.S. cities would be considered completely lost, and another 300 cities would lose at least half of their homes. Florida fared the worst in the study, losing more than 12 percent of the State's housing to sea level rise. Hawaii is not far behind, with over 9 percent of its homes expected to go underwater. Though New Jersey's overall housing situation fares somewhat better, with a loss expected at just over 7 percent, the value of those homes well exceeds any other State. New Jersey alone accounts for over 10 percent of the \$882,000,000,000 worth of potentially underwater properties.

Miami Beach would be the hardest hit city, losing over 37,000 homes, worth over \$33 billion. Those numbers just count residential properties, not expected losses to commercial or public properties. The insurance industry uses the term "100-year flood" to describe a flood that has a 1-percent chance of occurring in a given year. According to a 2013 study commissioned by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the area in the United States susceptible to 100-year floods will grow by 45 percent by the end of the century. Our Government Accountability Office says Federal flood insurance premiums are not keeping pace with that growing risk.

From 2002 through 2013 already, taxpayers bailed out insured properties to the tune of \$18 to \$25 billion. Government-backed mortgage giant Freddie Mac is preparing itself for broad losses from climate-driven flooding. "The economic losses and social disruption may happen gradually," says its Web site, "but they are likely to be greater in total than those experienced in the housing crisis and the Great Recession."

Let me say that again: "They are likely to be greater in total than those experienced in the housing crisis and Great Recession." Some of the effects of climate change, it says, may not even be insurable. Unlike the 2008 housing crash, owners of homes that are subsumed by rising seas would have little expectation of their home's value ever recovering. Therefore, they would have little incentive to make their mortgage payments, which would add to steep losses for lenders and insurers.

We don't, of course, have to wait until 2100 to see the effects of sea level rise on coastal cities like Miami, Charleston, Norfolk, or Newport, RI. So-called sunny day flooding is increasing in coastal communities. As sea levels rise, regular high tides can be all that is needed to flood streets, sidewalks and basements. NOAA estimates that non-storm-related nuisance

flooding, just from tides and sea level rise, has increased somewhere between 300 to 925 percent along the United States' three coastlines since the 1960s.

This past October's King Tides—the year's highest tides—brought around 2 feet of water to Boston's waterfront. Last month's Super Moon pulled water into the streets of Charleston and the parking lots of New Hampshire. This wayward octopus—I don't know if you can see it clearly, but there is a fairly good-sized octopus here—ended up swimming through a Miami parking garage.

These extreme high tides give a preview of what may be the new normal in this century. Higher seas plus stronger storms forebode real catastrophe for coastal communities. The Great New England Hurricane of 1938 is the worst in Rhode Island's history. A storm surge of 12 to 15 feet hit Narragansett Bay, engulfing downtown Providence. You can see old photographs of the streetcars with just their roofs showing over the water.

If that storm hit again today, it would have a big head start, riding to shore on 10 more inches of sea with that potentially 500 million metric tons of water available for storm surge. Again, we don't know how much of it becomes storm surge, but it certainly raises the potential.

This picture is from historic Newport after Superstorm Sandy gave us a glancing blow in Rhode Island in 2012. It brought a storm surge of over 9 feet to Providence, and over 4 feet to the south coast of the State. This is downtown Newport and Seamen's Church Institute right here, and somebody is kayaking through downtown.

According to the most recent report from the National Ocean Economics Program, more than 134 million people lived in U.S. coastal zone counties in 2014. Those counties accounted for nearly half of the total U.S. GDP and more than 40 percent of total U.S. employment. In my State of Rhode Island, the coastal economy accounts for \$55 billion of the State's GDP and employed over 400,000 people in 2014.

This productivity is at risk if those communities and their businesses cannot protect themselves from the consequences of our changing environment. A lot of places are taking this threat seriously. Although partisans in the State government make the phrase "climate change" a taboo in Florida, local policymakers, particularly in South Florida, are making climate change adaptation a priority, forming a regional bipartisan compact on climate resiliency, hiring resiliency and sustainability staff, building seawalls, installing pumps, updating building codes, and in Miami Beach's case—just in that one city—making \$400 million in storm water management upgrades.

In New Hampshire, the Coastal Risks and Hazards Commission has advised cities to prepare infrastructure and buildings for rising seas. Louisiana rewrote its Coastal Master Plan to accept the dark predictions of land loss

and sea level rise facing that lowland State and to include around 200 projects designed to protect Southern Louisiana's marshes and limit the effects of storm surge.

In Alaska, Native villages are seeking financial support to relocate their traditional coastal homesteads to higher ground. In Rhode Island, under the leadership of Grover Fugate at our Coastal Resources Management Council and in cooperation with the leading experts at the University of Rhode Island, Rhode Island Sea Grant, and Rhode Island Geological Survey, we are well aware of what climate change, sea level rise, and storm surge mean for our coastal communities.

STORMTOOLS, a free public online tool developed through this collaboration, is providing our city planners and concerned citizens with a visualization of the effects of various levels of sea level rise and storm surge on their properties. The Coastal Risk Environmental Index, which is shown here, will add even more specificity to the models working in STORMTOOLS. Users can actually navigate Google Earth to see what flood damage from sea level rise and storm surge will look like on a building-by-building basis. The city of Warwick, RI, featured here, is already using its maps in its future planning and emergency planning.

The rising tide calls for increased investment in coastal resiliency around the country. Senators MERKLEY, MENENDEZ, and I asked the Government Accountability Office to review the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's support for coastal States' resilience efforts. Among its findings, the GAO report said that the Regional Coastal Resilience Grants Program "received 132 qualified applications requesting a total of \$105 million during its first application period in fiscal year 2015." Well, guess how much money was available to meet that \$105 million approved or qualified need. Only \$4.5 million. NOAA was able to support less than 5 percent of the coastal States' demand.

Climate change doesn't care whether you believe the science or the propaganda and nonsense pumped out by the fossil fuel lobby—shoreside homes' basements will flood either way. It is not a matter of belief, it is a matter of physics.

For all the denial and diversion, you will notice that the fossil fuel industry's web of denial groups don't talk much about the effects we are seeing in our oceans and along our coasts. Their business is denial and, through calculated misinformation, creating phony doubt. That is their mission. If that is your mission, it is hard to deny water levels that are measured essentially on a glorified yardstick at tide gauges. It is hard to deny measurements from a Ph test that high schoolers do in their science classes. It is hard to deny readings from thermometers.

Here in the Senate, our choice is clear: We can take action or continue

to sleepwalk through history. But we should remember Pope Francis's warning. Pope Francis said: "God always forgives, we men forgive sometimes, but nature never forgives. If you give her a slap, she will give you one." And we have a big slap coming.

If we do nothing, what will we tell the millions of Americans who live by the sea and rely on it for their livelihoods? What should we tell them when they can't get insured for the next hurricane or when their mortgages are underwater in a literal sense? If we refuse to help our own citizens, who then will help the millions of others in developing countries around the world suffering the same fate and looking to our country for leadership? We have a moral obligation to pluck our heads from the sand and get to work. The oceans warn; it is time we woke up and listened.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

JUSTICE FOR ALL REAUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, it is my honor to come to the floor with the senior Senator from Vermont, my friend Mr. LEAHY, to talk about bipartisan legislation that will soon help victims of crime restore their lives. The Justice for All Reauthorization Act passed the House last week, and the Senate followed suit with unanimous support. Now it is on its way to the President's desk so it can become the law of the land.

When I served as the attorney general of Texas a few years ago, I felt that one of my most important jobs was to protect crime victims. I know that all Members of the Senate feel the same way. The Justice for All Reauthorization Act is first and foremost a bill that will help victims. It includes a number of provisions to help them get the justice they deserve. It will improve victims' rights by increasing access to restitution, reauthorize programs that support them in court, and increase resources for forensic labs to reduce the rape kit backlog.

I have spoken about the rape kit backlog before, and it is a big problem. At one point, it was estimated that there were as many as 400,000 untested rape kits in America, and this was due primarily to a lack of resources and lack of focus in making this a priority. This is evidence which has proven to be enormously powerful to help convict the guilty and exonerate the innocent.

This legislation will also give law enforcement more resources to keep violent offenders off the street and fairly prosecute crimes.

I know sometimes people must think Senator LEAHY and I are the odd couple of the Senate. We worked together not only on this legislation but also on reforms of the Freedom of Information Act. We share a passion for that topic as well. I am enormously grateful to him for his partnership on this important legislation. I also wish to thank Senator GRASSLEY for his leadership in

helping to shepherd this bipartisan bill through the Judiciary Committee.

I am looking forward to the Justice for All Reauthorization Act becoming law soon so we can help more victims restore their lives.

I yield to the senior Senator from Vermont.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I thank the distinguished senior Senator from Texas. Senator CORNYN and I have had the privilege of being prosecutors, he as an attorney general and I served as the State's attorney. I think you get a special view of what is needed. I have enjoyed working with the Senator because we do not have to paint a great picture for each other; we both understand the mistakes that can be made and why we do not want them.

For more than 6 years, I have championed the reauthorization of the Justice for All Act. I want to ensure that our criminal justice system lives up to our national pledge of liberty and justice for all. Having served as a prosecutor—and most former prosecutors—I am committed to ensuring that our criminal justice system has the integrity and confidence of the public it serves. I should not just say former prosecutors; current prosecutors feel that way.

From my time on the frontlines as a State's attorney in Chittenden County, VT, to the more than 15 years I have served as either chairman or ranking member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, it has become clear to me that our system is deeply flawed. There is not always justice for all. I have met many innocent people wrongly convicted of crimes they did not commit.

I shared the story of Kirk Bloodsworth. He was falsely convicted. He was sentenced to death for the rape and murder of a 9-year-old girl—a horrible crime, but he maintained his innocence. In 1993, he became the first death row inmate to be exonerated by DNA, and they were finally able to charge the man who did commit the horrible crime. The irony there is that some have said: Boy, don't they look alike? That is what happened.

We know our system gets it wrong. We have a responsibility to improve our criminal justice system. That is why I joined with Kirk Bloodsworth years ago to introduce and enact the Post-Conviction DNA Testing Grant Program. It was originally part of the Innocence Protection Act, which was enacted in 2004. It gives defendants like Kirk a chance to prove their innocence.

To ensure our justice system gets it right from the beginning, the bill provides a means to improve the quality of indigent defense. Ensuring good representation for those accused of crimes means fewer innocent people will be behind bars. It is an outrage if an innocent person is wrongly punished, but then that injustice is exacerbated because it means the person who committed the crime is still out there, and

oftentimes, as my friend from Texas knows, they will commit the crime again. The American people deserve a system that gets it right the first time.

Many Senators in this Chamber know the story of my friend Debbie Smith, also a friend of the senior Senator from Texas. She has become a champion for victims of sexual assault. She waited 6 years after being attacked before her rape kit was tested and a culprit was caught. Think about that. During those 6 years, she had to live in terror that the person who did this heinous crime might come back and do it again. No one should have to live in fear while an attacker remains free to victimize someone else or them.

This legislation not only provides important resources to improve the quality and efficiency of forensic testing, but it also expands it to underserved populations, such as those in rural areas, which is much of my State. Actually, every one of us has rural areas in our States.

I have worked with Senators on both sides of the aisle to craft solutions to some of the most significant issues of our time. That is why I am proud to partner with Senator CORNYN on this important legislation.

I hope we will continue to work together in the next Congress. We have to continue to protect all victims. We have to create fairness in our criminal justice system. We have to make sure we get it right the first time.

I call on those who have worked with me on this important legislation to continue to support our efforts. We can correct costly mistakes in our criminal justice system; we will be a better country for it. We will have a lot more respect for our criminal justice system, and we will do what the best of our prosecutors and police want to do—get it right.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I again wish to express my gratitude to the senior Senator from Vermont, Senator LEAHY, for his critical role in making sure this legislation becomes law, and I look forward to continuing to work with him on similar topics in the future.

LEGISLATION BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. President, we are about a week into the lameduck session, and we have already tackled some pretty significant legislation.

Last week, I was proud to see two bills that I introduced pass the Chamber. The first was the Cross-Border Trade Enhancement Act, a bill that will help staffing, safety, and efficiency at our ports of entry, and it passed the Senate unanimously.

In Texas, as the Presiding Officer knows in Arizona, this is not a new concern. Some of our border communities have seen the infrastructure and the staffing prove to be inadequate at our legitimate ports of entry, with a negative impact not only on the envi-

ronment, as cars stack up to cross the border, but it also provides an unnecessary drag on legitimate trade and commerce.

Through the use of innovative public-private partnerships, we have seen that we can increase staffing, improve the infrastructure, and basically end up filling the gap left by the Federal Government not doing its job by dealing—as it, of necessity, must—with our international borders and making sure they work as they should. This is a good step in the right direction, and I am hopeful we can get the legislation to the President's desk in the coming days so that more ports of entry throughout the country can take advantage of its benefits.

Senator LEAHY and I just spoke about the Justice for All Reauthorization Act, and then last night this Chamber voted to move the 21st Century Cures bill forward with—incredibly—85 Senators voting in favor of it. It passed the House overwhelmingly last week, and I look forward to getting it through the Chamber and to the President's desk as soon as possible. This legislation will play an important role in supporting our scientists and researchers working to find cures for diseases like cancer, and that includes resources that will support the Cancer Moonshot Program, which will help those studying and researching to actually find a way to end cancer. That means cancer centers like the MD Anderson hospital will have more support to carry out their mission to make cancer history.

The Cures legislation will support research for Alzheimer's and help fight the opioid addiction that is running rampant through many parts of our country. In other words, this legislation is critically important to the health of our country now and for generations to come.

Significantly, the 21st Century Cures bill includes reforms to our mental health delivery system, in part, based on legislation I introduced in the Senate called the Mental Health and Safe Communities Act. As a result of the de-institutionalization and treatment of people with mental illness in the 1990s, the safety net that was supposed to be there to catch people so they didn't fall through the cracks never came into being. So many people suffering from mental illness simply live on our streets as homeless individuals or they are frequently fliers, so to speak, in our criminal justice system and in many instances never had their mental illness diagnosed, much less treated, so they can actually have a chance at a better life. The mental health provisions included in the Cures bill is one way to correct that course. It would also help families with a mentally ill loved one find a path to treatment and a way forward, including assisted outpatient treatment programs.

One of the biggest challenges families have when they have a mentally ill family member—particularly when

they are an adult—is getting them to comply with their doctor's orders and take their medication. Due to the miracle of modern pharmacology, many people with mental illnesses, if they are compliant with their medication, can lead very productive lives. Often there are additional tools that need to be available to family members when they find their loved one is getting sicker and sicker and not being compliant with their medication, potentially becoming a danger to themselves or to the community at large.

This legislation will equip State and local governments with better tools to assess individual health care needs so those suffering from mental illness in the criminal justice system can begin to recover and get the help they need, instead of getting sicker.

This bill also encourages the creation of crisis intervention teams so our law enforcement officers and first responders can know how to deescalate a dangerous confrontation. If a police officer comes to the scene of a call only to confront a mentally ill person, if they are untrained and don't know how to deescalate the situation, they may find themselves in danger, both the first responder as well as the individual person with mental illness. This is about finding ways to help the mentally ill individual get help while keeping the community safe at the same time.

Mr. President, the last bit of business we have is to fund the government. I said many times the best way to do that is to take the appropriations bills up one at a time so we can properly vet them, discuss them, and pass them. Our friends across the aisle had a different view this year and blocked the passage of individual appropriations bills. While it is not my preference, it is where we are. Right now, we are looking forward to passing a continuing resolution soon as we fulfill our important responsibilities to the American people.

I am glad to see we are making some progress on other pieces of legislation, including the Water Resources Development Act, a bill that will help us strengthen our waterways to account for growing trade and provide help for drought and flood protection.

Finally, we are working to finish the national defense authorization bill that will make sure Congress provides the resources for our military men and women so they can accomplish their missions and keep America safe.

We have quite a bit of work left to do and not much time left to do it in before the holidays, but with a little cooperation, I am sure we will get it all done.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I am here, along with a number of my colleagues, to applaud the 21st Century Cures Act as a major milestone and a long-overdue initial investment in combating the opioid epidemic. In particular, I applaud the inclusion of \$1

billion in funding over 2 years that will address this crisis. For treatment providers on the frontlines of the epidemic, I am pleased to say help is on its way with this bill when it is passed by the Senate—and I believe it will be.

Make no mistake, these resources are badly needed. This remains an uncontrolled epidemic and unfortunately is still gaining strength. A staggering 47,000 Americans died of drug overdoses in 2014—more Americans than died in car accidents. Sadly, in New Hampshire, we are a bull's-eye for the highest percentage of drug overdoses per populace of any State in the country so I am pleased this bill includes language to prioritize the allocation of these new resources to the most heavily affected States, and I intend to work with the current and incoming administration to get this funding out to States as quickly as possible.

More than a year ago, I introduced legislation to help stem the tide of the opioid crisis by providing emergency funding to States, first responders, and treatment providers. I joined with other Senators in working to include funding in the Cures Act to provide at least an initial infusion of funding to fight the opioid epidemic. I am relieved these efforts have led to the bipartisan agreement we will soon vote on.

Last month, the U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. Vivek Murthy, issued a landmark report and an urgent call to action. He said 21 million Americans have a substance use disorder—far more Americans than have cancer—yet only 1 in 10 is receiving any kind of treatment.

My State of New Hampshire, and New England overall, has been especially hard hit, but make no mistake, this is a nationwide epidemic, and it doesn't discriminate. It is impacting young and old, urban and rural, rich and poor, White and minority, Democrats, Republicans, and Independents.

This fall I met with Susan Messinger of Holderness, NH. Her son Carl experimented with heroin at a party and quickly became addicted. He got treatment, was in recovery, and was doing great, but he came down with a respiratory infection and was prescribed medicine that unknown to him, included an opioid—just simple cherry cough medicine. Carl relapsed, and he died of a fentanyl overdose days before his 25th birthday.

This chart entitled “Drug Overdose Deaths Across America” shows very vividly the extent of the problem. It was compiled by the National Center for Health Statistics at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It shows the inexorable spread of the opioid crisis and the disease it causes from 2003, here where we don't see as much bright red, to 2008, where it is growing, to 2014, where it is almost the entire country. We can see that in the Presiding Officer's section of the country, in the Southwest, it is particularly challenging, as well as in the Appalachian region of the East. According

to the CDC, mortality trends in the opioid epidemic are now similar to the trends in the HIV epidemic at its peak in the late 1980s and 1990s.

The second chart shows drug overdose deaths across New Hampshire. It shows a parallel spread of the opioid epidemic in New Hampshire, with especially devastating effects in the northern part of the State—what we call the north country. In 2003, we see no orange and no red. In 2007, we are beginning to see patches of orange. In 2011, they have turned red, and by 2014, it is particularly affecting the entire State, and here—the northern part of New Hampshire—is where it is hardest hit.

In his landmark report last month, the U.S. Surgeon General said: “It is time to change how we view addiction—not as a moral failing but as a chronic illness that must be treated with skill, urgency and compassion.” Yet what we are seeing in New Hampshire and across the country is that treatment centers are completely overwhelmed.

Certainly, the new funding in the Cures Act will be welcome news to Friendship House in Bethlehem, NH, which is a treatment center I visited on Friday. It is up here in the northern part of the State in New Hampshire's north country, which has one of the highest overdose rates per capita in New Hampshire. Friendship House is the only treatment center within a radius of 65 miles.

Back in April, Kaiser Health News reported on the case of Eddie Sawyer. Eddie overdosed and died while he was waiting for his turn to be admitted to Friendship House. When police found Mr. Sawyer, on the table next to his bed was a list of treatment facilities. There were checkmarks next to the name of each facility. Mr. Sawyer had called every place on the list, and he had not found one that could take him for treatment.

The Surgeon General's new report states that nearly 9 out of 10 people with substance use disorders do not receive treatment. They are being turned away. They are being denied treatment due to a chronic lack of resources. Hopefully, this legislation is going to help that because over the last year, I visited treatment centers in every part of the Granite State. These centers are staffed by skilled, dedicated treatment professionals. They are saving lives every day, but they tell me that for every life they save, others are being lost for lack of treatment capacity, facilities, and funding. When people with substance use disorders are turned away, this means they remain on the streets, desperate, often committing crimes to support their addiction and at constant risk of a lethal overdose.

Last year, a promising young woman named Molly Alice Parks died of a heroin overdose in Manchester, NH—New Hampshire's largest city. Her father wrote her obituary which appeared in the Union Leader newspaper. He wrote openly about Molly's addiction, and

the obituary included this plea to readers: “If you have any loved ones who are fighting addiction, Molly's family asks that you do everything possible to be supportive, and guide them to rehabilitation before it is too late.”

I admire the courage of Molly's father, his willingness to warn other families, and talk openly about his daughter's addiction, but what if a family persuades a son or daughter to seek treatment and no treatment is available? Sadly, that is the case in so many communities across America where treatment centers are overwhelmed.

That is why the additional resources in the Cures Act are so important. This new funding will make a real difference for treatment providers in each of our States. Make no mistake, this legislation will save lives. The funding in the Cures Act is a welcome initial investment in combating the opioid epidemic. President-Elect Trump, during dozens of visits to New Hampshire over the last year, pledged aggressive action to fight the opioid epidemic. When the new Congress convenes in January, we must come together with our new President, on a bipartisan basis, to address the opioid crisis in a comprehensive fashion, including continuing resources for policing, prevention, treatment, and recovery. As Surgeon General Murphy says, “How we respond to this crisis is a test for America.” With so many lives at stake, it is a test we must not fail.

With the 21st Century Cures Act, Congress is providing urgent new funding for treatment on the frontlines—professionals who have been doing truly heroic, lifesaving work. Our message in passing this legislation is: Help is on the way. I urge my colleagues to give strong bipartisan support to this important bill.

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

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

COAL MINER HEALTH CARE BENEFITS AND PENSIONS

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, I rise to explain what is happening for all of my colleagues and my friends on both sides of the aisle.

I have been here for 6 years as a Senator. I have always fought to make the body work, and for the people of West Virginia and for our country. I have never believed partisan gridlock is a way to accomplish our policy goals, so I haven't come to this decision easily. I have never used the procedure that I am using today, and I will use, to basically stop all UCs, a lot of good pieces of legislation, a lot of good friends who have worked diligently on this. I want to be able to work with them.

My reason for doing this is that over 2 years ago we promised the retired coal miners of America—we promised them—mostly their families, and there are a lot of widows now; we promised them they would have their health care benefits that were guaranteed to them and their pensions. We have been working toward that.

We knew this day would come. As of December 31, the end of this month—less than 4 weeks away—there are going to be 16,500 retired families, retired miners who are losing their health care benefits. There will be another 4,000 the first of next year.

So I am using this procedure, which I do reluctantly and I never thought I would have to, because we are fighting for those people whom we promised, fighting for those we believe in, to thank them for the power they have provided to this Nation. Now we are turning our backs on them.

We have pay-fors for this. We have a way to move forward. These are the health care benefits for our retired miners. It is something they have worked for, they have earned, they deserve, and we are the country we are because of the hard work they have done.

So I wanted my colleagues to know why this procedure is going to be a little bit more laborious than they would have liked, why we might not be leaving here when they would have liked to go home. If we don't stand for the people who have made our country as great as it is, we stand for nothing.

So with that, I hope my colleagues understand where I am coming from and why I hope they will be with me on this for the sake of all of these families and all of these widows and all of these miners who have given to much so our country.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I wish to start by expressing my appreciation to all of my colleagues who have worked so hard on the priorities in the 21st Century Cures bill, including investing in tackling our hardest to treat diseases, confronting the opioid epidemic, strengthening mental health care, and advancing medical innovation.

The legislation that we will be voting on either really late tonight or tomorrow morning takes important steps to improve the care that patients receive.

I am very grateful to every Senator and Member of Congress who worked across the aisle to make this legislation the best it could be for those whom we serve. In particular, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to Vice President JOE BIDEN. Not everyone has the strength to respond to profound personal tragedy by doing even more to protect and help others, but that is exactly what he has done. I know we are all grateful for and inspired by his leadership, and I am confident it has

given a lot of families hope, knowing that JOE BIDEN is fighting for them and their loved ones.

Of course, I want to acknowledge and thank the chairman of the HELP Committee, Senator ALEXANDER, for his work and leadership on this bill, as well as the Energy and Commerce Chairman FRED UPTON, Ranking Member FRANK PALLONE, and Congresswoman DIANA DEGETTE.

I am proud of our country's history of lifesaving public health initiatives and world-changing medical innovation. From eradicating smallpox to mapping the human genome, we have risen to challenges and found ways to combat seemingly unbeatable diseases and public health threats. There is no question we are a strong country for that.

The bill we are talking about today, while far from perfect, gives us the chance to build on that tradition of leadership and respond to some urgent health challenges we face right now. One of those is the opioid epidemic. Like many of my colleagues, I have heard from far too many families and local leaders in my home State about the ways that opioid use disorders are ruining lives and tearing families apart. My constituent Penny LeGate, whose daughter Marah died of an overdose at the age of 19, said that this crisis can happen anywhere and it is everywhere. That is the same thing I have heard from worried parents and sheriffs and community leaders across Washington State.

I was glad that earlier this year, the Senate passed the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act to strengthen and improve programs that address opioid addiction. But, as Democrats made clear, improving policy wasn't enough. Tackling this crisis head-on requires putting new investments into these efforts as quickly as possible, and that is what this bill will do. It dedicates \$1 billion over 2 years, above and beyond the budget caps, to help States and communities fight back. And critically, we were able to secure changes that ensure this money will go to States based on where it is needed the most.

Many of my colleagues were closely involved with this effort, but in particular I wish to recognize Senators WHITEHOUSE, SHAHEEN, BALDWIN, MARKEY, DONNELLY, and MANCHIN.

I have also heard from people across Washington State and the country about what a broken mental health system means for them and their families. One constituent whose experience has really stuck with me is Jenny. Jenny is from Olympia, WA, and she was pregnant when her husband began having severe psychotic episodes. Jenny told me that she remembered how striking the differences were between the coordinated, thoughtful care she received as an expectant mother and the confusing patchwork that she and her husband had to navigate to try to help him get better. Jenny's hus-

band cycled in and out of the hospital without effective treatment, and tragically he took his own life while Jenny was in the NICU with their newborn baby.

Jenny's story is unfortunately one of many about families struggling to find quality mental health care for loved ones with mental illness. I am confident that everyone here today has heard these stories, and we know we have to do better.

Our legislation will help expand access to quality care for mental illness and substance use disorders by making it easier for patients to get in touch with providers. It will strengthen coordination between local agencies that are engaged in crisis intervention, and it will make sure that resources are available to strengthen the mental health workforce.

While we weren't able to resolve the IMD exclusion, which is a policy that makes it extremely difficult for States to provide inpatient care to those with mental illness and substance abuse disorders, this bill does change policy so that Federal funding will fully support the physical needs of children in psychiatric facilities.

It also puts in place measures to strengthen our mental health parity law to make sure that health insurance will cover mental health and addiction services when it is needed. Chairman ALEXANDER and I worked with Senators MURPHY and CASSIDY to move this legislation through our committee this year, and I wish to recognize their commitment and leadership on this issue in particular.

In addition to investing in and tackling the opioid epidemic and putting in place desperately needed reforms to our mental health care system, this legislation makes real investments in tackling the hardest to treat diseases. According to the National Cancer Institute at NIH, 40 percent of men and women in the United States will be diagnosed with some form of cancer in their lives. Right now, more than 5 million people are living with Alzheimer's. These are truly staggering statistics, and they represent enormous hardship and suffering and loss in nearly every family and community.

Now we have made enormous progress in understanding and treating cancer, and we know more about how the brain works and what diseases like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's and traumatic injuries do to human minds, but we can and must do more, and that is exactly what the investments in NIH in this bill will mean.

While this is not the mandatory funding we had hoped for, I want to be very clear: This is real funding. So \$4.8 billion is paid for within this bill, targeted to specific NIH initiatives, and available to appropriators above and beyond the budget caps. That means, as a result of this legislation—and thanks, in particular, to the leadership and vision of Vice President BIDEN—we will be able to invest billions right

away in better understanding, preventing, and treating diseases that have impacted so many families.

This bill also ensures that those investments in research will benefit all Americans, including women and children, LGBT individuals, and racial and ethnic minorities.

This bill also puts \$500 million above and beyond the budget cap toward helping the FDA meet the same high standards of patient and consumer safety in the face of increasing demands on the agency and new responsibilities under this legislation. As Democrats have made clear throughout this process, upholding the gold standard of FDA approval that patients and families across the country trust is a top priority.

In light of the antibiotic-resistant infections linked to contaminated medical devices called duodenoscopes in Seattle and across the country, it was particularly important to me to make sure that this bill strengthened the FDA's authority to require that medical device manufacturers ensure their products will remain safe after they have gone into repeated uses at our hospitals.

We also fought hard to move many of the other FDA reform policies that are included in this bill in the direction of greater patient and consumer safety. In particular, I was pleased that we were able to take out legislation that would have watered down transparency around drug and device industry payments to doctors, and I appreciate my colleagues on the other side of the aisle who were ultimately willing to work with us to make those changes.

Now, looking ahead to next year, I plan to monitor implementation of this bill extremely closely, with a focus on making sure the incoming administration adheres to the policies laid out in this bill and upholds the FDA's responsibility to patients and families to ensure our medicines and treatments are safe and effective. This standard has been critical to fueling biomedical innovation in America for over half a century. And while I am disappointed that Republicans were unwilling to take action on this legislation to tackle the high cost of prescription drugs, I am very glad we were able to remove expensive provisions that could have driven up costs for consumers even more.

While this bill is not what I would have written on my own, it is certainly not what my colleagues on the other side of the aisle would have written on their own, either. It locks in critical advancements ahead of the incoming administration and the partisan approach they are signaling they will take on health care, and it will make a real difference for patients and families across the country now and for years into the future.

Before I wrap up, I want to acknowledge the extraordinary time and effort put in by all of our staffs. There have been a lot of late nights and weekends

for our staffs, not just this year but last year as well on this bill, and I want to take just a minute to recognize their extra effort and sacrifice.

On Senator ALEXANDER's staff, I want to particularly acknowledge and thank his staff director, David Cleary, as well as Mary-Sumpter Lapinski and Grace Stuntz, his health and FDA policy leads, who worked very closely with my staff over many months. I also want to acknowledge and thank Margaret Coulter, Brett Meeks, Laura Pence, Melissa Pfaff, Kara Townshend, and Elizabeth Wroe for their efforts on this bill.

In the House, I want to recognize and thank the staff of Congressman PAL-LONE, including his staff director, Jeff Carroll, along with Tiffany Guarascio, his health policy lead. I thank the staff of Chairman UPTON, particularly his staff director, Gary Andres, and Paul Edattel, his health policy lead.

In addition, I thank the staff of my members on the HELP Committee, who worked so closely with my staff to make this a reality. In particular, I thank David Bonine and Joe Dunn with Senator MURPHY.

I want to acknowledge the assistance of Amy Rosenbaum, Jeanne Lambrew, Kate Mevis, and Dr. Francis Collins, among many others within the administration who helped make today possible.

Finally, I want to close by thanking my staff. I can't say enough about my incredible staff, who have put their time and talents into this bill from the word "go." In particular, I thank my staff director, Evan Schatz, and my health policy director, Nick Bath, for their extraordinary efforts on this legislation. Thank you.

I would also like to acknowledge the hard work of Remy Brim, Julie Tierney, Andi Fristedt, Colin Goldfinch, Melanie Rainer, Madeleine Pannell, Megan Howard, Elizabeth Wagner, Wade Ackerman, Kalah Auchincloss, Jane Bigham, Helen Hare, Eli Zupnick, John Righter, Nick McLane, and my chief of staff, Mike Spahn. I want you to know that I noticed their long hours and unwavering commitment on this legislation. It means a lot.

I urge my colleagues to join the House when we vote on this, which voted overwhelmingly in support of this bill—392 to 26—and to join us in sending this legislation to President Obama's desk.

Thank you.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

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

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, before the distinguished Senator from Washington moves on to her other duties, I want to commend her and Senator ALEXANDER for the outstanding job they have done and for the long hours she and her colleagues on the HELP Committee have put in to making the Cures Act the reality that it will be in a few days.

I know the distinguished Senator is on her way to other meetings. I have a

few things to say about it, but I want to express that before she leaves the Chamber.

Truly, as Senator MURRAY said, the 21st Century Cures Act is a world-changing piece of legislation. It seems rather quiet and unremarkable today, but I actually believe we are taking a major step toward disease cure and health care research that rivals the legislation which actually founded the National Institutes of Health some decades ago. So we are about important business here at Christmastime as we near the end of this lameduck session.

Senator BLUNT and I and perhaps other Senators were over in the Chamber of the other body last Wednesday afternoon when the House of Representatives passed the 21st Century Cures Act by an overwhelming bipartisan vote, 392 to 26. I appreciated the work House leaders did from top to bottom and on both sides of the aisle on this important legislation.

Of course, I am always pleased to visit my colleagues over there. A number of our House colleagues were over here last night when the Senate invoked cloture on the Cures Act by an overwhelming vote of 85 to 13. We will get to the vote either this afternoon or early tomorrow, and I have every confidence that there will be a strong vote on final passage.

The 21st Century Cures Act is the product of several years of bipartisan work in both Houses. My friend from Washington State gave a comprehensive overview of the legislation, which is indeed breathtaking. I wish to come behind her and mention what an accomplishment this is in three areas—first, in Alzheimer's research; second, in pediatric research; and finally, in the drug approval process.

I appreciate my friend from Washington and 62 others agreeing to take into this legislation the EUREKA Act, which I was happy to sponsor and which 62 of my colleagues cosponsored. EUREKA would and will initiate prize competitions in the fight against some of our Nation's most terrible diseases, including Alzheimer's. These prizes would pay only for success, and they would complement current funding that is and will be ongoing, according to the legislation. So this will be over and above what we are already doing for Alzheimer's. The Senator from Washington is correct about how costly Alzheimer's is. It will top \$1 trillion in taxpayer cost by the year 2050 unless we get a cure or unless we achieve major goals with regard to stopping Alzheimer's. So it is an expensive disease—the most expensive disease in the history of this country—but it is also terribly expensive in terms of human suffering. I know many Americans, including my family, have been touched in a very terrible and dramatic way by Alzheimer's.

I am pleased that the EUREKA prizes are part of this legislation. I want to thank everyone who helped us in this regard.

I am thankful for the advice we got from the XPRIZE Foundation and from all of the Alzheimer's groups, including the Alzheimer's Association and UsAgainstAlzheimer's.

Thanks should also go to Dr. Francis Collins and the entire team at the National Institutes of Health for making this legislation work and for listening to a different idea—the concept of prizes for health care research—and giving it an attentive ear and being willing to agree that, in addition to the funding, we would attack these diseases with a prize competition.

The NIH funding in Cures includes additional dollars for the BRAIN Initiative, and these EUREKA prizes will ensure that our researchers have the tools they need.

Secondly, another important part of the NIH section of the Cures Act is the National Pediatric Research Network, inspired by the Pediatric Research Improvement Act that I was happy to cosponsor with Senator BROWN earlier this year. Senator BROWN and I have been working together tirelessly to see NIH implement the National Pediatric Research Network, and I am glad to see this provision in the bill. Very simply, the goal is to expand access to clinical trials and treatments for children, especially those with rare diseases. That is a second aspect of this Cures bill that I am so pleased to see the leadership of this committee being attentive to.

Thirdly, this bill makes major breakthroughs in the way we approve drugs in this country. I am pleased that language from another bill I cosponsored, the Patient-Focused Impact Assessment Act, was included in the bill. This section of the Cures bill would ensure that patients understand the way FDA considers the patient experience and the way FDA considers data in the drug approval process. So for patients like those living with Duchenne and their families, for people who are interested in the drug approval process, and for the parents of children, this is a truly bipartisan achievement.

I am happy that Senator MURRAY was here so I could congratulate her in person. Certainly Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER, chairman of our HELP Committee, deserves high praise from both sides of the aisle for his leadership in this regard, as well as the bipartisan leadership of the House of Representatives.

As we enter this holiday season, patients, advocates, and providers have an extra reason to rejoice as this bill heads to the President's desk.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

ORDER FOR RECESS

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess, following the remarks of Senator CASEY, until 2:15 p.m. today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

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

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

TRIBUTES TO DEPARTING SENATORS

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, in the interest of time, I will limit my remarks.

I rise this afternoon to commend and salute three Senators from the Democratic caucus who are leaving the Senate this year. I will have longer written statements for the RECORD to appropriately pay tribute to their service. In alphabetical order, Senator BOXER of California, Senator MIKULSKI of Maryland, and Senator REID of Nevada.

BARBARA BOXER AND BARBARA MIKULSKI

I will offer some specific remarks about Leader REID, in the interest of time, but I do want to commend and salute Senator BOXER for her service to the people of California and to our Nation, as well Senator MIKULSKI for her great work—two great advocates, two individuals whom we are going to miss terribly here in the Senate. As I said, I will put longer statements in the RECORD.

HARRY REID

With regard to Senator REID, I can't help taking the time to say a few words about him in the remaining minutes we have before we break for the caucus lunches.

Mr. President, as many people know, Senator HARRY REID is a son of Searchlight, a small community in the State of Nevada, and he comes from humble beginnings. It is probably best to read his words about his beginnings rather than trying to describe or encapsulate them. Among many things he said about his background and his family, he said this, in short fashion, about his background:

My dad was a hard rock miner. My mom took in wash. I grew up around people of strong values.

That is a direct quotation from HARRY REID about his background. I think those values have helped him his whole life. Those values, that work ethic, and that strength of character allowed him to go from Searchlight to rise up to become a leader in his home State of Nevada in many positions in State government, to be a Member of the United States House of Representatives, later to be elected to the United States Senate in 1986, and then, of course, to become the Democratic leader—and he remains so until the end of this Congress—but, of course, the pinnacle was his service as majority leader, one of the longest serving majority leaders in our history. That is kind of a summary of his positions in government, important though they are, leading a large and diverse caucus. It is a difficult job whether you are leading that caucus in the majority or leading it as the minority party. So we salute and commend his service to his home State of Nevada and to the people of the United States.

But maybe more important than just talking about positions he held is to talk for just a minute about who he is—a fighter. No person has fought harder for workers and for their families than HARRY REID. No Senator, no person I know in public life, has made that such a central part of who they are and a central part of their priorities, also, at the same time, being a fighter for those who often don't have a voice here—people who don't have power ever in their lives or often don't have power on a regular basis. They always had a friend in HARRY REID—someone who would go to the end of the Earth fighting on behalf of them.

Over and over in our caucus, he would say: We have to work on this issue, or we have to get this or that done for people who are hurting. There are so many different examples of that, which we don't have time to enumerate them today.

I am recalling today a great line from a great Democratic leader, William Jennings Bryan, who talked about the power of one individual to make a difference and the power of an issue or set of issues to drive that person's success in public life or even beyond public life, as a citizen. William Jennings Bryan once said: "The humblest citizen in all the land, when clad in the armor of a righteous cause, is stronger than all the hosts of error." So said William Jennings Bryan about one citizen clad in the armor of a righteous cause.

HARRY REID is a Senator and he has been a leader, but he is also a very humble man at his core. His righteous cause wasn't just one issue, but if you had to encapsulate it or summarize it, the righteous cause for HARRY REID was fighting on behalf of those workers, fighting on behalf of those people who did not ever have power in their lives.

His ability to not just articulate their concerns and their struggles but literally their hopes and their dreams was one of the reasons why so many of us have such a high regard for him. We commend and salute his service. We appreciate his commitment to strong values, but we especially appreciate his steadfast support for those who needed his voice, who needed his work, who needed his votes, and needed his leadership.

To Senator REID, we say thank you for your service, thank you for what you did for your home State of Nevada, and thank you for what you did for the United States of America.

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

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

RECESS

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

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:33 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. ROBERTS).

TSUNAMI WARNING, EDUCATION,
AND RESEARCH ACT OF 2015—
Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The distinguished Senator from Vermont is recognized.

VOTING RIGHTS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I thank the distinguished Presiding Officer, the Senator from Kansas.

An editorial this morning in the New York Times is entitled: "Why Does Donald Trump Lie About Voting Fraud?" This is the editorial of which I speak. That is a question that many of us who have been fighting for the right to vote have been asking for decades. In a bipartisan fashion, this Congress reauthorized the Voting Rights Act 10 years ago. During the course of many, many, many Senate and House Judiciary Committee hearings, we fought against the false narrative that in-person voting fraud was at all common in our country. The evidence clearly and irrefutably shows that it is not, but, of course, the evidence does not stop those who are determined to make it harder for Americans to cast their votes.

Right after five Justices on the Supreme Court gutted the core protection of the bipartisan Voting Rights Act, several States led by Republican majorities enacted voting restrictions that made it harder for many Americans to vote.

It is most troubling that our President-elect has decided to make an unfounded charge of widespread voting fraud. I can imagine that he is disappointed in the fact that he got 2.5 million less votes than his opponent and did not win the support of a majority of Americans who voted last month. We should all hope that when our next President is presented with unfavorable realities, he will not resort to spreading information that has no basis in fact. That cannot and should never be the standard of American leadership.

In an article published in the Valley News of West Lebanon, NH, and reprinted this morning in VT Digger, researchers at Dartmouth explored President-Elect Trump's allegation of widespread voting fraud, and they found nothing to support his claim, noting "voter fraud concerns fomented and espoused by the Trump campaign are not grounded in any observable features of the 2016 Presidential election." Many other analyses have also made this crystal clear.

In a report to Congress, the Government Accountability Office concluded

that "no apparent cases of in-person voter impersonation [were] charged by DOJ's Criminal Division or by U.S. Attorney's offices anywhere in the United States from 2004 through July 3, 2014." That is the reality. The President-elect should not continue to peddle lies about voter fraud.

I say that because this year we have seen a dangerous uptick in what some call "fake news." These articles have no basis of reality or factual evidence, but they are broadly circulated because they affirm a particular ideology or because they are a proven way to make a quick buck by drawing the attention of unsuspecting online readers. Fake news stories get attention and clicks. We saw what happened when a man walks into a pizza place in the District of Columbia where children often congregate and fires a rifle because of one of these fake news stories he had read.

Some consider this despicable propaganda to be harmless, but it is certainly not without its victims. We know that the spread of lies through fake news can have real-world consequences, even for the public's faith in the Republic itself. There is no doubt that this is the way Russia sees it.

In conclusion, it should not be too much to ask our elected officials to operate on facts and reality. We will have many debates over policy in the years to come, as we should, but Americans deserve leaders who refuse to peddle in lies for political gain.

I call on leaders from both sides of the political aisle to no longer defend the indefensible.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the New York Times editorial be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the New York Times, Dec. 5, 2016]

WHY DOES DONALD TRUMP LIE ABOUT VOTER
FRAUD?

(By the Editorial Board)

The long-running Republican war against the right to vote has now gone national at the instigation of President-elect Donald Trump, who has promoted the lie that millions of illegal votes were cast in the presidential election.

There is not a scintilla of evidence for this claim, and Mr. Trump's own lawyers have admitted as much, stating in a court filing opposing a recount in Michigan that "all available evidence suggests that the 2016 general election was not tainted by fraud or mistake."

Yet one after the next, leading Republicans are spreading this slander of American democracy, smoothing the way to restrict voting rights across the country.

On Sunday, Vice President-elect Mike Pence told ABC's George Stephanopoulos that it was Mr. Trump's "right to express his opinion as president-elect." When pushed to admit that the illegal-voting claim was not true, Mr. Pence shifted the burden of proof away from Mr. Trump, even though Mr. Trump has accused millions of Americans of committing a crime. "Look," Mr. Pence said, "I don't know that that's a false statement, George, and neither do you."

Paul Ryan, speaker of the House, told CBS's "60 Minutes," "I have no knowledge of

such things," before defending Mr. Trump's claims as "giving voice to a lot of people who have felt that they were voiceless." (As recently as October, Mr. Ryan's spokeswoman noted that "our democracy relies on confidence in election results" and that Mr. Ryan was "fully confident the states will carry out this election with integrity.")

Reince Priebus, currently the chairman of the Republican National Committee and Mr. Trump's pick for chief of staff, told CBS's John Dickerson that "no one really knows" if millions of people voted illegally. "It's possible." It's equally true that no one really knows for sure that Reince Priebus wasn't snatched away and replaced with a doppelgänger hatched by aliens—it's possible, isn't it?

This is how voter suppression efforts start. First come the unverified tales of fraud; then come the urgent calls to tighten voter registration rules and increase "ballot security," which translate into laws that disenfranchise tens or hundreds of thousands of qualified voters.

That's already happened in Wisconsin and North Carolina, in Ohio and Texas, where Republican lawmakers pushed through bills requiring voter IDs or proof of citizenship; eliminating early-voting days and same-day registration; and imposing other measures. Virtually all these laws aimed at making voting harder for citizens who happen to be members of groups that tend to support Democrats.

While federal courts have struck down some of these laws, more keep popping up. In Michigan, lawmakers are pushing to fast-track a voter-ID requirement even though there was no evidence of voter impersonation there. In New Hampshire, the incoming governor, Chris Sununu, wants to do away with same-day registration, also despite the lack of any evidence that it resulted in fraud.

Reality is beside the point. Dallas Woodhouse, the executive director of the North Carolina Republican Party, recently told The New Republic, "Whether there's widespread voter fraud or not, the people believe there is." It doesn't seem to matter to G.O.P. leaders that election officials around the country of both parties have confirmed that there was no fraud on Election Day. What matters to them, as strategists have long known, is that Republicans do better when fewer people vote.

Under a Trump administration, anti-voter efforts could become national in scope—through congressional legislation, a hostile Justice Department or a Supreme Court nominee with little regard for voting rights.

Undermining the integrity of the electoral process and making it harder to vote is threatening to all Americans, regardless of party. The cynical Republicans now in power figure that all they have to do is fool the public long enough to win the next election. It's outrageous, but it's hard to see why they would stop when lying has gotten them this far.

Mr. LEAHY. I yield the floor and thank my colleague.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PORTMAN). The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I have some good news. Today we have before us a legislative package that reflects 2 years of work for the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee.

When we first embarked on this process, the goal was to find ways to spur innovation and reduce the time it takes for new therapies and treatments to get from the research bench to the bedside for patients. The bill is the 21st

Century Cures Act, which includes—I am going to repeat this several times—true bipartisan victories for patients in our health care system.

Throughout my time in Congress, I have been a consistent supporter of funding for the National Institutes of Health, or NIH, to fulfill our commitment to prioritizing biomedical research and innovation. NIH research returns priceless benefits, giving health care providers new tools and drugs to heal and give hope to individuals. The benefits of this research investment to Kansans back home have been direct and personal. Back in 2012, the University of Kansas Cancer Center received a National Cancer Institute designation, or an NCI designation. These centers are major players in research and development for cancer treatment and prevention.

The legislation we will be voting on today or tomorrow—or at the very least next week—does commit an additional \$1.8 billion for Vice President BIDEN's Cancer Moonshot. This will not only help the University of Kansas as they continue to push toward a comprehensive cancer center designation, but it will help all Americans who stand to benefit as we work to end the fight against cancer.

In addition to research funding, this bill includes some provisions I authored along with Senator KLOBUCHAR to improve and increase transparency in the review and approval of processes for medical devices. Specifically, the bill does this. It encourages the FDA, or the Food and Drug Administration, to accept international consensus standards to provide more predictability for innovators. Second, it makes improvements to the advisory committee selection process in an effort to provide more transparency. It provides a technical correction to establish a process by which the Food and Drug Administration may remove certain products from the class I device reserve list if they think a premarket review is no longer necessary to prove reasonable assurances of safety and effectiveness. Senators ISAKSON, CASEY, and ROBERTS' priorities seek to provide more certainty for FDA review of combination products and therapies that do not fit neatly into simply a drug or device.

The legislation also includes important reforms to our mental health system based largely on a bill the HELP Committee passed earlier this year. With this section of the bill, we seek to clarify and improve our mental health parity laws. We reauthorized the substance abuse and mental health block grants. We promote evidence-based practices to ensure we are utilizing our scarce resources on programs that work and not continuing to fund what doesn't work. We reauthorized the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act for suicide prevention and intervention and the National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative.

There is a lot more work to be done, obviously, to address the deficiencies

in our current system, but this bipartisan bill is certainly a good step in the right direction toward improving access to mental health services and eliminating the stigma of seeking treatment.

Finally, the 21st Century Cures Act includes numerous priorities that my colleagues on the Finance Committee and I have been working on for several years. One provision I was proud to support in committee extends the Rural Community Hospital Demonstration Program for another 5 years. As our rural hospitals continue to try and make ends meet, this program helps what we call "tweener" hospitals survive. Hospitals that do not qualify as critical access hospitals would not survive under the current Medicare payment system. It is a critical program that benefits Kansans in Junction City, Ulysses, and Fort Scott by keeping their hospital and access care open.

There is more rural relief. Senators THUNE, CRAPO, and I have championed a provision to protect rural access to durable medical equipment under the Competitive Bidding Program. We would have liked to have seen a more permanent solution. However, this bill delays applying competitively bid prices of rural areas and requires the Department of Health and Human Services to take into account stakeholder input as well as average travel distance, volume of items, services furnished, and the number of suppliers in these areas when determining adjustments in setting bid prices.

I have the privilege of being the co-chairman of the Senate Rural Health Caucus. I know how critically important these and other pieces of the package are for our beleaguered rural health care system. There is no question that we have many challenges ahead. While this package may not be a silver bullet to ensure cures for all that ails us, it sets priorities in research, cancer, cancer precision medicine, regenerative medicine, and heart-breaking diseases like Alzheimer's through the BRAIN Initiative. We all know someone affected by these dreaded diseases. It also makes significant changes in how these new therapies are evaluated, hopefully approved, and delivered to patients, providing more tools in the medicine cabinet that will improve many lives. Advances in medical research benefit us all, and this bill does just that.

I wish to make a comment with regard to previous discussions of this bill on the floor of the Senate. Unfortunately, a very small minority of my colleagues want to criticize and even villainize this legislation and those who worked so hard on it, which is terribly disappointing to me. With the passage of this bill, both Republicans and Democrats can take pride in putting together and working toward a bipartisan bill that lives up to its name—the 21st Century Cures Act. I regret the tone of the debate that took place with regard to this bill and the personal comments that were made.

I will remind my colleagues that there is a rule XIX that the distinguished Presiding Officer can invoke at any time and any Senator can ask that a Senator's words be taken down under rule XIX. I only say it so that we can look upon a bipartisan bill like this and say: Look at what we have done. Let's be proud of it and certainly not get into the mud with regard to any personal comments.

I urge my colleagues to advance research, advance the development treatments, and support this bill. It is a good bill. It is a bipartisan bill that we should all be proud of.

I thank the Presiding Officer and yield back.

21ST CENTURY CURES BILL

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, today I wish to support the 21st Century Cures Act, the bill currently before us that, if all goes well, will be approved by the Senate very shortly.

This important legislation represents the hard work of Members from both parties and from both sides of the Capitol. It has support across the economic and ideological spectrum and promises to do quite a bit of good for a number of people.

Put simply—or as simply as one can for a measure of this size—the 21st Century Cures Act represents a significant investment in improving our ability to discover and develop new treatments and medicines and ensure that patients have access to them.

To accomplish this goal, this legislation, among many other things, provides a much-needed expansion of funding for the National Institutes of Health, improvements to the approval process at the Food and Drug Administration, resources to respond to the growing opioid abuse crisis, and an updated government framework for addressing mental health needs.

Thanks to this bill, universities across Utah will be able to access the funding streams from the Precision Medicine Initiative, the BRAIN Initiative, and the Cancer Moonshot. Utah is known for its ability to leverage significant public-private partnerships to work towards cutting-edge health and innovation. I am proud to represent a State where complex technologies are being utilized to help patients find the best treatments and avoid interventions that would be costly, invasive, and ineffective.

Over the past several months, I have had several meaningful experiences working to improve health care for the people of Utah and for all Americans. For example, I had the pleasure of welcoming Vice President BIDEN to the Huntsman Cancer Institute in Utah as part of his Cancer Research Center tour.

The Vice President and I had an insightful discussion about a number of promising therapies being developed in Utah. This legislation will provide an infusion of funding for these types of

projects that will improve lives for individuals and families across our country and around the world.

Among the many noteworthy provisions in this bill are several items advocated by members of the Senate Finance Committee, which I chair. Throughout the 114th Congress, the Finance Committee has worked tirelessly to advance a number of bipartisan legislative efforts and address the concerns of our Members' constituents.

We have reported more bills out of the committee in this Congress than really in any other Congress in modern history, all of them—every single one—with bipartisan support. The long list includes bills in virtually every area of the Finance Committee's jurisdiction, including health care policy.

Some of these priorities—and many others—have been included in the Cures Act.

All told, the current version of the bill includes at least 22 separate provisions that reflect the hard work of Finance Committee members. These include modifications and updates to Medicare, Medicaid, and SCHIP, along with other important changes to the law.

I want to collectively thank the members of the Finance Committee for the work they have done on these measures and on everything else we have been able to accomplish over the last two years.

A number of measures that I personally worked on as a member of the Senate HELP Committee have also been included in the bill. All told, about 37 provisions in this bill are ones that I either drafted or helped draft at some point during my years in the Senate.

For now, I want to focus on my work to help those in the rare disease community. Millions of Americans suffer from unexplainable illnesses that leave them feeling abandoned and alone. And, if we do not address the dry pipeline for drugs that end up treating just a few hundred patients, we are making a national decision that these people do not matter.

None of us should accept that.

To address these concerns, I worked to include specific measures in the Cures Act that improve pediatric care and expedite the drug approval process for rare diseases, ensuring that thousands of patients get the treatments they need when they need them.

With this bill, Congress will make significant steps in helping Americans with rare diseases, but our work will be far from over. Families affected by rare diseases have united around the country to speak with a growing voice, and we need to do all we can to make sure their pleas do not fall on deaf ears.

As you can see, there are a number of good things to say about the 21st Century Cures Act. However, I don't want to leave the impression that the bill is perfect from my point of view. While I support the bill and plan to vote in favor of passage, I do want to make note of what are, in my view, some of the bill's shortcomings.

As this legislation was being developed, I noted that I had concerns with some of the pay-fors that were being thrown around. I have always supported the goals of this legislation and believed it was important that we try to move it forward. However, I do not believe we should be setting undesirable precedents when it comes to funding these types of endeavors.

Early on in this process, some publicly expressed their belief that the spending in this bill could be paid for by making alterations to federal health entitlement programs, namely Medicare and Medicaid.

I will spare my colleagues a lecture on the budget process today. Instead, I will just note that, while there are a number of areas where we can responsibly find savings in these programs, we have almost always tried to avoid diverting funds from these programs—which constitute mandatory spending—to pay for discretionary spending programs.

And, put simply, I believe we need to continue following what has generally been a brightline rule in that regard. If we start casually commingling mandatory and discretionary funds, we run the risk of greatly expanding discretionary spending programs while simultaneously weakening our entitlement programs that are already on the brink of fiscal crisis.

Fortunately, the main proponents of the Cures Act have been willing to work with me, and they have scaled back their initial efforts to use the mandatory spending sources to pay for the bill. While those pay-fors haven't been entirely purged from the bill, I do not intend to vote against the legislation on that basis.

That said, I do want to make clear that this shouldn't become a legislative template or be considered a precedent for how Congress will pay for new spending in the future. And, as the chairman of the committee that has jurisdiction over most of the relevant mandatory spending programs, I intend to do all I can to make sure we avoid this practice going forward.

In addition, I want to say that I was disappointed that the bill before us does not include provisions from the Family First Prevention Services Act, which Senator WYDEN and I, along with our counterparts in the House, introduced earlier this year.

This is commonsense legislation that, in my view, would be a good fit for this vehicle. It has broad support from Members of both parties and in both Chambers, and we all worked to get it included in this package. Unfortunately, we weren't able to complete this task. So all of us will have to keep looking for any reasonable vehicle or opportunity to move this important bill in the near future.

Still, even with these concerns I have about this final version of the 21st Century Cures Act, I am strongly supportive of the bill, and I want to commend those who worked so hard to get

it this far, including Chairmen BRADY and UPTON and Speaker RYAN over in the House, and Chairman ALEXANDER, Leader MCCONNELL, and his leadership team here in the Senate.

They have all done good work, and I congratulate them on this success.

Now, we just have to pass the bill.

Once again, I intend to vote in favor of the 21st Century Cures Act, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, first, we got a little out of order on the speaking schedule as to how it should have started this afternoon.

I ask unanimous consent that Senator NELSON go immediately after me. He has been courteous enough to allow me to speak, and I ask unanimous consent that he speak after I am done speaking.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I wish to congratulate everyone who has worked on the Cures bill. There are many areas that I have concerns about, and there are many positive things. I am looking forward to coming back as well and working with colleagues on how we complete the job on mental health by providing full funding for community mental health care across the country, which is not in the bill. But there are some positive steps forward on health care.

MEDICARE

I think it is very important, as we are coming to the end of this session in the next week or two, that we talk about the fact that when we come back, there will be incredibly important debates on health care, and one of them is what will happen to Medicare for tens of millions of seniors and people with disabilities going forward in our country. I want to take a moment to speak to that.

First of all, Medicare and Social Security are great American success stories. Those two programs have lifted a generation of seniors out of poverty and created a quality of life for them and a guarantee, after paying in all their lives, that health care and some basic economic security will be there.

I am particularly concerned right now, though, about the comments we are hearing about proposals to fundamentally change Medicare and undermine Medicare. We are hearing every day now that Medicare, as we know it, is in jeopardy of being dismantled, taking away the security and the peace of mind of tens of millions of Americans and their families across the country who are currently on Medicare—the health care guarantee of Medicare—or those who care for others or those who within the next few years will be on Medicare or who are concerned about their children.

Why are we expressing this now? First of all, the Speaker of the House said on Sunday that Medicare is burning through the budget. He has consistently said Medicare is on the verge of

bankruptcy, which is not true. It appears the goal is to scare people by telling us Medicare will not be there for our children. It will not be there only if we don't keep our commitments to Medicare and the people of this country.

I think I have heard almost every single day since the 1980s that if we want to save Medicare, we have to destroy it as a guaranteed health care system somehow. Now, we know there was a huge difference of opinion and a partisan split back when Medicare was created between Democrats and Republicans, and I am proud as a Democrat that we created Medicare and have been able to expand prescription drug coverage and other quality measures and other coverage that is so critical, but it seems like we are constantly going back in some way debating whether Medicare should exist as we know it. So we hear that to save Medicare, we have to destroy it as a guaranteed health care system—which I completely reject, as do my Democratic colleagues.

We are hearing we have to cut Medicare, we have to change it from a guarantee into a “maybe.” We also hear all kinds of different names used, whether it is a voucher system, where you get a certain amount of money in a voucher and you go to the private sector and try to buy coverage, and whatever is not covered by the voucher, you have to make up the difference. I would remind people that Medicare came into being because the private sector was not providing affordable health care for seniors and people with disabilities so we have absolutely no reason to believe that would not be the case today.

We hear about eligibility changes, premium support, means testing, and all kinds of other things that go to the very essence of what Medicare is all about. Again, Medicare is a great American success story that Americans of all ages want to see continue and be expanded upon. Regardless of what kinds of names are used, the end result is still the same. These plans are plans to take away the benefits Americans have worked their entire lives for, a system they pay into that lets them know that as we all get older, we will have the health care we need for ourselves and our families.

What is also not mentioned is the fact that Medicare is solvent through 2028, thanks to the Affordable Care Act which extended the fiscal sovereignty of Medicare. The Affordable Care Act also closed the gap in coverage—what has been called the doughnut hole—for prescription drug coverage. By the way, if the ACA is repealed, there will be another hole in that coverage and seniors' Medicare prescription drug costs are going to go back up. We have seen that Medicare, in fact, is solvent to 2028. It now actually costs less for a prescription drug today than it used to cost, and we are seeing quality efforts going on every day, preventive efforts, to continue to extend sovereignty and bring down costs.

I am all for improving Medicare. I have supported efforts to bring additional accountability and credibility into Medicare. We will continue to do that. We want to make sure it continues to be more and more effective. We want to strengthen Medicare. Cutting it, taking it from a guarantee to a maybe, is not the way to do that. In fact, it is not—despite the Speaker's own hashtag—a better way. It is not a better way.

Why am I concerned at this point? Why do we think Republicans are serious about trying to undermine Medicare as well as Medicaid, of which 80 percent of the spending goes to long-term care for senior citizens? There are two things that are deeply concerning to me. First, in every House Republican budget since 2011, everyone has effectively turned Medicare into a voucher for people eligible after 2023, 6 years from now. It would raise the costs. It would take away the certainty and the guarantee of Medicare. It would reopen the gap in prescription drug coverage. For millions of people across Michigan and across America, you don't need to make health care harder. It needs to be easier.

In addition to comments from the Speaker of the House about changing Medicare and making it a priority in the budget, creating payoffs in the system, taking away the universal guarantee, we now have the President-elect nominating Dr. TOM PRICE, a current House Member, for Secretary of Health and Human Services, who has supported that budget privatizing Medicare, block granting, and cutting Medicaid and long-term care for seniors in nursing homes and so on. We are told by the nominee that he expects Republicans in Congress to move quickly on this legislation in the new year, even though President-Elect Donald Trump promised throughout his campaign that Medicare would be safe on his watch. He made that promise to the people I represent—the people we all represent—and I can assure you, I am going to be doing everything possible to make sure that promise is kept.

The only thing gutting Medicare is going to do is create chaos for tens of millions of seniors, people with disabilities, and for the health care system in general. Seniors and people with disabilities—all Americans—deserve better than this. As we enter the new year, Democrats will fight tooth and nail to protect Medicare, to make sure Medicaid and long-term care is available for our seniors, to make sure the health care guarantee that has been there for a generation of retirees and people with disabilities is continued. Medicare is a great American success story, and we are ready to do everything possible to protect it and strengthen it as a guarantee for Americans in the future.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

DREAMERS

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I want to speak about DREAMers. These are children who are brought to this country in an illegal status because they are brought by their parents who are undocumented. These children often do not know that in fact they are undocumented.

There are threats in the new administration to completely reverse President Obama's Executive order that allows these children to stay in the United States and continue their education. I want to tell you about one such DREAMer. This is Elisha Dawkins. Elisha came from the Bahamas in an undocumented status with his mother at the age of 6 months. Elisha's mother was deported shortly thereafter, and he was raised by family in Florida.

He always thought he was an American citizen. After high school, he joined the Army. This photo shows when he served a tour in Iraq. He came back and was mustered out of the Army with an honorable discharge after having been awarded the Iraqi Service Medal. He was assigned to a very sensitive position as a photographer.

Promptly after coming back and starting his studies, he decided to join the Navy Reserves and was given a top secret clearance. He performed photography at a very sensitive location, Guantanamo, with all of the detainees.

So Elisha, coming off his Reserve duty, resumed his studies at the University of North Florida. At one point, he had started to fill out a passport application but did not go through with that application and never turned it in. Later on, filling out a passport application, he was asked if he had ever applied for a passport and he checked the box “no” because he hadn't. The U.S. attorney's office came in and arrested him, threw him in the clink, and in the process, found out he was undocumented because of the circumstances I just told you. A veteran of Iraq and Guantanamo—Army in Iraq, Navy in Guantanamo—is in a detention center awaiting trial.

Fortunately, Elisha Dawkins' situation came to my attention and I started raising some Cain about this. As a matter of fact, in a further hearing in front of a Federal judge, the Federal judge, in essence, dressed down in court the assistant U.S. attorney who had pursued this case and, fortunately, the charges were dropped. That enabled Elisha to go on and to continue his studies. In the process, since he had no conviction, he was allowed to apply for U.S. citizenship. His military service justified him to do that. This past week, he is now graduating from the University of North Florida.

Because a child came here in an undocumented status through no fault of their own, it is not right that children, such as Elisha Dawkins, who grow up to be great assets for the United States would be penalized and threatened with deportation.

Obviously, we have to attend to the national security implications, in his case of potential passport fraud, which was not the case, but this was a man who had not committed that fraud and who had served his country honorably.

As this case has resolved itself into a happy ending, just think of all the other stories of DREAMers who are out there and who share Elisha's commitment to and love of country, commitment to the ideals that all these DREAMers share of growing up in the only country they have ever known, and they had always thought they were a member of that country.

I have said it before, and I will say it again. The DREAMers are our neighbors, they are our friends, they are our high school valedictorians, and they are our veterans.

They were brought to this country before they ever even knew of the significance of their trip, and they have benefited our communities greatly. It is clear that America is stronger for a person like Elisha Dawkins.

As this Congress comes to a close, I remind all of us and urge us to remember—next year, when there is an attempt to turn around that White House Executive order, I want us to remember the faces of people such as Elisha Dawkins. I want us to come together and acknowledge their many contributions to this great country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). The Senator from Oregon.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT NOMINATION

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, colleagues, we are now 4 weeks out from a Presidential election in which millions of American voters indicated they wanted a change.

Donald Trump, our President-elect, campaigned and was elected on a platform he called draining the swamp. Getting rid of entrenched special interests sounds good. Fighting on behalf of middle-class Americans sounds good. Taking on Wall Street's powerful special interests sounds good.

In fact, month after month, our President-elect attacked Secretary Clinton, saying she was too close to the Wall Street banks. He said things such as "Hillary will never reform Wall Street." He said, "I know the guys at Goldman Sachs. They have total control" over his opponent.

These are pretty harsh words. With months of hammering Wall Street and hammering his opponent, it came as a big surprise to many last week, when President-Elect Trump announced that he would be naming Steve Mnuchin, a darling of Wall Street, a 17-year veteran of Goldman Sachs, a career in the financial industry, to run the Treasury Department—the single most important post in our economy to be run by Wall Street.

Instead of draining the swamp in Washington, it looks as if our President-elect is turning our government intended to be of, by, and for the people into a government of, by, and for Wall

Street. Appointing a 17-year Goldman Sachs executive to oversee financial regulation is the definition of the fox guarding the hen house. It has the potential to undo all the progress and recovery we have made since shutting down the Wall Street casino, which dragged our country into the Great Recession. Furthermore, wouldn't it be great to have someone at the helm of our economy who fought to put people into homes, instead of fighting to kick people out of their homes and onto the street, as he has done.

One of the great things about America is the resiliency of the American people. They come upon a challenge, sometimes a catastrophe, and they work to put the pieces back together again. We have made our way through the Great Depression. We made it through two world wars, we made it through the September 11 terrorist attacks, and we have worked to recover from the Great Recession.

That crisis saw 8.7 million jobs lost, trillions of dollars of lost family wealth, and more than 2 million businesses shuttered. It was a financial crisis that cost about 4 million Americans their homes. It wiped out the hard-earned retirement savings of millions more families.

The American people are working to rebuild, but they haven't forgotten. They haven't forgotten foreclosed homes. They haven't forgotten the lost jobs. They haven't forgotten the retirement savings. They haven't forgotten the shuttered businesses across our great land, and they definitely haven't forgotten the recklessness of Wall Street that made it all happen.

It seems that perhaps President-Elect Donald Trump has already forgotten not just the driving force behind the Great Recession of 2008 that caused these calamities for millions of American families and businesses, but he has also forgotten his campaign vow to take on Wall Street. Instead, Mr. Trump is planning to put Wall Street in charge of the Treasury Department—again, the most powerful economic position in the United States of America.

Where does Wall Street stand on these issues? Wall Street hates the provisions that Congress adopted to end predatory lending practices in mortgages and consumer laws. They hate those provisions, and they want to get rid of them. They want to get rid of the watchdog that makes sure those provisions don't return. Wall Street hates the provisions that we adopted to shut down the Wall Street casino, where Wall Street firms made huge bets with the deposits of American savers to terrible consequences.

Bloomberg News reported that Trump's nominee, Steve Mnuchin, was front and center during these operations of the Wall Street casino. Have no doubt that he plans to do what he can to restore that casino. While being interviewed right after his nomination, he promised to "strip back parts of

Dodd-Frank" and went on to suggest that the Volcker rule, which is the provision that shut down the Wall Street casino, should be weakened or eliminated. It is not speculation; it is straight from his own testimony to the American public, after he was nominated, that he wants to restore the Wall Street casino.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau is another target. That protection bureau is a watchdog on the beat against predatory financial practices. It is a pretty good thing when you have an organization that has returned nearly \$12 billion to 27 million American citizens harmed by illegal and predatory practices in the lending business. Furthermore, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau has saved far more by preventing these practices in the first place on current lending—\$12 billion returned, but who knows how much they saved consumers on the front end. Maybe it is \$50 billion, maybe it is \$100 billion, maybe it is more. But the fact is, our citizens are getting a better foundation for our financial success.

If you believe in the success of American families, you want to block predatory practices designed to undermine them. That is what we did in Congress, and that is what is at risk.

We did a lot of powerful things to rectify the excesses that led to the disaster of 2008 under the Bush administration. We created stress tests to ensure the strength and security of our largest banks—that they had sufficient reserves to withstand periods of economic challenge. That makes sense. We put procedures in place to unwind megacorporations when they fail so they can be unwound and not take the rest of the economy, the financial system, down with them. That makes sense.

We established a cop on the beat to make sure people aren't scammed by credit card companies. It makes sense. We made sure we had an organization to which people could appeal when they thought there was a predatory practice, to have it rectified and have the funds returned to them if they were right. That makes sense. All of this makes sense. It makes what type of sense? It makes common sense.

Isn't it just common understanding that when a predator damages a family, our entire community suffers and when a family loses its home, our entire community suffers? Don't we understand that when people are thrown out into the street—as Steve Mnuchin's banks specialized in—the families are hurt, the children are deeply hurt? But now we have a nominee who specialized in Wall Street and specialized in foreclosures. I say again, wouldn't it be great to have a nominee to head our economy who worked to put people into homes, who worked to make families successful, not someone who specialized in throwing them out of their homes and onto the street?

In 2009, in the depths of the financial crisis, Steve Mnuchin purchased the

fourth largest failed bank, IndyMac, when it collapsed in July of 2008. After buying IndyMac, he renamed it OneWest and took over as the CEO.

Under Mnuchin's leadership, OneWest became what housing advocates in California called a foreclosure machine. Why did they call it a foreclosure machine? Because in the midst of the Great Recession, it pushed forward 36,000 homeowners into foreclosure, using tactics that were certainly off limits, such as robo-signing, fake signing—let me put it directly, fake signing of documents. His bank was responsible for more than one-third of all reverse mortgage foreclosures, which disproportionately were targeted at America's seniors.

Let me tell you the story of Ossie Lofton. Ossie Lofton, a 90-year-old woman from Lakeland, FL, took out a reverse mortgage on her home. This is a type of loan that allows an elderly individual to draw up the equity of their home to help them meet their basic monthly expenses. The beauty of this is that once you have that reverse mortgage, assuming it is not designed with predatory features, it can supply to a senior some steady supply, and they don't have to write a steady mortgage check to anyone. Instead, they get income to help meet those basic expenses, so it is hard to imagine how you would end in default in this situation. But individuals are still responsible for paying property taxes and homeowners insurance.

In Ossie Lofton's case, there was confusion over her homeowners insurance coverage. The bank sent her a bill for \$423.30. Ossie looked at that. She thought she had it right, and so she sent the insurance company a check for \$423, overlooking the 30-cent payment.

Well, they sent her back another bill for 30 cents. Again, she misread it. She thought they were asking for 3 cents, and she mailed them 3 cents—27 cents shy.

What did OneWest do under Steve Mnuchin's leadership? They foreclosed on Ossie for 27 cents.

In my hand I have 30 cents, a dime and four nickels. Why would a bank foreclose on a woman who owed them a few cents? Why would they do that?

Well, if you followed these predatory practices, some banks looked at it this way. They said if we can find a technicality to grab someone's home, we can resell it for far more than we are owed. That is a huge profit.

So for that 27 cents, she lost her home. She and thousands of others lost their homes so this bank could profit rather than work out a mortgage modification. That is really a crime against an American citizen, a specialty of this bank, a specialty through which Steve Mnuchin profited millions and millions of dollars. Millions of dollars of income was accumulated based on the suffering inflicted on thousands and thousands of American homeowners.

We could look at another story. Leslie Parks took out a subprime adjust-

able rate mortgage to pay for repairs. She faced some hard times and was falling behind, but under very constructive negotiations with One West to stay in the home, you will recall we had this program called the Home Affordable Mortgage Program—the HAMP program—wherein a bank could rework it. They were saying to her that we are reworking it, all is good, but, meanwhile, they were pursuing foreclosure. The result was, thinking she was working out a modification, she came back to her home in the middle of a blizzard and found herself locked out.

This is an example of the widely publicized two-track policy in which banks would pretend to work out a modification while aggressively pursuing foreclosure. That is not a good practice. It is not fair to the homeowner.

Let's look at another story. Gregg and Diane Horoski. They refinanced in 2004. They paid off their original mortgage with a loan from Deutsche Bank and used the rest of the money to cover health care costs, but it is one of those loans with an exploding interest rate, and the loan interest soared to 12.375 percent. Then Gregg Horoski started having health problems so they were having trouble keeping up with those high interest payments. So they asked the bank to work with them. What bank? One West. They asked One West to work with them to modify the loan, but the bank turned them down, misled them about how much they owed, lied to them about how much was at stake.

The Horoskis felt betrayed by the misrepresentations and they took One West to court and Judge Jeffrey Spinner said the following about the bank's behavior. Which bank? One West, the bank that Steve Mnuchin was heading. He called the bank's behavior "harsh, repugnant, shocking and repulsive." He also added, "unequitable, unconscionable, vexatious and opprobrious." He pretty much summoned every word in the English dictionary to say how wrong the bank's action was as they dealt with this couple.

Now, the bank lost that case, but they were aggressively pursuing everything so they took it to appeal. They spent a lot of money and had a lot of lawyers take on this couple and eventually the bank won. They won no grace period, no compromise, no home for this couple. The bank won and the Horoskis lost, as did thousands and thousands and thousands of individuals and couples who owned homes who lost them to these very aggressive foreclosure strategies.

That is not all. Mr. Mnuchin and his bank didn't just prey on hard-working Americans, they also had an operation that has a record of discriminating against minority home buyers and minority neighborhoods. Fair housing applicants have filed legal complaint after legal complaint against their practices.

Here is an example. According to the California Reinvestment Coalition and

Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California, the bank's Southern California branches made a total of only two mortgage loans to African-American home buyers during 2014 and 2015. That is one per year; two loans over 24 months in one of the country's most diverse communities—a community that includes Los Angeles, where African Americans make up more than 9 percent of the population. This practice is known as redlining. It is an egregious practice. What is more, of the 35,877 homes that One West foreclosed on just in California between April 2009 and April 2015, 68 percent were majority non-White areas.

Looking at this record, it is pretty clear that Mnuchin has not used his skills in life to put people into homes; he has used his skills to kick people out of their homes and into the street.

Instead of fighting for homeowners, he has made a living—the life of a mega-multimillionaire—off the suffering of low-income and middle-income Americans.

Our President-elect bashed his opponent for being too cozy with Wall Street banks. He told Iowans: "I am not going to let Wall Street get away with murder," but then he nominates an individual with this record of predatory practices, of private profit over the suffering of thousands of families, to lead our economy in the years ahead. This is just 4 weeks after his election, just 4 weeks after we heard the cries that he would stand up to Wall Street, and now he is putting Wall Street in charge.

There is more. He is not appointing just one but two former Goldman Sachs executives to key positions of power and influence. One is Steve Bannon, assigned to be his Chief Strategist. That is right—Goldman Sachs—Chief Strategist for our President-Elect. Now we have an economist in chief, the Treasury Secretary, also coming from the same direction. It sounds like instead of "draining the swamp," our President-elect is helping Wall Street restore the predatory practices that destroyed the living and the lives of millions of American homeowners. This is wrong.

I call on President-Elect Trump to reverse course, to fight for government of, by, and for the people—not government of, by, and for Wall Street.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

CONGRESSIONAL PRIORITIES

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, the business of the 114th Congress is drawing to a close to wrap up a few final bills. One of the most important bills that we will be passing this week is the National Defense Authorization Act. In fact, this is one of the most important bills that we pass each year.

The National Defense Authorization Act is one of two bills that ensures that our military men and women have the tools and resources they need to defend our country. It is the bill that

authorizes funding for the body armor our troops wear and the weapons they carry into battle. It is the bill that authorizes funding for the advanced technology our military needs to be successful on today's battlefield and the bill that authorizes true pay increases which help us retain an All-Volunteer Force. Making sure our troops have what they need to defend our country is pretty much our most important responsibility as Members of Congress; first, of course, because the security of our country depends on it and, second, because we owe our men and women in uniform nothing less.

This year's National Defense Authorization Act authorizes the largest troop pay increase in 6 years. It modernizes the military health care system to improve quality of care for our troops and their families. It reduces Pentagon bureaucracy to focus resources on our Nation's warfighters, and it supports our allies amid growing threats.

It also addresses the dangerous underfunding of the military that has occurred under President Obama. It stops troop reductions for the Army and Marine Corps and authorizes additional funds to address readiness shortfalls.

Members of our military should not have to be salvaging spare parts from retired aircraft to keep their planes in the air. Over the next few years, the Republican majorities in Congress will work with President-Elect Trump to rebuild our Nation's military and ensure that we have the strongest fighting force in the world.

This bill is an important start.

As we finish the work of the 114th Congress, we are also looking forward to the 115th. Republicans will move quickly to take up a number of important measures. Two big issues it will tackle right at the beginning are repealing ObamaCare and confirming a Supreme Court nominee.

I don't need to tell anyone that ObamaCare is a failure. A Gallup poll released last week found that 80 percent of Americans want major changes to ObamaCare or want the law repealed and replaced. That shouldn't come as any surprise.

The President promised lower premiums and affordable care, but ObamaCare has meant exactly the opposite. Premium costs have soared and soared again. Deductibles have increased, and health care choices have been sharply reduced.

One constituent contacted me and said:

My ObamaCare premium went up from \$1,080 per month to \$1,775 per month, a 64-percent increase. That is \$21,300 a year for health insurance.

Another constituent wrote to say: "My ObamaCare premium doubles next year." It will double. I don't know too many Americans who can afford to have their health insurance premiums double.

Still another constituent wrote to tell me that "today I received a new

premium notice for my ObamaCare insurance. My policy rate for myself, my wife, and my teenage son has increased by 357 percent"—357 percent.

ObamaCare is on the brink of collapse. We know what millions of Americans already know; that is, that the status quo is unsustainable. It is time to repeal this law and replace it with something that works, and that is precisely what we are going to do.

We are going to get started on repeal as soon as the 115th Congress convenes, and then we are going to work step-by-step to replace ObamaCare with real health care reform—health care reform that focuses on the States rather than having the Federal Government running everything, health care that gives more control to patients and doctors when it comes to health care choices and decisions, health care that provides choices and is patient-centered so there are more options out there, more choices, more competition in the marketplace, and a health care system that allows flexibility for our small businesses on which much of the responsibility for providing health care for their employees falls.

Another thing we are going to get started on right away in January is confirming the President's nominees, including his nominee for the Supreme Court. My Democratic colleagues have spent a lot of time talking about the importance of confirming a ninth Justice to the Supreme Court. I trust they will bring that same eagerness with them in January. I look forward to working with them during the confirmation process.

After Justice Scalia's death, I came to the floor to honor him. Like others who spoke at the time, I mentioned his keen mind, his gift for language and, most of all, his absolute commitment to the law. For Justice Scalia, the Constitution truly was the supreme law of the land. He didn't let anything interfere with that. His politics, his personal opinions, his feelings about a case, none of those things were allowed to play a role in his decisions. That is the key right there.

We all know Justice Scalia had personal opinions, but when it came down to deciding cases, he ignored them. He looked at the law and the Constitution, which is the supreme law, and he judged accordingly.

It is wonderful to have strong opinions. It is wonderful to have sympathy for causes or organizations. It is wonderful to have plans for fixing society's problems, but none of those things have any business influencing your ruling when you sit on the Supreme Court. There only two things that should influence a Supreme Court Justice's ruling: the law and the Constitution. The minute something else comes into play, whether it is a Justice's personal feelings or a political philosophy, you have done away with the rule of law and replaced it with the rule of personal opinion. We have gone through a lot in this country to ensure

that we will be governed by the law and not by someone's personal opinions.

Justice Scalia will be a hard Justice to replace, but I am confident that President-Elect Trump will nominate a Justice with a similar respect for the rule of law, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to get a qualified nominee confirmed.

Repealing ObamaCare and confirming a Supreme Court nominee are two important things we are going to do next year, but they are just the beginning. Republicans are going to spend the 115th Congress fighting for the American people's priorities, from growing our economy and creating better paying jobs to securing our borders and protecting our Nation. We have a chance to do big things for the American people in 2017, and we can't wait to get started.

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

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

MINE WORKER HEALTH CARE BENEFITS AND PENSIONS

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, it strikes me as pretty unbelievable that we are in the process of voting—debating a continuing resolution, and yet nobody has read it and nobody understands what is in it. We hear news reports, but nobody who I know here—at least on our side—has been in the negotiations even though we have a Democratic President and the Senate is 45, 46 percent Democrats, even though more people voted for Democratic Senators than Republican Senators in this election and most of the last several elections. Even with all that, that shouldn't matter, but Senator MCCONNELL and the Republican leadership are asking us to vote on something this complicated with this many add-on amendments that we have not even read yet. What kind of way to run the Senate is that? We do know, though, from the reports I can get, what they have told us is that Majority Leader MCCONNELL's response to the mine workers has been pretty pathetic.

Today I met with Senator HATCH in his office. Today I met with Senator WYDEN in his office. One of the things we did in the Finance Committee on an overwhelmingly bipartisan basis, joined by my Republican colleague from Ohio, Senator PORTMAN, and other coal State Democrats and Republicans—Senator CAPITO, Senator MANCHIN, Senator WARNER, Senator KAINE, Senator CASEY, Senator TOOMEY—all of us in this committee supported a bipartisan fix for mine worker pensions and health care. Yet the continuing resolution at best—at best, we understand; again, we haven't

read it yet because they won't show it to us yet even though they want us to vote on it—at best, it has some 4 months of health care and nothing for pensions.

This is not a taxpayer bailout; this is moving money—unused money—from the abandoned mine fund in to fund the pensions and health care for mine workers and mine worker widows. Keep in mind—I know the Presiding Officer doesn't represent coal States. She may not know a lot of miners, as I and some of my colleagues do, but she knows about mining. Understand, there are more miner widows than there are likely to be insurance salesmen widows or realtor widowers or whatever. Mine-working is a dangerous job. Mine workers too often get injured and killed on the job. Their lives are shortened from injury. Their lives are shortened from illnesses, black lung and other illnesses. So mine workers who marry at 20 or 25 are likely—their spouses are likely to outlive them by a number of years. That is the other reason we should do this.

The third reason we should do this is that almost 70 years ago, President Truman made a commitment that we have lived up to until now. The reason we aren't living up to it now is because the majority leader of the Senate said no. I don't know exactly why he said no. I know he is not a big fan of the United Mine Workers union. I support the United Mine Workers union. I care about unions. I know unions helped create the middle class in this country. But that is not the point. My caring about this is—there are 12,000 mine workers in my part of the country, more than 1,000 in Ohio, for which this will be a very, very bad Christmas because they have already gotten notice, as Senator MANCHIN said, that their health care is going to be cut off. If we do a 4-month fix, then they will get another notice in January that their health care is going to get cut off. How do you treat people that way? I mean, we dress well. We are all well paid. We have good health care. We have good pensions. We are telling these mine workers: Yeah, you may have earned this under the old rules, but, sorry, we can't take care of you.

My friends over there could bail out the banks—that is OK—and then banker compensation keeps going up and up, but they can't take care of mine workers with a relatively small pension and health care. They can't take care of them.

We passed a bipartisan mine worker pension and health care bill. We passed it out of committee. We did it the way Senator McCONNELL, the majority leader, wanted us to. We went through the process. Now he is not willing to honor that. It is pretty outrageous. At the same time, they are doing something special in this bill for Wyoming. Nothing against Wyoming. I like Senator ENZI. I like Senator BARRASSO. I want to help them help their State. But this is a part of the country. It is

Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia, Virginia. These are States that have thousands of mine workers, and this Senate is betraying them. If my colleagues think we should go home for Christmas starting next week without doing this, that is morally reprehensible.

Senator MANCHIN and I were talking today and Senator CASEY and Senator Kaine and Senator WARREN and I were talking today about how we are willing to stay until Christmas, we are willing to stay until December 25—literally, to Christmas—to get this done because it is morally reprehensible and it is outrageous that we would leave here without taking care of these mine workers.

I know some of them. I know Norm Skinner. I know Dave Dilley. I have known Babe Erdos for 35 years. These are people who worked very hard in the mines under dangerous conditions. They are the reason we are able to have so much manufacturing in Ohio. The coal they mine helps to produce the electricity that makes our standard of living so much higher than it would be without it.

I spoke at the rally. Thousands of mine workers were here late this summer—I think in July. I am not sure what month it was; maybe in September they were here. It was a very hot day. I remember the president of the International Mine Workers, Cecil Roberts, asked the question: How many of you are veterans? A huge number of people waved their hands. They were all standing at this rally. How many of you had fathers or mothers who were veterans? It seemed as if it was the whole crowd. These are people who served their country, they make our communities work, and we are going to betray them, we are going to forget them because one Senator, who happens to be the majority leader, for whatever reason doesn't like the United Mine Workers. That is fundamentally what it is. I don't ever want to embarrass anybody, I don't want to call people out, but there are 12,000 mine workers who are going to have a bad Christmas. Their lives will be shortened if we don't take care of them. The stress they are under—they have already gotten one notification. If we do this for another 4 months, they will get another notification in January saying: Sorry, I know we gave you health care again for a while, but we are cutting it off again because Congress can't get its act together.

The President wants to do this. Even the House of Representatives wants to do it—the House of Representatives that took out of a bill this week “Buy American” provisions for steel and aluminum. That is a whole other issue; I don't understand why they would do that. The fact is, the House did it, the President wants to do it, and a strong majority of the Finance Committee wants to do it. If we brought this to a vote on the Senate floor, there is no question it would pass. It doesn't cost the taxpayer money. It is not a bailout.

It is honoring a pledge that Harry Truman made, that we made in the 1950s and 1960s and 1970s and 1980s and 1990s and 2000, and all of a sudden we are not honoring that pledge. It is outrageous. We can fix this. We know how the Senate should do it.

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

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

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, as we send troops into harm's way—and as you personally well know—it is our job to ensure that they have the tools and the resources they need to carry out the mission they are asked to carry out. We never want Americans to be involved in a fair fight. We always want them to be involved in an unfair fight where they have every possible advantage. It doesn't always work out that way, but it should always be our goal. That is what the Defense authorization bill is designed to do.

This will be the 55th consecutive year that the Congress has passed and the Senate has passed the National Defense Authorization Act. The leadership of Chairman McCain and Ranking Member Jack Reed makes it possible for us to be here one more time, emphasizing that the No. 1 priority of the Federal Government is to defend the country. It is hard to find a bill that we pass every year for more than half a century, but this critical piece of legislation provides the vision and the authorization necessary for the military to move forward and to do that No. 1 job of defending America.

There has been—and I think today we will see that again in the vote on this bill—the strong, bipartisan support that this bill always receives. Although there is sometimes a discussion about when it should be passed, we have not failed to pass it in a long time. It includes a lot of provisions that I think will make a big difference. One is a pay raise for our troops, which they deserve. It is the largest pay increase in the last 6 years, and it begins to fulfill our commitment to those who currently serve. As well, we need to fulfill our commitment to those who have served.

I am also glad that there is a vital project for the Nation that happens to be located in my State, in St. Louis, MO. The final version of this bill includes authorization for the land acquisition for the National Geospatial movement from the south part of St. Louis, where it has been for seven decades, to a new location that allows them to build a facility, as it is right now, that is fully backing up the only other facility in the world that does the level of geospatial work that this one does. When something happens in

Springfield, VA, where that location isn't monitoring the world as it usually does, all of that work goes to St. Louis, where on every other day they share the responsibility for geospatial.

There is a provision in here, at a fundamental level of safety, to build a fire station at Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri. Everything from building a fire station to creating a \$1.7 billion facility that allows us to further keep an eye on the world as we do now is a good thing. It also addresses the issue that was raised earlier this year concerning members of the National Guard—men and women who were given a bonus and then wrongfully asked to return that bonus. It was not their error. That money in most families long ago has been spent. It was thought to be appropriately handed over to them, and they shouldn't be penalized because other people made a mistake when that distribution was made. With this bill, they will not be penalized.

I think there is an increase here in end strength. It is in the conference report. I certainly supported Senator MORAN's efforts on this issue and commend him for the hard work he put forward to be sure that we don't lose any more ground on the strength we have and the ability we have to be ready. Making down payments on our readiness issues, stabilizing our force at a time when we really face more challenges around the world—not less—was a minimum thing for us to do, but the bill does that. Senator MORAN's leadership was important in accomplishing that as well.

Once again, this bill puts Congress on record against the President's plan to move terrorist detainees held at Guantanamo Bay to any location on U.S. soil. I, along with a majority of Americans, oppose the idea that we bring these terrorists here. The President made a campaign pledge a decade ago now, and 10 years later, not only has that campaign pledge not been able to be fulfilled but the Congress once again today asserts our view that it should not be fulfilled.

The administration admitted earlier this year that Americans have been killed by terrorists released from Guantanamo, and they made that admission, by the way, days before they approved another dozen inmates to transfer somewhere else in the world, where I don't think they can be kept count of and track of like they need to be. We don't need to close this facility. We don't need to abandon the facility, and I am glad that there are strict prohibitions here that don't allow that to happen.

This bill also makes important steps toward enhancing the quality of life for our servicemembers and their families. GEN Ray Odierno, recently retired, Chief of Staff of the Army, said that the strength of the military is in military families, and we need to do a better job recognizing that. I hope we are able to advance an effort that was in the Senate bill that didn't get into the

final bill—the Military Family Stability Act—next year. This is an action that will allow military families to stay longer at a location or to move earlier than the individual in the military does if there is a professional reason or an educational reason for that to happen.

The investment that military families have made in the country and the investment they have made in what the person serving has learned in a very complicated defense world don't need to be unnecessarily complicated by whether someone gets to finish a year in elementary school or gets to stay another 3 months so they can graduate from high school, particularly if the person in the military is willing to go on ahead and bear their own expense until the family, with the family assistance that families get or the living assistance, moves later.

This was determined by everybody that looked at it, except the Pentagon, to have no cost. I asked every senior officer who came before the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee about this concept of making it a little easier for people to stay, for a spouse who needed to go ahead and move a little early to start that teaching year at a new school, to get a job that was available at a hospital, or to do whatever that spouse could do to continue to have their professional career. I asked officer after officer: What do you think about this?

One after another, they all said: This is exactly the kind of investment we need to make. We didn't quite get there in this bill, and I am grateful that Senator MCCAIN has pledged to work further to study why the Pentagon itself—or at least the Department of Defense at the highest levels—is the only place that thinks this would cost anything or would be too much trouble. It wouldn't be too much trouble. I hope to see it in the bill next year.

Someone who has really helped in my ability to look at this bill, with the work that I do as a member of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee and with the work that we do with great military facilities in our State, is here on the floor today, MAJ Andy Anderson. He has been a great resource to our office, and we have benefited for some time now of having military fellows come in and spend a year with us. I continue to hear from them that it is also a great benefit to them to see how this part of the process of preparing to do what is necessary to help them defend the country works.

The knowledge and experience that Major Anderson has gained as an Army officer helped in discussions we had both in the State and in the Nation. I have been particularly appreciative of his willingness to go beyond what might be considered the typical duties of a military fellow in a Senate office. For instance, he has taken personal interest and has been instrumental in assisting a Missouri family in getting their father's remains returned home

from Laos after having been shot down over Laos during the Vietnam war. He has devoted a lot of time to gathering and analyzing data on legislative history and actions that will continue to be critical to the office moving forward. I want to also thank his family and wish him the best as he and his wife Audra and their sons Reid and Joel go to what military assignment they have next.

This bill renews the Iran Sanctions Act, and the Iran Sanctions Act would have expired at the end of the year. I am hopeful that the administration understands that this act is really a foundational element of the regime that they entered into. It was an agreement that I didn't support. I still don't support it, but extending the Iran Sanctions Act is perfectly consistent with what the Iran nuclear agreement purports to do. If the Iran Sanctions Act is a problem, the Iran nuclear agreement is just as bad as I thought it was.

When that agreement was completed, the administration repeatedly promised that U.S. sanctions on Iran for its support of terrorism would remain in place under the agreement. For example, the day the agreement was announced, President Obama himself said that we will maintain our own sanctions related to Iran's support of terrorism.

The administration continues to recognize the Iranian state as the leading state sponsor of terrorism. This Iran Sanctions Act extension sends another message to Iran that the Congress and the country of the United States are paying attention. It gives the next administration a powerful tool to hold Iran responsible, and I certainly urge the President to sign this bill. I urge my colleagues to vote for it.

In conclusion, once again, for 55 years in a row, the Congress of the United States is going to make the point that the No. 1 obligation of the Federal Government is to defend the country, and this bill helps to allow that to happen.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, I rise in strong opposition to this legislation, the so-called 21st Century Cures Act. While I appreciate the work Senator MURRAY, Senator ALEXANDER, and others have done on this legislation, I cannot in good conscience vote on it in its current form.

It goes without saying that everybody, whether Republican, Democrat, or Independent, wants to find cures to the terrible diseases that are impacting the lives of millions of people, such as cancer, Alzheimer's, diabetes, and the

terrible illnesses that strike children. We all want to find cures for those illnesses, but that is not really what this debate is about. The debate we are having on this bill is simple: Do we continue to cave in to the demands of the pharmaceutical industry—an industry that is making recordbreaking profits by charging the American people, by far, the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs—or do we have the courage to stand up to the CEOs of big drug companies whose prices are so high that one out of five Americans who gets a prescription from a doctor is unable to afford to fill that prescription? Let's be clear. If you cannot afford to fill that prescription, you will likely get sicker, and in some cases, you are going to die.

It is incomprehensible to me that we have a major bill dealing with prescription drugs, and yet we are running away from the most important issue that impacts millions of people and that the American people feel very strongly about, and that is the greed of the pharmaceutical industry and the outrageously high prices our people are being forced to pay. That is the issue on which we must focus.

If we were really serious about finding cures for life-threatening illnesses and diseases, maybe—just maybe—we would adequately fund the National Institutes of Health and the Food and Drug Administration. Over the last 12 years, medical research has been cut by over 20 percent after adjusting for inflation. Even if this bill passes, funding for NIH will still be roughly \$7 billion less this year than what it was in 2004. Meanwhile, over the same time period—just to put this in context—the top 1 percent has received over \$1 trillion in tax breaks. In other words, we cannot fund the agencies that are trying to find cures for diseases, but we can give unbelievably significant tax breaks to the 1 percent.

Let me very briefly give a few major reasons this bill should be defeated.

No. 1, as I said a moment ago, the most important prescription drug-related crisis facing our country right now is the skyrocketing price of prescription drugs. This bill does not even deal with that issue. How can we talk about a bill dealing with the pharmaceutical industry without addressing the elephant in the room, which is the fact that we pay the highest prices in the world for medicine? And in many cases, those costs are soaring.

In America today, one out of five people between the ages of 19 and 64 cannot afford to fill their prescriptions. Hundreds of thousands of seniors are forced to cut their pills in half because the medicine they need is just too expensive. Let me give just a few examples.

Since 2007, Mylan has raised the price of a package of EpiPens by 461 percent while rewarding its CEO with a 671-percent increase in compensation. Maybe, just maybe, we might want to address that issue.

Last year, Turing Pharmaceuticals increased the price of Daraprim by 5,000 percent overnight. It went from \$13.50 to \$750 for just one pill.

While thousands of children in Flint have been poisoned by lead, Valeant increased the price of the drug to treat this disease 2,700 percent in a single year—from \$7,100 to about \$27,000.

Meanwhile, at a time when 35 million Americans cannot afford the medicine they need, the drug companies are making enormous profits and providing extremely generous compensation packages to their executives. Last year, fellow Americans, while you were paying more and more for prescription drugs you desperately needed, the 5 major drug companies made over \$50 billion in profit—\$50 billion in profit, 5 drug companies—while the top 10 pharmaceutical executives received over \$320 million in compensation. In fact, the prescription drug companies literally have money to burn. This year, the pharmaceutical industry spent \$131 million to defeat Proposition 61, a ballot initiative in California that would have lowered average drug prices by at least 24 percent for millions of people. They spent \$131 million in California to defeat a proposal that would have lowered drug prices.

How does it happen that the pharmaceutical companies can charge any price they want for prescription drugs? The answer is clear: The prescription drug industry, along with Wall Street, is the most powerful political force in America. I have been fighting the greed of the prescription drug industry for decades, and as far as I can tell, the pharmaceutical industry always win. They never lose. They win, but the American people lose.

Since 1998, the pharmaceutical industry has spent more than \$3 billion in lobbying all over this place. There are hundreds and hundreds of lobbyists telling Members of Congress what the pharmaceutical industry wants, and they have made hundreds of millions of dollars in campaign contributions. They currently have over 1,200 lobbyists on their payrolls here in Washington, including former leaders of the Democratic and Republican Parties. That is why the pharmaceutical industry makes huge profits while the American people cannot afford the medicine they need.

It would be one thing if these outrageous price increases were happening in other major countries. Are these price increases taking place all over the world? The answer is, they are not. In 2013, we spent nearly 40 percent more per person on prescription drugs than Canada and five times as much as in Denmark. How is it that the cost of prescription drugs in Denmark, Canada, the UK, and France is significantly lower than it is in the United States? That is an issue, and it is high time we begin discussing it. For example, it costs \$730 for a 90-day supply of Crestor—which is used to treat high cholesterol—in the United States but

just \$160 in Canada. Americans with heartburn pay \$736 for a 90-day supply of Nexium, but that same product costs \$214 in Canada. Americans with arthritis are forced to pay \$895 for Celebrex, but it costs just \$280 in Canada.

During this recent campaign, President-Elect Donald Trump promised, among many other things, to lower the prices of prescription drugs. That is what Mr. Trump said. He promised that he would “allow consumers access to imported, safe and dependable drugs from overseas to bring more options to consumers.” He also promised to require Medicare to negotiate with the drug companies for lower prices—something that is banned by law today.

Here is what President-Elect Trump said while on the campaign trail:

We are not allowed to negotiate drug prices. Can you believe it? We pay about \$300 billion more than we are supposed to, than if we negotiated the price. So there's \$300 billion on day one we solve.

Since President-Elect Trump supports requiring Medicare to negotiate with drug companies to lower prices, which is an idea that many people in this body also support, and since Mr. Trump believes we should be able to re-import low-cost medicines from Canada and other countries, I am quite confident that all of my Republican colleagues will support an amendment in my hands that will do exactly what Mr. Trump said he would accomplish as President. Think about what you can do to pave the way for Mr. Trump when he comes into office. You will have already satisfied one of his major campaign pledges.

Therefore, Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending motion to concur with an amendment be set aside, and I ask unanimous consent for the immediate consideration of a motion to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 34 with a further amendment that I send to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, reserving the right to object, one way to be sure of not getting the work done we are doing today is to add another topic. I think the work we are doing today is important.

My friend from Vermont mentioned some statistics that were right a couple of years ago about the decline in health care research money. We are not where we should be, but we are not where we were 2 years ago, either. When my side took control of the majority, I got a chance to chair the appropriating committee for Health and Human Services, and for the first time in 12 years, we had an almost 7-percent increase. The Senator is absolutely right—at that moment, we were 22 percent behind in research buying dollars from where we were 12 years earlier. But if everything is a priority, nothing is a priority. So we did what the government should do and what people want the government to do: We went

through the process of prioritizing. We eliminated 18 programs last year—zeroed them out for either being duplicative or not doing what they were designed to do—so we could prioritize exactly the important health care research this bill talks about and my friend from Vermont mentioned, a 7-percent increase last year and another 6.5-percent increase this year. Another \$2 billion came out of our committee, came out of the full appropriating committee, and has been on the desk ready for the minority to let us take up for months now. That would be an almost 14-percent increase in 2 years. Fourteen percent of the 22 percent would have been eliminated if we could have taken up the bill that I still wish we were voting on today. The bill we are voting on today does some of what that baseline increase would do.

Why do we want to increase health care research? Obviously for individuals and their families who might be able to better deal with or totally avoid a health care crisis they would otherwise have.

From the point of view of taxpayers, on Alzheimer's, which was mentioned here today, we are spending \$250 billion a year right now. The NIH projection for 2050 is that we will be spending \$1.1 trillion that year in today's dollars, which is twice the defense budget. Now, \$1.1 trillion sounds like a lot and \$250 billion sounds like a lot to me. In fact, pretty small numbers sound like a lot to me. But when I think about spending twice the defense budget on Alzheimer's alone—and that is just tax dollars, that is not what families would be spending if we don't invest in research now. It makes a big difference.

So from Alzheimer's—there is an inducement here that I would like to see be even more specific, and when we get back to the regular appropriating process, I will work to do that again. There is a prize inducement, the Beau Biden cancer research fund. There is money that could go to autism. Everything from Alzheimer's to autism benefits when we focus on health care research.

There is also money in this bill to further enhance the ability to get drugs to the marketplace quicker so that people have an opportunity that they don't currently have to work with their doctor and decide they want to try that new advancement.

This bill matters. I think in some ways it is better to let NIH—the real researchers—prioritize spending and let us prioritize research as a topic.

I think this bill should pass. I think it should pass today. I was on the House floor last week when they overwhelmingly voted for it to pass. The sure way for this bill not to pass in this Congress is to do something now that changes the subject.

I am particularly glad that my longtime friend from both the House and Senate is really interested in President Trump fulfilling his campaign pledges, and I am particularly pleased to see him agree with at least that one

pledge, but that won't happen until next year. Today's work is to pass the 21st Century Cures bill. I look forward to the vote that will do that before we leave this week.

Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LANKFORD). Objection heard.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, two points. First of all, let me reiterate that is for inflation-adjusted dollars, not nominal dollars. The funding for the National Institutes of Health this year will still be roughly \$7 billion less than what it received in 2004. That is point No. 1.

Point No. 2—and I will yield briefly to my friend from Missouri—did I hear him say that he is supportive of reimportation and having the Federal Government—Medicare—negotiate prescription drug prices with the pharmaceutical industry? That is what I thought I heard him say.

I yield to my friend.

Mr. BLUNT. I thank my friend for yielding.

In terms of the money available for research, we have taken that 22 percent of buying power and changed it to about 15 percent. If we doubled our bill this year, we would change it from 15 to about 7 or 8 percent. We need to get back to where we were 12 years ago and then not stop in real buying power. I want to do that.

I think what I said about the overall discussion of reimportation and other things was that I was delighted to hear my friend from Vermont so supportive of the next President's program.

Mr. SANDERS. I am very supportive, he is dead right. But I was wondering if my friend—when he said we are going to get to it next year, what does that mean? Does that mean you will be pushing the ability of Americans and pharmacists and distributors to be able to benefit from unfettered free trade and buy low-cost medicines and some of the same drugs sold in Canada and the UK? And will you also, as Mr. Trump made the point, allow Medicare to negotiate for lower prices? Is that something on which we can expect our Republican friends to support the President-elect?

Mr. BLUNT. If my friend would yield, I would say we have passed this bill in the Congress—that bill—several times over the last few years. On each occasion, often with Democratic administrations, the only obstacle has been for the administration to certify that reimportation could be safely done.

Mr. SANDERS. Exactly right.

Mr. BLUNT. And none of them have ever been willing to do that.

Mr. SANDERS. My friend is exactly right. Neither a Republican nor a Democratic administration will have the guts to stand up to the pharmaceutical industry.

Today, if you have a salad, it is likely you are going to get your salad with tomatoes and lettuce that are from Mexico or some other country with very poorly inspected farms. That is no

problem, but somehow or another, we are led to believe that it is impossible to bring in brand-name medicine from Canada or the United Kingdom or France, that it just cannot be done. It is beyond belief that anybody with a straight face believes that to be true. Clearly, this is what the pharmaceutical industry wants us to believe, but I hope that my friend from Missouri will not accept what the pharmaceutical industry tells us and understands that the next Secretary of HHS should certify that with proper procedures, we can reimport medicine.

I yield to my friend.

Mr. BLUNT. I thank my friend for yielding. I would just say that if the Secretary of HHS can certify that, that is a good thing, and I voted for that in the past. But I know what a tomato looks like. I don't know what is inside a capsule, and that has always been the obstacle for the people we have asked to look at this and certify the safety.

If people can figure out how to do that so we know what is inside of that pill—the worst thing you can do health-wise is believe you are taking a pill that isn't the pill you believe you are taking.

Mr. SANDERS. I know what a tomato looks like, too, but you don't know what kind of pesticide was used or how that tomato was grown. The idea that we cannot get a product from across the border safely really doesn't pass the laugh test, frankly. This is one of the things the pharmaceutical industry has been pushing. We have unfettered free trade for fish, for vegetables, for meat from all over the world, but somehow, from Canada or the UK or France—we cannot safely bring medicine into this country at a fraction of the price our pharmacists are now paying. Frankly, I would say to the Senator from Missouri, that does not pass the laugh test, and I hope we can work together. Clearly, we want the medicine to come in safely, but I think we can do that, and I look forward to doing that.

I yield.

Mr. BLUNT. I would say that the one thing we will accomplish before the week is out is passing this bill, but I hope this bill doesn't become something that we continue to refer back to and say we have already done that. This bill is a step in the right direction, but in health care research, it does not get us to where I would like to be or where we were 12 years ago. We need the kind of research dollars that encourage young researchers to stay in the research business, the kind of research dollars that encourage them to find solutions, the kind of research dollars that ensure that every family who can avoid a crisis or be ready to deal with it in a better way is able to do that. So I look forward to the bill being passed as we finish the week.

I yield back.

Mr. SANDERS. I agree with the last statement the Senator from Missouri made.

Let me give another reason why I am opposed to this bill. Incredibly, this legislation makes it easier for prescription drug companies to get away with fraud. Fraud is something the major drug companies have been perpetuating on the American people for a number of years.

It is not widely known, but it should be known that since 1991, drug companies have paid over \$35 billion in fines or settlements for fraud and misconduct—\$35 billion—but instead of cracking down on pharmaceutical company fraud, this bill actually legalizes the fraudulent behavior of some of the big drug companies.

Specifically, under this bill, pharmaceutical companies would be allowed to promote unapproved uses of drugs to insurance companies—a practice which is currently illegal. Why would we allow the pharmaceutical industry the opportunity to market drugs to insurance companies for uses that haven't been approved by the FDA? This is a major problem. Let me give a few examples.

In 2013, the Justice Department ordered Johnson & Johnson, one of the major pharmaceutical companies in the country, to pay \$2.2 billion in fines for "recklessly promoting drugs for uses that have not been proven to be safe and effective." According to the U.S. attorney handling the case, Johnson & Johnson's "promotion of Risperdal for unapproved uses threatened the most vulnerable populations of our society: children, the elderly, and those with developmental disabilities. Congress rightfully determined that this is unacceptable and made it illegal, but under this bill, it could become legal. That is wrong.

In 2010, AstraZeneca pharmaceuticals paid \$520 million to resolve allegations that it illegally marketed the antipsychotic drug Seroquel for uses not approved as safe and effective by the FDA.

In 2009, Eli Lilly was fined over \$1.4 billion for its off-label promotion of another antipsychotic drug known as Zyprexa. According to Federal investigators, Eli Lilly's illegal activities increased patients' costs, threatened their safety, and negatively affected the delivery of health care services to over 9 million military members, retirees, and their families who rely on health care.

We need to make it harder for the pharmaceutical industry to commit fraud, but instead this bill allows the pharmaceutical industry to, in fact, commit even more fraud. That is unacceptable.

Third, let's be clear: This bill would cut Medicare and Medicaid by a billion dollars. Millions of senior citizens are in desperate need of Medicare and Medicaid.

Thanks to Medicare, today more than 48 million seniors and 9 million people with disabilities have health insurance coverage through Medicare, and over 73 million Americans are en-

rolled in Medicaid. The last thing we should be doing today is cutting Medicare and Medicaid. We need to make health care more affordable to senior citizens, the disabled, and low-income families with children—not more expensive.

Finally, this bill—and this is quite significant—cuts \$3.5 billion from the Affordable Care Act's prevention fund to prevent Alzheimer's, diabetes, suicide, heart disease, and lead poisoning.

Instead of cutting Medicare and Medicaid, instead of cutting funds for health care programs, we should be demanding that the wealthiest people in this country and the largest corporations start paying their fair share of taxes. We should not be cutting life-and-death programs for the most vulnerable people in this country.

I say to my colleagues, if you want to lower the outrageous cost of prescription drugs, vote against this bill. If you are opposed to legalizing pharmaceutical fraud that can endanger the lives of many Americans, please vote against this bill. If you are opposed to cutting Medicare and Medicaid, vote against this bill. If you want to prevent cuts to programs that would prevent Alzheimer's disease and many other diseases, vote against this bill.

It is time to stand up to the pharmaceutical industry and stand with the American people who are tired of being ripped off by this extremely greedy industry.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I come to the floor to speak about the fires and tornadoes in Tennessee, but I would observe beforehand that by tomorrow we will be voting on the 21st Century Cures and the mental health bill.

I have a little different view of it than the Senator from Vermont. For example, using the money in the prevention fund, which was a part of the Affordable Care Act, I would say is a pretty good use of it to support the President's Precision Medicine Initiative and to support the Vice President's Cancer Moonshot and to support the BRAIN Initiative at the National Institutes of Health. This is what we do in the bill, with \$1.4 billion for precision medicine, \$1.8 billion for Cancer Moonshot, and \$1.5 billion for the BRAIN Initiative. If we are interested in reducing grief and reducing spending in this country, accelerating the arrival of medicines that will identify Alzheimer's before its symptoms and other medicines that will retard the progression of Alzheimer's would be a magnificent thing to do. It would be a miracle for many families. It is not just a miracle; it is something that Dr. Francis Collins, a renowned scientist who is head of the National Institutes of Health—the "National Institutes of Hope" is what he calls it—predicts will happen in the next 10 years, along with a vaccine for Zika, a vaccine for HIV-

AIDS, a vaccine for universal flu, which killed 30,000 people last year, and advances in regenerative medicine that would put a physician like our former majority leader, Dr. Bill Frist of Nashville, out of business.

Bill Frist was at one time a heart transplant surgeon. I think he transplanted more hearts than anybody in the world—or nearly anybody. But Dr. Collins believes that with advances in using our own adult cells, we will restore hearts. We will not have to transplant them. We may be able to restore eyesight. These are the kinds of miracles this legislation will encourage that could affect nearly every American family.

The other part of the legislation, equally important to money, is that it would make reforms in the Food and Drug Administration and in the National Institutes of Health that will move research for those treatments and cures through the regulatory and investment process more rapidly, at lower costs, into the medicine cabinets, and into the doctors' offices, where they can help virtually every family in this country.

That is why 85 Senators yesterday voted to end debate on this floor, and I suspect more will vote tomorrow to send it to the President. That is why, in the House of Representatives, 392 of them voted for this bill. Only six Democratic Members of the House of Representatives voted against it. They are not persuaded that there is some evil force in there. They like what they see, and not only them. The President of the United States says that this is "an opportunity we just can't miss."

The Vice President of the United States, talking about his Cancer Moonshot, says that this is a big and important step forward.

The Republican Speaker of the House, PAUL RYAN, turned a couple of somersaults trying to figure out the way to do the funding on this because it is an important part of his own agenda for our Nation's health care future.

I have heard the majority leader of the Senate, Senator MCCONNELL, say in private meetings and in public that this is the most important piece of legislation we will pass this year.

Add to it the mental health legislation that Senator CASSIDY, Senator MURPHY, and Senator CORNYN worked so hard on over here, and you can get something we can be very proud of, which is why it received such a big vote yesterday.

I want the American people to know that is what we are doing. I think that is what they want us to do. We could do something in a partisan way, we could do something by Executive order, or we could take 2 years, as we literally did in this bill, with multiple hearings, multiple consultations, many differences of opinion, all of them resolved though in a bipartisan way, and produce a lasting result.

It will not be like ObamaCare, where the next day one party is trying to repeal it and the next party is defending

it. It will not be like some other partisan legislation. This will last. Nobody is going to be trying to repeal it because almost everybody voted for it. The money will come just as the legislation says, year after year.

I am proud of the Senate, and I am happy for the American people, and I look forward to tomorrow.

SEVIER COUNTY FIRE

Mr. President, on a more somber note, a week ago last Wednesday, on a mountaintop called the Chimney Tops in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, someone spotted a fire and called the National Park Service about 5:20pm in the afternoon. I have been up on Chimney Tops many times—more times when I was younger than when I have been older—but it is a peak with rocks at the top. We are not like the West where they have a lot of rocky mountains. We don't have many of those. We have an average of 83 inches of rainfall a year, unlike Southern California or Phoenix, places like that, where they only get a few inches of rain a year. We almost have rain forests. When the fall comes, there are lots of leaves on the ground.

But the fire started up on the Chimney Tops. I can tell you there wouldn't have been anyone within 100 miles who would have imagined that somehow the next Monday, wind would have swept that fire into Gatlinburg, TN, killing 14 people, injuring another 134, causing an evacuation of 14,000 people, wrecking lives and wrecking homes.

There have been some people wondering a little bit: Well, how could this have happened? Look, we have had fires all over East Tennessee this year. We are not used to that. It is because we have had a drought for a long time.

I have an article by Bob Hodge about Greg Ward of Sevier County. This is the county where Gatlinburg is. Greg Ward spent his 53 years roaming around the woods and waters of Sevier County, according to Bob Hodge, a writer for the Knoxville News Sentinel.

The long and short of it is, those who know the woods and the waters in East Tennessee know that this drought has been with us for a while. Trout stocking programs wouldn't work because the water was so low that the streams wouldn't handle the trout, and the water was too warm for them to survive.

In some places the creeks were flowing at 10 percent of normal. We may have seen that once before in someone's memory back in the 1970s, but for the last 3 months, there has been very little rain. According to Bob Hodge's article, we have had a drought since 2015.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD this article by Bob Hodge of the Knoxville News Sentinel following my remarks.

On Friday, Governor Haslam of Tennessee, Senator CORKER, and I went to Gatlinburg. The only thing I could think to say to the people assembled there were two things. One was that

your character is measured not so much by how you handle things when things are going well, but how you handle adversity. If that is the measure of character, the character of the people of Gatlinburg in Sevier County are through the roof because they are not complaining.

The mayor of Gatlinburg, Mike Werner, had his home burn down in 15 minutes. He was at the press conference worried about other people, not himself.

Cindy Ogle, the city manager of Gatlinburg for a long time, had her home burn down. She was there, not complaining, and worrying about the other people of Gatlinburg and Sevier County.

Mike Werner's business was also burned down. He is staying in the apartment of a friend nearby.

That story is happening over and over and over in Sevier County. There have been extraordinary gestures by people to help.

At one point, shortly after the fire started, there were 140 fire trucks from all over Tennessee and more than 400 volunteers. The fires kept going and going because this wind came up on Monday night after the fire had already started 10 miles away on the top of this rocky mountain, and a 90-mile-an-hour wind blew the fire all the way into Gatlinburg. The wind knocked down transformers and started other fires, and people were racing for their lives.

On the floor, I mentioned stories of firefighters having to get back in their trucks to get away from the bears that were running toward them escaping the fire, of people driving through fire to escape, of windshield wipers melting as they drove down the mountain. It was a terrifying experience. In the West they may be used to this. Nobody ever gets used to it, I guess, but we don't see that where we are from, typically with 83 inches of rain in a year.

I salute the people of Sevier County and Gatlinburg for their courage, their character, and their compassion for one another. I know it is going to take a long time for many to get back on their feet. We are doing what we can to help.

I salute the Governor of Tennessee. He was there the next day. So were many of their agencies, working seamlessly together. As I have said, last Friday we went there together with him. Through the State, we have arranged for Federal assistance, which will pay for 75 percent of the cost of fighting the fires.

Then that same day we went to some other counties in Tennessee that had experienced tornadoes about the same time. We went into McMinn County. No one was killed there, but several were hurt.

We went to Polk County where we talked with a lady named Mrs. Stoker, who wasn't hurt, but a trailer next to where she lived had been blown across the road, and her daughter and her

daughter's husband had been killed. We talked to her for a while, and the Governor and Senator CORKER and I were very impressed with her. We doubted that we would have the strength she does.

As we left, she said to us: You fellows go back on up there, do your job, and we will take care of it here.

I am sure she will, but I am awfully impressed with Mrs. Stoker.

I have told the people of Sevier County that many Senators had said something to me about the fire. For example, Senator FEINSTEIN called because of her experience in California.

I am here only to say those two things, first that the people of Sevier County, in Gatlinburg, the area of Polk County and McMinn County, if their character is measured by how they handled adversity, their character is over the top.

Secondly, I thank all of those who have tried to help.

One last example: In McMinn County, a young woman had a baby during the tornado. Her home was damaged. She went to the hospital. When she came back the next day, the neighbors had found another home for her. They had clean sheets and everything that she needed.

There are wonderful stories that came out of a terrifying series of instances. I wanted to come to the floor and say that we are proud of the people of East Tennessee.

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

[From the Knoxville News Sentinel, Dec. 3, 2016]

GATLINBURG FIRE WAS SET IN MOTION
MONTHS AGO

(Op-ed by: Bob Hodge)

Greg Ward has spent his entire 53 years roaming around the woods and waters of Sevier County, many of them as one of the best known hunting and fishing guides in the state. When a lot of those woods starting burning he knew things could get bad.

Then again, he had suspected things were going to get bad for months.

The fire that has destroyed over 17,000 acres inside and outside the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, destroyed hundreds of buildings and cost at least 13 people their lives has left Ward wondering what, if anything, could have been done. He's lived his life and earned his living listening to what the mountains tell him.

"Everybody talks about the drought we've had this year, but the drought started in 2015," said Ward, owner of Rocky Top Outfitters in Pigeon Forge. "This year it just got a whole, whole lot worse."

Back in the summer, the drought which would lead to the out of control fires that would destroy so much was already wreaking havoc on the mountain fisheries. Trout stocking programs were curtailed in June because there was too little water in the creeks and rivers and what was there was too warm for stocked trout to survive. In July, Ward said he and his guides started noticing species harder than trout, like stonerollers, were beginning to die off.

Water flows and volume are measured in cubic feet per second or CFS. During the summer Ward said the CFS numbers in many of the rivers and streams in the mountains in and out of the park were about 10% of normal. That was bad for his fishing business,

but he thought it was just bad business, period.

"You would hear numbers about us being 8 or 10 inches below normal when it came to rainfall, but it was a lot worse than that in the French Broad Watershed," Ward said. "Whatever number they were saying it was probably double that."

"It's happened before back in the 1970s. We were in a drought cycle then and this was just like that."

It was so bad he had even thought that, maybe, it would be a good idea to delay the opening of hunting season in Sevier and other counties in the mountains. Fewer people in the woods would mean fewer opportunities for an accident to happen.

"There's a lot of hindsight people can have right now," Ward said.

Fast forward to Monday night and about 8 p.m. a knock came on the door at his home in Pigeon Forge near the base of Iron Mountain. It was the authorities telling Ward and his wife Diane to evacuate. They were ahead of the game, having already packed up papers and pictures and things that couldn't be replaced if lost.

After getting his wife to safety, Ward—this isn't too surprising to the people that know him—then drove up Pine Mountain to see what he could see.

It was devastating.

"There's nobody that knew anything like this was going to happen . . . but because of the drought you knew it could happen," he said. "From up on top (of Pine Mountain) you could see fire just about everywhere and you could see it moving because of the wind."

The stay wasn't a long one because even though the area where Ward was at was safely out of harm's way, he could see that what was not being threatened by the fire one minute was ablaze the next. He and a friend had packed chainsaws to cut through any trees that were blown down by the wind, and it turned out they needed them.

"I wasn't going to die on that mountain," he said. "We've had fires before. I've seen a lot of fires before, but there was so much fuel and so much wind . . ."

Eventually the fire would come within a few hundred yards of his house. But when he and his wife went back the next day it was no worse for wear.

"I have a house today because they made a stand at Dollywood."

Perseverance is the standard for the people that have been impacted by the fire.

Ward said he doesn't know what if anything, could have been done differently. All he knows is the fires that burned so much on Monday were set in motion months and months ago.

"It's been so god awful dry . . . it was that way two months ago," he said. "You had the drought and then this summer all the heat that just made it worse. We were just in an awful situation."

Mr. ALEXANDER. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. AYOTTE). The Senator from Indiana.

FAREWELL TO THE SENATE

Mr. COATS. Madam President, today I rise for the second time on the Senate floor to deliver a farewell speech. It doesn't seem like that long ago, back in 1998, that I delivered my first Senate farewell speech. I spoke then about making the transition from Senator to citizen, and I reflected on the end of 24 years of public service.

Standing here today in 2016, 24 years has now become 34 years, as the call for additional public service has brought

me back to the U.S. Senate. Now, as I begin today, I want to assure my family, some of whom are in the Gallery; my colleagues, some of whom I am pleased to see have come to hear me speak; my campaign contributors, and even the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee that I will not be back for a third farewell address.

Through it all—the ups and the downs, the highs and the lows, the successes and the failures—I have felt nothing but gratitude for the incredible privilege of serving. Serving in the military, working as a congressional staffer to then-Congressman Dan Quayle, serving in the House of Representatives, representing my home State, and as a U.S. Senator, and representing our country overseas as U.S. Ambassador to Germany—all of this together has been the adventure of a lifetime, and I am so very grateful for the opportunities I have been afforded. Participating in the process of governing, being in the arena fighting for the principles and values in which I believe—these experiences have all been a privilege almost beyond description.

It is time to express a few thanks. My good friend and fellow Senator from Tennessee, LAMAR ALEXANDER, who is sitting here today, who has a good habit of speaking words of wisdom, has said: When you are driving down a country road and see a turtle on the top of a fence post, chances are that turtle didn't get there on its own. I didn't get here on my own. Throughout my career, I have been blessed to have the support of so many talented and wonderful people who provided invaluable help along the way. First and foremost, though, I want to thank God for His providence, guiding my steps along the way. I want to thank my family, including my wife Marsha for her unwavering support and wise counsel, our three wonderful children, and our 10 grandchildren, for their love, their support, and their patience that allowed me to engage in the consuming job of an elected official.

I thank my former Senator and Vice President Dan Quayle, a mentor, friend, and the person who first encouraged me to consider public service. I want to express gratitude to former Indiana Governor Robert Orr, who chose me to fill the Senate seat vacated by then-Vice President Quayle.

I thank President George W. Bush, who gave me the opportunity to serve as our Nation's Ambassador to Germany, and Colin Powell, who led the Department of State during my time as Ambassador.

I thank the exceptional staff I have been blessed to have support me over the years—some who are here today and many who have served through the years and gone on to achieve great success in their own careers. I specifically want to thank the five chiefs of staff I have had as a Senator who have put the team together to support me in such exceptional ways: David Hoppe; Dave Gribbin, now deceased; Sharon

Soderstrom; Dean Hingson; and Viraj Mirani. All have led our team with exceptional leadership.

I thank my colleagues for their friendship and encouragement over the past 6 years. This is a demanding job, and we all work hard, but it is also a job that allows each of us the opportunity to spend a lot of time interacting together. The friendships I have had and now have with the talented men and women who serve in this distinguished body is what I will miss most in leaving the Senate.

Last, but certainly not least, I thank the citizens of Indiana. Hoosiers have given me the honor of representing them in the world's greatest deliberative body. Hoosiers, thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Now, I am not here today to offer deep reflections about the health of this institution or to advise my fellow Senators on how to govern in the years ahead. It is clear that at this time in our history, in our great Nation, we are a divided country with two very different visions for America's future. The Senate is not immune to those divisions, but I firmly believe that all of us, Republicans and Democrats, are trying to do what we think is in the best interests of our country and its posterity. We are all united in the common cause of making our country a better place, a safer place, and a more prosperous place, even if our means of getting there differ.

With that spirit in mind, I know there are many topics of significant importance that the Senate will consider when I am gone, but I want to briefly discuss two transcendent issues that I believe jeopardize America's continued existence as the world's leading Nation. These are issues I have repeatedly expressed deep concern about on this Senate floor.

From a practical standpoint, our country simply cannot keep borrowing money we don't have. Today our national debt exceeds \$19.5 trillion and continues to grow by the second. Meanwhile, programs that millions of Americans depend on—Social Security and Medicare are two—are creeping ever closer to insolvency. America's looming fiscal storm is bearing down upon us, and the alarms are sounding louder each day. One day, if not addressed, this debt bomb will explode and have a devastating effect on our country's economy and on our children's future.

My second great concern is what I call the terrorist bomb—the threat posed by terrorists or rogue state actors who can successfully conduct an attack with weapons of mass destruction. We must ensure that the world's most dangerous weapons stay out of the hands of its most dangerous people, and we must also adapt to the new threats we face, such as a cyber attack, that could shut down our financial systems or electric grid. These challenges require all those who have governed to rise above the political consequences that may occur in making the hard decisions needed to make our country

stronger and more secure for future generations.

In conclusion, I would like to say this. My congressional career began during the Reagan administration. I would like to conclude my comments with a reflection on remarks President Ronald Reagan made during a memorial service in 1987 for the fallen sailors of the USS *Stark*. Allow me to quote a few of the words President Reagan shared that day:

Yes, they were ordinary men who did extraordinary things. Yes, they were heroes. And because they were heroes, let us not forget this: That for all the lovely spring and summer days we will never share with them again, for every Thanksgiving and Christmas that will seem empty without them, there will be moments when we see the light of discovery in young eyes, eyes that see for the first time the world around them and wonder, "Why is there such a place as America, and how is it that such a precious gift is mine?"

As citizens of this great country, we have been given a precious gift—the gift of freedom. America has been a beacon of freedom that has burned bright before a world that cries out for liberty, but we should never forget that we have been able to preserve this precious gift throughout our history because men and women have heard the call and then said: "I will stand in defense of freedom and I will sacrifice for future generations."

In looking back on my life of public service, I have experienced moments when I also have seen that light of discovery of this precious gift of America and asked myself: How is it this precious gift is mine? I have seen the light of discovery at Veterans Day ceremonies as we remind ourselves that this gift has been earned and preserved by those who have fought in defense of our freedoms and especially those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice. I have seen it in the eyes of wives and young children who rush into the arms of dads arriving home from the frontlines of battle. I have seen it in the tears of joy as our Olympic athletes stand while the "Star-Spangled Banner" is played before the eyes and ears of the world. I have seen it in the naturalization ceremonies, where immigrants like my mom expressed pure joy in becoming an American citizen.

Do we not then—those of us who have been given this privilege and the challenge of serving in this body as U.S. Senators—do we not then have an obligation and a solemn duty to carry on the task of ensuring that the young eyes of future generations can see this light of discovery and continue to wonder how it is that such a precious gift is theirs?

So, my colleagues and friends, with gratitude to the Almighty, love in my heart for each of you, and bright hopes for the future of our beloved country, I bid farewell.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

TRIBUTES TO DAN COATS

Mr. DONNELLY. Madam President, I rise as we bid farewell to my good friend, my colleague, my captain, the senior Senator from Indiana, DAN COATS, who has served his State of Indiana and our country so well and with such honor and such dedication for more than 35 years.

I also note how grateful I am to be serving with the Presiding Officer, for what an extraordinary Senator you have been, what a good friend. Someday I hope to come see the White Mountains of New Hampshire and visit and see your family. We have been very lucky to have been touched and blessed by you.

As many of us know, my friend DAN's service to his country started long before he was elected to this body. After graduating from Wheaton College in Illinois—and he has not often told folks he was a soccer star there—he joined the U.S. Army, where he served from 1966 until 1968 and earned the rank of staff sergeant.

After coming to Indiana to earn a law degree at Indiana University's McKinney School of Law in Indianapolis, DAN moved to Fort Wayne, where he continued his public service as a staff member for then-U.S. Congressman Dan Quayle.

In 1980, DAN COATS was elected to represent the Fourth Congressional District of Indiana—a wonderful area which he served so well—and it was an office he held for 8 years. Then, in 1988, as Senator Quayle was elected to serve as Vice President, Senator COATS was appointed to the U.S. Senate, and he successfully won reelection in 1990 and in 1992. For 10 years, DAN continued his legacy of service to our beloved State.

As I mentioned, DAN is the senior Senator, and I am the junior Senator, so whenever we have football discussions, DAN wins every time.

Through his work on the Senate Armed Services Committee and the Intelligence Committee, he ensured our country was more secure and more prosperous for the future.

In 1999, DAN retired from the Senate. He was soon called back, though, when President Bush asked him to serve our country again—this time, as U.S. Ambassador to Germany.

Then-Ambassador COATS arrived in Germany ready for his duties on September 8, 2001. We know how much our world changed 3 days later and how important his job became in ensuring the United States continued its constructive relationship with our German allies and in keeping all of us safe back here at home. He not only forged a strong relationship with then-German Chancellor Gerhard Schroder and Angela Merkel, but he also played a key role in the establishment of a new U.S. embassy in the heart of Berlin. It is hard to stress how critical DAN COATS' leadership was for our country at that time, as he used American diplomacy to help maintain American security.

In 2011, DAN made his return to the Senate, eager once again to serve the

people of Indiana. Over the last 6 years, he has produced steadfast leadership on the Finance Committee, the Intelligence Committee, and the Joint Economic Committee.

On a more personal note, I have always been able to count on him as a partner and a thoughtful friend, willing to work together to address the many issues impacting Hoosiers and our whole country—because, when it comes down to it, we are Americans, and we are all in this together.

DAN always has been ready to roll up his sleeves and work in a bipartisan manner, whether it was on an issue impacting our veterans, protecting our national security, advocating for fiscal responsibility, or even the finer issues of government, such as making sure the Government Printing Office could change their style guide. As the rest of us all know, DAN was able to make it clear that we are not Indianians; we are Hoosiers, and it should be appropriately discussed as such.

DAN, it has been an honor to serve with you.

He has been a true gentleman and a great teammate in our work to improve the lives of the hardworking Hoosier families we represent. I am proud of the work we have done together.

As DAN leaves the Senate, I wish my friend and partner—my senior Senator—the best. He will be remembered for his extraordinary service, his love of country, his love of our State, and his love of his family. I hope he will be able to spend a lot of time with his wonderful wife Marsha, their 3 children, and their 10 grandchildren. DAN has been blessed to have a wonderful family, and we have been blessed that we could be a part of his life.

May God bless Senator COATS and his family, may God bless Indiana, and may God bless America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, as I have listened to the eloquent farewell remarks of my friend and colleague, Senator DAN COATS of Indiana, I could not help but think that he sounded happy, contented, serene, and at peace with the decision he has made. But he leaves the rest of us feeling bereft and sad and knowing that we will miss him as a friend and as an esteemed colleague.

As the 114th Congress draws to a close, many words of affection and gratitude will be offered in tribute to our friend and colleague DAN COATS as he leaves this Chamber. But there is no word that better defines this outstanding leader than the one word that has guided his entire life, and that word is "service."

As we have heard from his colleague from Indiana, the junior Senator, in 1966, at the height of the Vietnam war, DAN COATS enlisted in the U.S. Army, achieving the rank of staff sergeant. In 1980, he was elected to the U.S. House

of Representatives from Indiana's Fourth Congressional District, and he joined the Senate 8 years later. He quickly became widely known and deeply respected as a strong voice for fiscal discipline and national security and as an expert in our intelligence agencies and foreign affairs.

DAN COATS left the Senate in 1999 and was named as U.S. Ambassador to Germany 2 years later. He arrived at his post in Berlin just 3 days before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. I cannot help but think how fortunate our country was to have him in that key position at a time of such turmoil, anxiety, and fear for our country and all the world. He played a central role in strengthening the relationship between our Nation and Germany during that critical time.

After his tenure as Ambassador had ended, Senator COATS continued his service. He became the president of Big Brothers and Big Sisters of America and offered his talents to many other civic and volunteer organizations, including the Center for Jewish and Christian Values, which he chaired with another dear friend of mine, Senator Joe Lieberman. With his wife Marsha, he founded the Foundation for American Renewal to advance faith-based solutions and initiatives to help resolve our Nation's many social problems.

When DAN COATS returned to the Senate in 2012, he pledged to the people of Indiana and to our Nation that he would focus his tremendous energy and extraordinary intellect on cutting wasteful spending, reducing our national debt, promoting pro-growth, job-creating policies, and strengthening our national security in an era where we face numerous threats from every possible place. He has kept those promises. As a father and a grandfather—two roles that I know he cherishes—Senator COATS has taken to heart our obligation to ensure a sound economic future for the next generation.

It has been a particular honor to work side by side with DAN COATS on the Intelligence Committee. His public service through that committee will never be fully known to the public, but I can share with you that Senator COATS has almost an instinctual ability to get to the heart of an issue, no matter how complex or difficult the topic. That, of course, is also a tribute to the fact that he has thought so deeply about the issues that confront our country and the threats posed by rogue states and terrorist groups. He was one of the first Members of the Senate to recognize the crisis that would emerge due to this administration's failed policy and incoherent strategy toward Syria.

His strong and effective advocacy for improved cyber security, a passion that we share, is another example of his deep commitment to the safety and security of our Nation and its people. For years, Senator COATS has worked to protect our Nation's most critical in-

frastructure from devastating cyber attacks. Senator COATS has warned us that it is not a matter of if but of when such attacks occur right here in our country. He did so—he led the way—knowing of the political pressure that would be brought to bear to accept the status quo of cyber insecurity that exists within our country's most important infrastructure.

Senator DAN COATS is an inspiring role model to all of us who seek to serve. He epitomizes dedication, effective service, and an untiring commitment to making America—already the greatest country in the world—an even better place to live. Our Nation is truly grateful to this great man, and I am so grateful for his friendship.

I wish Senator COATS and his family all the best in the years to come.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, I speak today as a neighbor of DAN COATS. I am his neighbor here on the Senate floor, and I am his neighbor back home. I represent the State of Ohio, and he represents Indiana. I also was involved in DAN COATS' early political career because I was asked to interview him when I was a young lawyer for his potential move from the House to the Senate. There was no way to be involved in that process without acquiring great respect and admiration for this man.

I got to know about his family and his background. He is literally and figuratively a Boy Scout in every way. He is also a guy who we will miss here greatly. He has become the voice of reason, the voice of wisdom, and the voice of knowledge here in the Senate. In our conference meetings, he is the person who, when he stands up to speak, others stop their conversations and actually listen, which is a rare trait for people in public office sometimes. But that is because DAN is always sincere, he is to the point, and, again, he has the experience and knowledge to be able to speak intelligently on a whole range of issues—some which we heard about today on the national security front. But also, he is an advocate for economic growth. He is the leader here on tax reform proposals. He is the guy who continually reminds us of our solemn duty here to represent all the people.

So, DAN, we will miss you greatly. I know Marsha is happy to have you around a little more. You are going to have a great time with your grandkids, as we have talked about. But we know that there will be a great loss here when you move on. I have to find a new neighbor.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, I have one story I want to tell about Senator COATS.

We have been able to serve together on the Intel Committee. We sit near each other on that committee. We work together on other things.

I came to the Senate when Senator COATS came back to the Senate. It has already been established here that he served and then served in another capacity as Ambassador. Then in 2010, when the Presiding Officer and I came to the Senate, he came with us. In almost everything in the Senate, there is some element of seniority in how everything is done.

As the only person in our class with prior Senate service, DAN COATS is the ranking member of our class. He was 88th in seniority in the Senate the day he started his second term of the Senate. For circumstances, I turned out to be 89th.

In the process of going through and selecting offices, when they got to 88, DAN COATS called me, standing in the hallway of the Russell Senate Office Building, and he said: I am standing here in front of an office that says it was Harry Truman's office when he was in the Senate. You choose after me; don't you?

I said: Yes, I choose after you.

He said: If I don't take this office, will you take it?

It was the best of the 12 offices still left. That wouldn't have been the reason I would take it, but I said: Yes, I will take that office. It would be great for me to be in an office in which Harry Truman had spent 10 years while in the Senate, and I later found out he also spent 82 days as Vice President in that office.

I said: I will stay there if I take that office.

I am actually the only Member who—every year when the question comes around “Do you want to look at another office?” I check the “no” box and send it right back. Almost everybody else checks the “yes” box because they want to see the real estate in the building that is available.

I said: I will stay there if I take it.

He said: Well, I am going to find an office somewhere else.

I have chaired the Rules Committee in the last couple of years. I deal with lots of Members about lots of requests. I don't actually know of very many similar circumstances. In fact, I don't know of any exactly like that one where Senator COATS said: I want you to have the office.

I mentioned it to him again the other day, and he said: You know, the reason for that was, it was the right thing to do.

If there is any part of DAN COATS' character that comes through time after time, it is that part. It is that part of who he is that always wants to do the right thing. He is a man of great conscience, of great courage, of great

willingness to serve. He is a good friend, and it has been one of the honors of my life in elected office that I have gotten to spend 6 years working in the Senate with him.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, first, I notice that Senator COATS is still on the floor. I want to add my personal congratulations to Senator COATS for an incredible career of public service, not only here in the Senate but serving our country in a very important diplomatic role.

Senator COATS has added such dignity to this body. He is a person of incredible integrity and a person who always listens and tries to do what is right not only for the people of his State but for our Nation. It has been a real honor to serve with Senator COATS in the U.S. Senate, and I wish him only the best going forward. I know he will continue to find ways to help our country.

21ST CENTURY CURES ACT

Madam President, I rise today to comment on a provision in the 21st Century Cures Act that I have strong concerns about that would affect thousands of patients receiving home infusion therapy. As many of my colleagues know, home infusion therapy is important because it provides patients with a higher quality of life. Patients are able to receive this treatment in the comfort of their own home, surrounded by their family. Furthermore, home infusion therapy eliminates unnecessary emergency room visits and travel to and from hospitals.

A provision in the Cures Act reduces the payment for infusion drugs without including a payment for home infusion services until January 1, 2021. As a result, home infusion suppliers will not be paid to administer infusion therapy until 4 years after the change in reimbursement. Without a service payment, it will be economically difficult for home infusion suppliers to provide patients with home infusion therapy. Many patients will be unable to receive care in the comfort of their home and will have to go to hospitals and long-term care facilities to receive treatment. This provision in 21st Century Cures Act could affect over 20,000 people with congestive heart failure, neurological disorders, and immune deficiency problems who receive home infusion therapy.

Patients' lives are at stake. That is why I prepared an amendment to the 21st Century Cures Act that delays the reimbursement change for infusion drugs by 1 year. I hope that this amendment could be included in the 21st Century Cures Act or the end of session continuing resolution. Instead of going into effect on January 1, 2017, the overpayment reduction would go into effect on January 1, 2018, under my amendment. This is only a 1-year delay, but it would allow 20,000 patients to continue receiving infusion therapy at home. I think this is reasonable and fair and I urge my colleagues to support the amendment.

The 21st Century Cures Act includes many very important provisions that should be enacted, so I hope this issue can be corrected.

TRIBUTE TO BARBARA A. MIKULSKI

Madam President, this is a bitter-sweet moment as I rise to pay tribute to my esteemed colleague, dear friend, and fellow Senator, BARBARA A. MIKULSKI, the longest serving woman in the history of the United States Congress.

Senator BARB has been more than a dedicated champion for the State of Maryland; she has fought tirelessly for the welfare of all Americans across the country but especially the disadvantaged—equal pay for equal work, funding for childcare for working families, quality health care for all Americans, an ambitious space exploration program, robust homeland security programs, and fire protection grants. These are but a few of the causes Senator BARB has worked on for more than four decades as an outstanding public servant and legislator.

She is rooted in the city we both call home, Baltimore, where her father ran a grocery store in Highlandtown. She earned her bachelor of science degree in sociology from Mount Saint Agnes College and a master of social work degree from the University of Maryland School of Social Work. She became a social worker and then demonstrated her formidable organizational skills and resolve when she led the successful opposition to a 16-lane highway that was going to cut through the Fells Point neighborhood in Baltimore. Throughout her 40 years of congressional service, she has returned to Baltimore almost every night.

She ran for the city council in 1971, where she served for 5 years before she was elected to the House of Representatives to represent Maryland's Third District—a seat she held for 10 years. I was proud to succeed her in the House when she was elected to the Senate in 1986 and became the first female Democratic Senator elected in her own right. Here in the Halls of the Senate, she opened doors that had previously been closed to women. She refused to accept second-class treatment because of her gender and fought to be recognized as an equal. Generations of young women who chose to participate in public life or who dreamed of joining the U.S. Senate have benefited from Senator BARB's trailblazing legacy.

From affordable housing and education to childcare, health benefits, and pensions, she has left an indelible imprint on the Nation's social policies as a senior member of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions. It is fitting that she authored the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009—the first major bill to be signed into law by the first African-American President. I know one of her proudest accomplishments is strengthening the social safety net for seniors by passing the Spousal Anti-Impoverishment Act, which helps keep seniors from going into bankruptcy while paying for a spouse's nursing home care.

Senator BARB said, "We work on macro issues and macaroni and cheese

issues. . . . Our national debate reflects the needs and dreams of American families."

In 2012, she became the first woman and the first Marylander to chair the Senate Appropriations Committee. She has worked well with Senator COCHRAN and other Republicans on the committee to produce annual appropriations bills under difficult budget constraints. I think she has shown how the Senate can work in a productive, bipartisan fashion.

Senator MIKULSKI has served as the dean of the women Senators from both parties, promoting collegiality, civility, and consensus-building. In this capacity, again, she has been one of the leaders of this institution with respect to making it work better.

Senator BARB has always had her feet planted firmly on the ground, but she has reached for the stars. No one has been a stronger advocate for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, NASA; the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, NOAA; the National Science Foundation, NSF; and for researching and understanding the universe to make life better here on Earth than Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI.

Not only has she reached for the stars, she is a star. NASA named a supernova after her in 2012—Supernova Mikulski—discovered, fittingly, by the Hubble Space Telescope on January 25, 2012. The supernova is 7.5 billion light-years away and the remnants of a star more than eight times as massive as our own Sun.

Senator MIKULSKI has so much political energy per square inch of height that she has reached her own orbit in space. Even though her realm includes the entire universe, Senator BARB always kept the needs of Marylanders close to her heart during her tenure. Whether it is fighting for funding to restore the Chesapeake Bay, supporting mass transit improvements in Baltimore, standing up for Federal employees and retirees who work and live in our State, or posting the world's best recipe for crabcakes on her Web site, I know I speak on behalf of each and every Marylander when I say how much we will miss her outstanding leadership and unwavering commitment to our State.

I am privileged to have worked with Senator BARB for 10 years in the Senate and for 20 years before that when I was in the House of Representatives. I am proud to have stood alongside her as two members of Team Maryland.

On a personal basis, I have a very close friend and my service in the Senate is much more productive, much more enjoyable, and much more rewarding because of Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI.

The United States Congress, the State of Maryland, the United States, and, indeed, the world are better places because of Senator MIKULSKI's public

service. She may not be the tallest Senator, but she certainly leaves the biggest shoes to fill. I will miss her, but I will remain internally inspired by her shining example of public service at its best.

TRIBUTE TO BARBARA BOXER

Madam President, for the 10 years I have been in the Senate, I have been privileged and have had the pleasure to serve alongside the Senator from California, BARBARA BOXER, on the Committee on Environment and Public Works and on the Committee on Foreign Relations. She is the ranking member of the Environment and Public Works Committee and previously chaired the committee, the first woman to do so.

Senator BOXER has spent the last 40 years in elective office—24 years here in the Senate, 10 years before in the U.S. House of Representatives, and 6 years on the Marin County Board of Supervisors. She was the board's first woman president. Earlier, she worked as a stockbroker while her husband Stewart, whom she met at Brooklyn College, attended law school. Senator BOXER has been a journalist and is the author of two books.

The first time Senator BOXER ran for the Sixth Congressional District seat, in 1982, her campaign slogan was "BARBARA BOXER gives a damn." Her constituents have agreed. She ran for reelection four times and never received less than 67 percent of the vote. In 2004, when she was running for a third term in the Senate, she received 6.96 million votes—the most votes any candidate has ever received in the history of the U.S. Senate.

Oscar Madison and Felix Unger may have been the original odd couple, but Senator BOXER and the Senator from Oklahoma, Senator INHOFE, have been the Senate's odd couple. An unabashed liberal and unabashed conservative working together to pass some of the most important legislation of the last quarter century—our periodic surface transportation bills and the Water Resources Development Act reauthorizations. These bills have put millions of Americans to work and made our economy more efficient.

Senator BOXER understands the importance of building, and she also understands the importance of preserving. She has helped to set aside more than 1 million acres of Federal land in California as wilderness. The omnibus public lands package, which became law in 2009, includes three Boxer bills to protect 57,000 acres in Big Sur and the Los Padres Forest and another 273,000 acres of California coast as wilderness. She wrote the Senate bill that elevated Pinnacles National Monument into America's 59th national park. She helped champion the creation of the Fort Ord National Monument and Cesar Chavez National Monument and was instrumental in expanding the Gulf of the Farallones and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuaries. She also authored the Cali-

fornia Missions Preservation Act to protect and restore California's 21 historic missions and led the effort in the Senate to create the Manzanar National Historic Site.

Senator BOXER's concern for the environment hasn't been just a parochial interest; no one has fought harder to defend and improve our Nation's landmark environmental laws, such as the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act. She fought to remove arsenic from drinking water. The air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food we eat are better because of Senator BOXER.

Senator BOXER's environmental bonafides are well known, but she has been a superbly effective legislator on so many other issues. She is a champion for women. In 1991, she led a group of women Members to the Judiciary Committee to demand that the committee, which was all-male and all-White at the time, take Anita Hill's charges seriously. Senator BOXER has defended women's reproductive health choices and privacy. She was involved in passing the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act and the Violence Against Women's Act. She is a senior member of the Foreign Relations Committee, where she chairs the first committee to focus on global women's issues.

In a business meeting earlier today, the members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee unanimously passed a resolution honoring Senator BOXER's work on that committee and her work in the U.S. Senate. At that time, we noted that she was the ranking member on the subcommittee that provided help for women and girls globally, and her work in Afghanistan was most notable. She has made a difference around the world for young women.

Senator BOXER authored the first ever specific authorization for after-school programs, a bipartisan bill that then-President George W. Bush signed into law in 2002. Today's afterschool programs are funded at \$1.15 billion, allowing them to serve 1.6 million children. She was the author of another bipartisan bill to accelerate America's contribution to combat global HIV-AIDS and tuberculosis.

Senator BOXER wrote two laws to enhance economic and security cooperation with Israel. In 2012, she worked with the Senator from Georgia, Mr. ISAKSON, on the United States-Israel Enhanced Security Cooperation Act, which extended loan guarantees to Israel, increased the U.S. military stockpile in Israel, and encouraged NATO-Israel cooperation. In 2014, she worked with the Senator from Missouri, Mr. BLUNT, on the U.S.-Israel Strategic Partnership Act of 2014, further strengthening economic and security cooperation between the two countries.

Senator BOXER has strong principles. She can be outspoken when the need arises, but she is also a consummate legislator, able to work across the aisle and across the Hill to get important things done. We are going to miss her

skills and her leadership. I know we will continue to hear from her because she is not the retiring type, but she certainly has earned the right to spend more time with her husband Stewart, their children Doug and Nicole, and four grandchildren.

We wish her well, and we will miss her in the Senate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

FREE SPEECH RIGHTS

Mr. LEE. Madam President, over the weekend, syndicated columnist George Will wrote about a disturbing ruling in a French court. The court ruled that a video called "Dear Future Mom," produced by the Global Down Syndrome Foundation, must be banned from television. It cannot be viewed on television anywhere in France. What, you might ask, triggered this draconian act of censorship? Was it speech inciting violence? No. Was it a hate speech? No. Was it discrimination? In fact, it is the opposite, as it turns out. I will let Mr. Will tell the story as I read the words from his column.

The column is entitled "The 'right' to be spared from guilt."

The word "inappropriate" is increasingly used inappropriately. It is useful to describe departures from good manners and other social norms, such as wearing white after Labor Day and using the salad fork with the entree.

But the adjective has become a splatter of verbal fudge, a weasel word falsely suggesting measured seriousness. Its misty imprecision does not disguise, but advertises the user's moral obtuseness.

A French court has demonstrated how "inappropriate" can be an all-purpose device of intellectual evasion and moral cowardice. The court said it is inappropriate to do something that might disturb people who killed their unborn babies for reasons that were, shall we say, inappropriate.

Prenatal genetic testing enables pregnant women to be apprised of a variety of problems with their unborn babies, including Down syndrome. It is a congenital condition resulting from a chromosomal defect that causes varying degrees of mental disability and some physical abnormalities, such as low muscle tone, small stature, flatness of the back of the head, and an upward slant to the eyes. Within living memory, Down syndrome people were called Mongoloids. Now they are included in the category called "special needs" people. What they most need is nothing special. It is for people to understand their aptitudes, and to therefore quit killing them in utero.

Down syndrome, although not common, is among the most common anomalies at 49.7 percent per 100,000 births. In approximately 90 percent of instances when prenatal genetic testing reveals Down syndrome, the baby is aborted. Cleft lips or palates, which occur in 72.6 percent per 100,000 births, also can be diagnosed in utero and sometimes are the reason a baby is aborted.

In 2014, in conjunction with World Down Syndrome Day (March 21), the Global Down Syndrome Foundation prepared a two-minute video titled "Dear Future Mom" to assuage the anxieties of pregnant women who have learned that they are carrying a Down syndrome baby.

More than 7 million people have seen the video online in which one such woman says,

"I'm scared: What kind of life will my child have?" Down syndrome children from many nations tell the woman that her child will hug, speak, go to school, tell you he loves you and "can be happy, just like I am—and you'll be happy too."

The French state is not happy about this. The court has ruled that the video is—wait for it—"inappropriate" for French television. The court upheld the ruling in which the French Broadcasting Council had banned the video as a commercial.

The court said the video's depiction of happy Down syndrome children was "likely to disturb the conscience of women who had lawfully made different choices."

So, what happens on campuses does not stay on campuses. There, in many nations, sensitivity bureaucracies have been enforcing the relatively new entitlement to be shielded from what might disturb, even inappropriate jokes.

And now this rapidly metastasizing right has come to this:

A video that accurately communicates a truthful proposition—that Down syndrome people can be happy and give happiness—should be suppressed because some people might become ambivalent, or morally queasy about having chosen to extinguish such lives because . . .

This is why the video giving facts about Down syndrome people is so subversive of the flaccid consensus among those who say aborting a baby is of no moral significance than removing a tumor from a stomach. Pictures persuade.

Today's improved prenatal sonograms make graphic the fact that the moving fingers and beating heart are not mere "fetal material." They are a baby. Toy maker Fisher-Price, children's apparel manufacturer OshKosh, McDonald's and Target have featured Down syndrome children in ads that the French court would probably ban from television.

The court has said, in effect, that the lives of Down syndrome people—and by inescapable implication, the lives of many other disabled people—matter less than the serenity of people who have acted on one or more of three vicious principles:

That the lives of the disabled are not worth living. Or the lives of the disabled are of negligible value next to the desire of parents to have a child who has no special, meaning inconvenient, needs. Or that government should suppress the voices of Down syndrome children in order to guarantee other people's right not to be disturbed by reminders that they have made lethal choices on the basis of one or both of the first two inappropriate principles.

That is the end of Mr. Will's column, which I just read in its entirety.

As Americans enter yet another era of change in our politics, it is my sincere hope, and indeed my prayer, that it can also be a season of change in our hearts. Here in the United States, the free speech rights of groups like the Global Down Syndrome Foundation to produce videos like "Dear Future Mom," which I highly recommend, are protected by the First Amendment, but the rights of actual Americans with Down syndrome, both born and unborn, can only be protected by their fellow citizens, not just in our laws but in our communities, our families, and our culture.

This time of year, we would all do well to remember the life-changing joy that can come from a single, unexpected, and special child, and also re-

member the courage of their mothers and fathers who chose life—the heroes who chose to make room at the inn.

I know I speak for all of my colleagues when I wish all of them a very merry Christmas.

I thank the Presiding Officer and 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. WARNER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

MINERS PROTECTION ACT

Mr. WARNER. Madam President, I rise to join my colleague who spoke earlier today, the Senator from Ohio, and here shortly, the Senator from Pennsylvania. I wish to also thank my friend, the Senator from West Virginia. Without his tireless efforts, this cause we are fighting for might not still have a chance, and I want to commend him for the countless hours and the amazing amount of work he has done on an issue we have been here time and again on; that is, begging this body to take meaningful action on the Miners Protection Act before the end of this year.

For over a year and a half, we have been coming to the floor to tell our colleagues that if we do nothing, retired coal miners and their families—for the most part we are talking about widows because most of the miners have passed away—will lose their health care at the end of this year. Well, the end of the year is upon us. It is literally days away, and we have taken every procedural step to ensure a vote on the Miners Protection Act.

Under the leadership of the Senator from West Virginia, we were asked to go through regular order. We were asked to have a hearing. Those of us on the Finance Committee—the Senator from Pennsylvania and I—were asked to have a committee markup. We had the committee markup. We reported the bill out with strong bipartisan support. Yet here we are, days away from the supposed end of the session, and we still have not had that vote. We have a long-term bipartisan solution, but instead we are being told the CR that might simply fund the government for a few months may have some kind of stop-gap effort—a stop-gap effort that would barely provide enough time, for those who were already threatened with losing their health care at the end of the year—barely have enough time to even reschedule a doctor's appointment.

These miners—many of them have faced devastating illnesses as a result of their time in the mines—will be given absolutely no certainty that they will receive the medical care they need if we simply were to extend this bill to the time of the CR. And what would happen after May 1? And that has nothing to say to the more than 100,000 min-

ers across the country—thousands of them in my State of Virginia—who lose not only health care but also future pension benefits that are threatened by the approaching insolvency of the United Mine Workers 1974 pension fund.

Madam President, you may not know this—as a matter of fact, even my colleague from West Virginia didn't realize this—but today, December 6, is actually National Miners Day. Each year on December 6, we set aside a day to honor the mine workers of today and yesterday and reflect on their contributions to our Nation and rededicate ourselves to doing everything we can to protect their lives and health. Think about that. Today is actually National Miners Day. What better day to take the long awaited action to make sure that for those miners—and particularly, more often than not, for their widows—we honor the commitment that was made back in 1947 to make sure that their health care and pension benefits—at least their health care benefits—are guaranteed. The reality is that even with stronger safety standards, coal mining remains a dangerous and difficult profession. The truth is that nobody can really understand what it is like to be in a mine unless you have been underground. I have had that opportunity a number of times in my career. So many of the miners I worked with and supported when I was Governor and now as I am a Senator have seen all the changes that have come about by the changing nature of the industry, by globalization and by technology. Now many of those communities are on hard times. If we produce one more hit to these communities—a hit whereby the Federal Government doesn't honor the commitment they made to those miners in terms of protecting the health care of the miners and their families—then, quite honestly, we are not doing our job.

We have come together and worked in a bipartisan fashion. We have a solution. We have a solution that wouldn't add to the debt or the deficit. I hope that those who are holding up this long-term solution—and it is not simply one side. We have complete support on this side of the aisle and from a number of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle. Again, we ask: Let's make sure these miners, their widows, and their families don't lose their health care come the end of this year. We can ensure that happens, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to make sure that promise becomes a reality.

With that, I yield the floor to my colleague from Pennsylvania.

Mr. MANCHIN. We are close. It is West Virginia.

I yield the floor to my dear friend and colleague, the Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I have a parliamentary inquiry.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GARDNER). The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, it was my understanding that I was going to follow the Senator from Connecticut on the VA bill, and I am happy to accommodate the Senator from West Virginia or the Senator from Pennsylvania or the Senator from Connecticut, whomever knows what order we should be in.

Mr. MANCHIN. Sir, that is so kind of you. If we could do that, since the Senator is not here, then we can be very brief on ours, if you don't mind.

Mr. ISAKSON. Will I yield to the Senator from West Virginia?

Mr. MANCHIN. Yes.

Mr. ISAKSON. And then would you yield to the Senator from Connecticut?

Mr. MANCHIN. Let's let you do yours now. Go ahead. The Senator from Connecticut can go ahead.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to recognize the Senator from Connecticut, the Senator from Georgia, and then the Senator from Pennsylvania.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I want to thank my colleagues who are very gracious for yielding to me, and I thank the Presiding Officer for recognizing me.

VETERANS HEALTH CARE AND BENEFITS LEGISLATION

Mr. President, there is welcome news today, which is that the Senate has received from the House H.R. 6416, a bipartisan comprehensive measure that keeps faith with our veterans and makes sure that we continue our progress toward leaving no veteran behind.

I want to emphasize at the very start that this measure is a down payment. It is far from a final or even fully acceptable solution to many of the problems that it addresses. It has more than 70 provisions. It is broad and comprehensive in scope and scale. More vets, many at risk and homeless, will receive the care and benefits they need and deserve. VA hospitals will have better management and more mental health caregivers and emergency room doctors. Families of veterans will be helped by extending critical education benefits to surviving members of those families. Work will finally begin to help descendants of veterans exposed to toxic substances. But again, on those issues and so many more, we are only taking another step in what must be a journey toward helping our veterans with services that they need, deserve, and have earned.

One example that is long awaited is a landmark move that will commence research on descendants of veterans who have been exposed to toxic substances and address the painful residual wounds. It is all the more important today because we know the modern field of combat is ridden with nerve gas and other toxic and poisonous substances that all too often may endan-

ger not only the brave men and women engaged on the battlefield but also their descendants. This measure expands the definition of homeless veterans to include individuals—perhaps women fleeing domestic violence—and it broadens the eligibility for critical homeless prevention programs. Many of those women fleeing brutality and violence deserve this kind of help.

Under this legislation, the Veterans Health Administration will be given the flexibility it needs in scheduling physician workloads to bring them in line with the common practice that prevails in most medical centers. It is past time that we adjust the 1950s schedules, practices, and policies to work regulations within the VA hospitals and the need of today's veterans.

One extraordinarily important provision relates to mental health, long a priority for me. We will make it easier to hire mental health counselors and access mental health treatment, significantly overhauling VA construction practices and authorize major medical construction projects in Reno, NV, and Long Beach, CA.

On the issue of accountability that is so critically important and needs so much work, a provision in this measure would limit the ability of the VA to place an employee who is under investigation for misconduct on paid administrative leave for more than 14 days. This limitation would end the current practice of placing problematic employees on long periods of paid administrative leave and the provision would force the VA leaders to address issues when they arise to impose accountability.

I want to thank my colleague Senator ISAKSON for his leadership, his dedication, his attention to detail, and his flexibility in the best traditions of this body. He clearly has put veterans first by sharing their ideas. They have come to us from many of the veterans service organizations, and I want to acknowledge all of them as well because they have been such a positive force.

I want to thank my staff on the Veterans' Affairs Committee for their work on this bill and others that we passed, such as the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act, which I did in partnership with Senator KAINE and Senator ISAKSON.

We need to do more to help veterans cope with opioid addiction, combat homelessness, protect veterans against identity theft, and make sure that our health care system for veterans continues to improve. It is still clearly a work in progress and still fails to meet the demands of access for thousands and tens of thousands of our veterans, even as it provides quality health care to many others.

Many of the current challenges faced by veterans are directly attributable to management failures, and that is why accountability needs to improve. I want to thank Senators BURR and TESTER for their bipartisan agreement to move forward on these challenges,

and, hopefully, we will continue their work in the next session. Likewise, I have worked with Senator MORAN and Chairman ISAKSON on numerous accountability reforms in the Veterans First Act, which was before this Chamber, again, providing goals and measures that we must achieve in the next Congress.

Our bipartisan efforts to pass, hopefully within the next few days, H.R. 6416 is a crucial test of whether there is the necessary will and determination in this body to move ahead on the enormous challenges yet unmet and the enormous obligations that we have.

Just as critical as the health care challenges, so too are the chronic problems in providing veterans the benefits they have earned—benefits that are denied them in decisions they appeal. Today, over 450,000 veterans' appeals await a decision. That is why I introduced the Department of Veterans Affairs Appeals Modernization Act of 2016. The present veterans' appeals process is a travesty. It is a mockery of justice. It must be reformed. It must be given the resources to make it effective. Even when veterans earn benefits, there are too many examples of unequal application. I joined Senator MURRAY in her efforts to ensure that all caregivers for severely wounded and disabled veterans, regardless of when the veterans have served, have access to caregiver support services. These caregivers are moms and dads, spouses, and children who provide care day after day after day at great expense and burden to them with very little support from the Nation that should be as grateful to them as to the veterans themselves.

Simply put, veterans deserve better, and they deserve more. Even when they have grievances, often they are denied a day in court. They are forced into arbitration agreements concerning their reemployment rights and workplace protections. That is why I introduced the Justice for Servicemembers Act in June—to clarify that servicemembers cannot be denied access to the courthouse and forced into arbitration and that servicemembers cannot be forced to sacrifice those rights as a condition of future or continued employment. It is about basic American justice. Who deserves that justice more than our veterans who fought for it and died for it and should never be denied it?

I want to thank again all of my colleagues who have worked with me over these past 2 years. We owe every veteran—regardless of the war or the conflict, regardless of the era—the basic guarantee that they will never be left behind, that this Nation will keep faith with them. This body owes them the obligation to summon the political will to cross partisan lines to make sure that we keep faith with them.

As I yield the floor today, I want to express my gratitude again to Chairman ISAKSON and say that I yield the floor today but none of us should ever yield in the fight to help our veterans.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Connecticut for his recognition. I want to take this moment on the floor to praise him for the contribution he has made to the committee over the last 2 years.

I want to tell you a story. RICHARD became ranking member in the same year and at the same time that I became chairman. We met, we made a commitment to one another that we were going to move forward as a united Veterans' Affairs Committee, address the problems of our veterans, and do it in a bipartisan fashion. To set the tone for that, we introduced the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act, which RICHARD BLUMENTHAL introduced, and passed it unanimously in the committee and 99 to zero on the floor of the Senate in the first weeks of this Congress. We did so to set the table that whatever the problems are, we should never let our pettiness, our politics, and our partisanship stop us from helping a veteran. Because of RICHARD BLUMENTHAL on suicide prevention and our commitment to make it bipartisan, we passed that unanimously early on in the session and since that time have addressed other issues as well.

The bill we discussed today, which is named in part for RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, is, as he said a minute ago, a down payment on the continuing debt we owe to our veterans who have served us well. On the first day in the committee when I took over as chairman, I said: You know, there are no Republican veterans and no Democratic veterans; there are only American veterans. They are the Americans who fought for our flag, fought for our Constitution, fought for our liberty, and fought for each of us.

I am proud to have fought with RICHARD for our veterans in the foxhole of the Senate.

There is much left to be done. With the passage of this act today, which is named after Senator BLUMENTHAL and Congressman JEFF MILLER, who is retiring from the House, we are making another down payment on what we owe our veterans.

There are other payments soon to come. I met earlier today with JOHN MCCAIN. We have made a commitment to make sure Veterans Choice is made permanent for our veterans and work to see that veterans have the best choice they can have, not to privatize the VA but to optimize the exposure of veterans to health care services wherever they need them.

Last night I met with JON TESTER, our colleague from Montana, who will replace Richard as the new ranking member of the committee. He is equally committed with us to see to it that we move beyond the current sunset of the Veterans Choice Program, to solve the Veterans Choice Program as well as the other problems that confront our veterans.

We are a team of Americans, not Republican Americans or Democratic Americans but Americans committed to see our veterans get what they were promised.

As Senator BLUMENTHAL said, this bill addresses homelessness, it addresses women's health care issues, it addresses the possible passage of exposure to toxic waste in a hereditary fashion to the surviving children and grandchildren of our veterans, an obligation we owe to see to it that if there is any transfer of the exposure of those toxic substances, the VA benefits that go to the veteran also can be passed down to the child who is a victim of heredity through no fault of their own.

We do a lot on the court and the appeals. As Senator BLUMENTHAL said, we have a backlog of 450,000 appeals. We are adding two judges in the appeals process. We need to do more to expedite the appeals process.

This year I was personally disappointed that as close as we got to dealing with the administration and finding a solution, we still failed to say to our veterans: We are going to solve your problem of waiting in line.

Two weeks ago, I had the sad duty of breaking into tears in the living room of a home of a veteran in Marietta, GA. This is a veteran who has been trying for 3 years to get an appeal responded to and can't get it. He is a veteran whose life is about to end without ever getting an answer as to whether his appeal is justified. That is just not right.

We can find a way in this country to get the manpower and womanpower necessary, make the moral commitment that is imperative, and see that our veterans who have an appeal get an expeditious answer. Our veterans need to cooperate in that process by giving us all the backup data as fast as possible for every appeal they ask for. But it is not right for an appeal to last as long as the one that is before us in the U.S. Veterans Administration today, which is 25 years old. That's right, the oldest appeal in the Veterans Administration is 25 years old.

I am committed—and I make the commitment on the floor of the Senate today—to work with RICHARD, JON TESTER, the members of our committee, and everybody in this body to see to it that we say to the 450,000 veterans who are waiting on an appeal: We are going to get you an answer, and we are going to get it faster.

To those sons and daughters today who are signing up for the U.S. military, if you have a need for an appeal, we will see you get an expeditious answer. They deserve the very best. They deserve no less than a thorough answer in response to the appeal they have made.

The last 2 years, it has been a privilege and a pleasure for me for to work as chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee. It has been a pleasure to work with RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, and I commend him on the contributions he has made. It has been equally great to

work with his staff, who have worked closely with us to see that we brought the best legislation possible to the floor of the Senate.

I particularly thank Tom Bowman, my chief of staff, who has made a lot of magic things happen during these last 2 years. But things have just begun in the Veterans' Committee of the Senate. We are going to work together to reach the dreams we all have to see to it that our veterans have seamless services and that we pay back to them what we owe them, equally what they have sacrificed and pledged for us—their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor.

I thank Senator BLUMENTHAL for his support and ask each of our Members in the Senate today to help us pass this downpayment on the promise and the debt we owe to the veterans of the United States of America.

I yield to the Senator from Pennsylvania.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

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

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

MINERS PROTECTION ACT

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise to speak tonight about the Miners Protection Act.

First, I commend and salute the work that has been done in this Chamber. I especially highlight the Senators on the Democratic side who have been working. I know this will not cover everyone, but I thank Senator MANCHIN, the senior Senator from West Virginia, Senator BROWN of Ohio, Senator WARNER of Virginia, and others, including the Democratic leadership, for working on this. I know we have bipartisan support on this issue. I thank our Republican colleagues who have worked on this.

Unfortunately, just today we are told that in the negotiations, in the back-and-forth on the continuing resolution, which we should be voting on this week—we are told that Majority Leader MCCONNELL is not going to include the Miners Protection Act in the continuing resolution. That is very bad news, especially when we consider how we arrived at this point in terms of bipartisan support. I will get to that in a moment.

Instead, apparently the proposal—or I guess at this point it might be beyond a proposal because it might be in a draft of the continuing resolution. Be that as it may, what has been proposed is 4 months of health care for miners and their families instead of a lifetime guarantee. In a word, that is unacceptable. I will not dwell on that because I want to get to the rest of our arguments on why this is a proposal we cannot accept.

A long time ago, before the turn of the last century, Stephen Crane, known mostly for the "Red Badge of Courage," a great novel, died at the

age of 28 or 29. But prior to his death, in addition to all that he wrote in a great novel, he wrote for McClure's magazine an essay about a coal mine near my hometown of Scranton in Lackawanna County. I come from a county that had of what they used to call hard coal, anthracite coal. It heated homes across the Nation and across the world, for not just years but generations.

Stephen Crane described how dangerous it was to work in a coal mine. He did it with such beauty and such skill, but there were so many horrible images. I, of course, will not read the entire essay, but at one place he described the coal mine as a place of "inscrutable darkness, a soundless place of tangible loneliness."

Then he described all the ways a miner could die in the mines. That was in the 1890s. Of course, coal mining today is safer, but still very dangerous. But no matter what the danger level, no matter what the circumstances of today, we owe these miners their health care, their pensions, and we owe their families.

What they don't want to hear, what we should not engage in, is the usual horse trading and kind of back-and-forth of Washington. They deserve the Miners Protection Act. It is not some theory, and it is not some idea; it is legislation that was introduced, debated, and then voted on by the Finance Committee, 18 to 8, a bipartisan vote in a place that sometimes cannot agree on the time of day, let alone something as substantive and as important as health care and pension benefits for those who earned them. This isn't some extra thing we are giving, not some gift we are giving; they earned it, in many cases not just for years but for decades they earned this. OK. We owe them this. This country owes them this. This Chamber owes this to these miners.

It was a promise a long time ago, in the late 1940s. These miners kept their promise. They went to work every day, year after year and decade after decade, and their families depended upon that promise. Some of them served in wars, including Vietnam, as just one example. They served in Vietnam and then worked in the mines again and worked and worked. So they kept their promise. They kept their promise to their family, they kept their promise to their country, and they kept their promise to their company.

Yet here we are once again, and the only ones left out are the miners. The companies will figure out a way to do OK. The country will move forward, the Senate will be just fine, but once again we stand at the precipice or at the threshold of a new time period. People are wanting to get out of here for the holidays, yet coal miners are not asking us to do anything other than keep a promise.

We should keep our promise, and the Republican majority leader should keep that promise. It is outrageous

that anyone would think it is appropriate to propose temporarily saving benefits when, in practice, these recipients would be notified almost simultaneously that they are both eligible for benefits—temporarily—and that their benefits will terminate. That is not just wrong; that is an insult. It is an insult to them and to their families.

Just imagine the stress of this. We cannot imagine it. I will answer my own question: We cannot imagine it. Probably no one in this building could imagine the stress on these individuals and their families. It is completely unnecessary.

I know we are limited on time tonight, but I wish to highlight portions of letters that I have received. I know the Senator from West Virginia has received even more because of his great advocacy, his work, and the substantial impact that the mining industry has had on his great State and the work that is done by great miners to this day.

To protect people in case we haven't received their permission, I will not use full names. This letter is from Waynesburg, PA, Southwestern Pennsylvania. I will limit it to a son talking about his mom. He said: "I am writing to you for my mother." He is asking us to vote on this bill. In the letter he says his mom is a widow. "She now lives on a fixed income. Her life depends on this passing," meaning, the bill passing. "She has cancer and will need surgery."

Her life depends on this bill passing. OK. This isn't just another bill about some far-off issue. That is a son writing to us from Waynesburg, PA, about his mom.

This is another letter from a son writing about both his parents, and I will provide just an excerpt. He writes that it would be "very comforting" to know his parents could "continue their current UMWA benefits until they can turn 65." He is worried about the fact that two parents are going to turn 65 in 2017, and he wants to make sure that they are protected.

The third and last letter I will read an excerpt from is from a miner himself from Johnstown, PA. It is a town I know pretty well in Cambria County. There has been a lot of mining there over many years. He is talking about working the mines for 21 years. He said: "When you make a promise it should be kept."

That is what a miner from Johnstown, who worked in the mines for 21 years, reminds us. It is just what I said: "A promise should be kept." It continues, "This insurance has gotten me and my wife through many health concerns including breast cancer in which my wife still fights today."

Then he talks about how this would dramatically change their access to doctors and medical care.

So we are not talking about some budget number here; we are talking about a family telling us the life of their mother depends upon it; another

family member whose mom has breast cancer, her life—or at least her health care at this point—depends upon it. So this isn't theory.

This legislation, which passed the Finance Committee, as I said, 18 to 8—all we have to do is have the majority leader stand up and say that we are going to attach this to the continuing resolution and have the House Speaker say the same because they have control. That is all they have to do—attach it to the continuing resolution—and we will finally have kept our promise.

Temporary relief is not only insufficient, it is an insult. It is not just insufficient, it is dead wrong.

No one here should be playing games with people's ability to pay for medication, pay for their oxygen. That shouldn't be the subject of games or horse trading.

We delivered in both parties. We delivered to Majority Leader McCONNELL everything he asked for—committee consideration, debate and vote in the committee—and now it has come to the floor of the U.S. Senate. It is time for all of us to keep our promise to coal miners and to make the Miners Protection Act permanent law and to keep our promise to those miners and their families.

I again commend and salute the Senator from West Virginia, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, I wish to thank my dear friend from Pennsylvania, my neighbor State, for his commitment to the hard-working people who made this country what it is today.

There are a lot of people who don't know the history of how we are the superpower of the world, how we won two world wars, how we energized the whole industrial age, and how we built the middle class. It came because of the domestic energy that we basically extracted right here in America and it was done by mine workers. My grandfather came to this country as a young child in the early 1900s, and his family came here to find a better life. On both sides—I had one set of grandparents who came from Czechoslovakia and the other set came from Italy, and both sides ended up in the coal mines, as well as all of my uncles and cousins. We had these little coal camps all over the area where I grew up in Farmington, WV.

I was so proud of my heritage. I will never forget my Boy Scout leader was Pat Keener. He was a coal miner. When the coal mines automated in 1959, he had to go and find a job in Ohio in the auto industry. My Little League coach was a coal miner—everybody I knew. The hunting and fishing clubs were all coal miners who took all of us and showed us how to do things and enjoy the outdoors.

It is just an unbelievable network of people, and most all of them were military. Most all of them were veterans.

They continued to serve their country when they left the mines and went to the military and came back to the mines.

So I rise with a heavy heart because I thought we had this fixed. I thought this was something we had done—and Senator CASEY laid it out so well. We have done everything we can. This day has been coming for quite some time. I warned everybody 2 years ago that this finite time would come December 31 of this year. We started working in earnest quite a while ago. We were told to go through the regular order, as Senator CASEY said, to do the things we were supposed to do. It got its full purview, if you will, and it passed bipartisanly. Everyone is sympathetic. Everyone knows the hard work that is done and how dangerous it is.

My uncle on my mom's side got killed in the 1968 mine explosion in Farmington. I lost a lot of kids I went to school with, classmates, so it has been very near and dear to me.

As Governor of West Virginia, the Sago Mine disaster, I lost 12 miners there. We had the Logan Mine disaster, and I lost two people there, and then we had the UBB, and we lost 29 people. So I have been through it. I know how dangerous and tough this business is, but I know the country depends on them. We can't run without them.

I want to make sure everyone understands that this was never intended for the government or the taxpayers to pay. It never was. It wasn't set up that way. In 1946, John L. Lewis basically said we are going to go on strike. We are pulling everybody out. This was after World War II. The economy had been ramped up because it was 100 percent employment. We were producing and consuming because of the war effort. When that happened, the economy started heading down. He said: Oh, no. We have to keep this economy going. We can't let this tail off. They said: Listen, from the beginning of the 20th century until 1946—46 years—these miners have done back-breaking work. We have heard the old adage "I owe my soul to the company store." My grandfather told me that when he worked in the mines in the early 1920s, he had four children and was expecting his fifth child, and he said at the end of the day, he had no money. All the script was at the company store. He had to borrow everything there, and at the end of the month, he owed them for working, trying to make it. He had no health care. There was a doctor who helped them a little bit. They had no pension or retirement. They worked until they died, and that was the way it was.

In 1946, they said: Enough is enough. You shouldn't work this hard and so many people benefit. You helped build a country and you get nothing. So they said from that day forward—and that was the Krug amendment that was signed—and by the blessings of the U.S. President, Harry S. Truman. Then they said, from that day forward: All the

coal that we mine, a percentage of that coal or the money on that percentage of coal, would go into a black lung fund and then it would go into the AML fund and then it would go into basically the miners health care and retirement—a portion of that.

So it wasn't coming from taxpayers; it was coming from the work they were producing. That is where this came from.

So everything is going fine. Then, basically, Congress passed bankruptcy laws that allowed companies to go and declare bankruptcy and basically divest themselves of all of their responsibilities to the people who worked for them. This was done to them. We had the 74 plant and the 92 plant.

So we dealt with something that was not their making. These people negotiated contracts in good faith by bargaining, and they would give away salary or money that could have been in their pocket because they knew they were going to get guaranteed health care, and now here we stand basically saying: I am sorry. That is not going to happen. You are going to lose your pension and health care.

We have over 16,000 who will lose their health care benefits by the end of this year, less than 4 weeks away—16,000. Senator CASEY read some letters, and I am going to read some letters as well.

What we are doing here is we are holding up—and I know it affects everybody's hard work. This is something that is not easy for me. I have never done this. I have been here 6 years. I have never used this procedure, but I have never felt so committed and so beholden to people who have given so much. We are talking 60-, 70-, and 80-year-old women. Most of the husbands have died; they are still depending on this. The little clinics we have in the coal communities around West Virginia and southwestern Pennsylvania, those coal communities and coal camps and basically those little clinics will not survive. This has a ripple effect.

Now, I understand they are going to give us a 4-month extension—4 months. Let me tell my colleagues what these people are going through. They were told the 1st of October they will lose their benefits of health care; 16,000 were sent letters telling them they will lose them by the end of this year. Now, what we are about to do—which I believe is totally inhumane—we are about to now send them another letter, if passed the way it is going to be presented to us in the CR, that says: I am sorry, Mrs. Smith. I know we told you that you are going to lose your health care on December 1, but now we are going to tell you that in January we will send you another letter and tell you, you are going to lose it in April.

Now, you tell me if there is anything fair about that. You tell me how you face people who have given everything, and now we are just going to extend it for another 4 months with no certainty that anything will continue from there.

We are asking for a permanent fix. We have a pay-for for that permanent fix. It is the excess we have, surplus in the AML money, but everybody has other plans for that. Well, guess what. The people who need it have plans also, to try to keep themselves alive. That is the plan they have, and that is what they are asking for.

I haven't ever used this tactic before, but I feel so compelled that I said we are going to do whatever we can to keep this promise. We have asked for the health care—this had a health care and pension provision. It has only the health care provision right now because we understand that we worked and we negotiated and we said this is something we felt we needed now because they had a finite time—at the end of this month. We will work on the pensions next year, too, to make sure they are going to be preserved.

That being said, I have gotten letters, the same as everybody else in coal country where we come from. Here is one: Dear Senator MANCHIN, without action I, along with thousands of other coal miners and widows of coal miners, will lose our health care on December 31. My husband died in 2012 of pancreatic cancer. He also had black lung. He loved his job even though it was so dangerous. He worked to ensure that we had good health benefits not just for me but for him and our family. I am asking Congress to please do the right thing and don't let us lose our health care benefits.

I have another letter. This is from Carol Turek. Carol writes: My husband worked in the mines with blockages in his brain until he had enough time. He worked even though he was that ill so that I would have insurance if something happened to him, knowing that he was very ill. He retired in 2009 and he passed away in 2011. He was a good worker. He stayed over and worked days off when needed and this is how they thank him in return. How is an older person supposed to live when they take away your retirement, take away your insurance, and never give you raises in Social Security? Everything raises and medical is outrageous. I guess when you are old, they expect you to crawl into a corner and die. Well, I pray every day that God gives me another day, and I am praying that they pass this health care provision so that others and myself can live just a little bit longer.

I have another one. She says: Dear Senator MANCHIN and all of you who are trying to help us. My husband Charles passed away on October 12 from cancer. Patriot Coal filed bankruptcy before Charles passed away. He told me that if they took his medical coverage, that he would not go to the doctor because he didn't want to leave me in debt if he didn't get medical coverage, so he didn't want to go to the doctor. My income was cut almost 75 percent when Charles passed away. Charles was promised these benefits for us both. He worked all of those years in

coal dust to help supply this country with the energy that it needed. I pray that our government will pass this bill to help the thousands that will be affected by not having health care. Some people will choose to buy medicine instead of food. This is so sad and coal miners worked in the mines and risked their lives for so long. Some people that have never worked can get help under the new health care law, so why not help the ones who have worked and paid for it? Why can't they get what they are supposed to get? I am proud to be an American and daughter, sister, wife, and mother of coal miners.

I have one here that explains it very well. She says: Dear Senator. I have dedicated my life to a career in nursing in Boone County, WV. My husband developed kidney disease and heart disease at an early age. He did not smoke, drink, nor do drugs. Doing his work he developed an autoimmune. He worked very sick for 30 years underground in the coal industry as an electrician in the mines and maintenance worker. He was an educated man but he loved working with his hands. After coming out of the U.S. Air Force when he worked in the World Communication Agency as a cryptographic specialist in the White House, he chose to go into the mines as a career because of the reliable future, retirement, and health benefits that it assured for his family. Rick worked hard every day and during the last 15 years that he worked he would sometimes travel over 45 minutes away and take chemotherapy treatments to treat his kidney disease while he was still working. He had heart disease as a result of those treatments. So many heart studies, the stent, and the bypass surgery followed along with the continued renal disease. All of those years he worked in the mines to provide electricity to so many who worked other jobs, were comfortable in their homes, sitting at their desks, not risking life or limb for the luxuries afforded them by the coal miners who had been promised health and retirement benefits if they took less pay, did not strike for same, and continued providing the valuable coal resources this country needed.

Continuing: After educating me to beyond my Master's level; putting a girl through medical school, and another daughter to Master's level in teacher education—we depleted many of our financial resources to do this, knowing we had “secure retirement and health” planned for through his union. During the last 1½ years of his life, after retirement, Rick died of leukemia that developed from many years of chemical treatments for his autoimmune kidney disease. Meanwhile, I worked 26 years as a school nurse plus additional years as a registered nurse, planning to utilize my husband's percentage of retirement and health benefits to secure my own retirement.

Continuing: When the courts of this land allowed bankrupting companies to fold on their commitments to our min-

ers, that has become a frightening and impossible situation for myself, a widow, and many more in my same situation. Devastation is the only word that can be used to describe the trickle down effect it will have on so many other businesses and health agencies, if this congressional action does not carry through to secure our union miners, retirees, and widows. You are not only destroying the 12,000 plus miners and widows involved, you are destroying huge infrastructures and businesses that depend upon the income and health benefits where these individuals are served. Please note, only the “union” miners contributed to these funds, not the nonunion miners who chose much higher wages opposed to the union wages and structure. Please consider this so we can go into Christmas knowing we have the security of the fund being stabilized. Some will have no way out; some individuals will literally not survive without the needed health care and pensions they worked and sacrificed their health to obtain. Thank you, Sue Peros, Wife of Bert Ricky Peros, South Charleston, WV.

We have many more.

The thing I want to emphasize is that these are real people. This is not just something we are fabricating. These are people who work every day. These are people still living, still contributing, still taking care of their families, still depending on health care. The ripple effect is unbelievable. To sit here and say we are going to pass a CR because we want to go home for Christmas or to say we have the comfort of being home and we have 16,000 miners, retired—we have their widows and families depending on health care, and they have been told they are going to lose it December 31, but we are in a hurry to leave. We just can't wait to leave. We have got to get out of here. Well, I am sorry, that is not the way we do it back home. That is not how we treat our friends and neighbors and especially not how we treat our miners.

I am asking all of you to work with us to make sure we get a permanent fix. That is all I am asking for. We have a way to do this with the surplus AML funds to pay for that, money that was made for mining the coal to be used for this. That is what we are asking for. That is what we promised them. That is what we owe them.

I thank all of my colleagues, each and every one, for being so considerate. We have bipartisan support.

I will say this: If this were a standalone bill on this floor, it would pass. This bill on this floor would pass, with Democrats and Republicans working together. It would also pass in the House. But that is not the case. We can't get a standalone bill. We have what we have. We are asking for the compassion of our leaders on both sides of the aisle here to give us a clean, long-term fix for health care for the retired miners as promised.

Mr. President, I yield the floor to my dear friend from Ohio.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I thank Senator MANCHIN for driving this issue. It was done better with him than without him. I thank him for making a world of difference and Senator CASEY for his impassioned pleas and reading the letters from mine workers, retired mine workers, widows, retired mine workers in Western Pennsylvania and all over West Virginia and Southeast Ohio. We are all getting letters in our offices that are heartfelt and just make me wonder, why aren't we doing something?

I want to share a letter from a lady in Gallipolis, OH, a village. I was just there in the community of Rio Grande earlier this week. She wrote a letter to MITCH MCCONNELL, who is, frankly, the single person standing in the way of doing this.

Dear Leader Mitch McConnell:

Just to inform you as a member of UMWA that it is vitally important that we keep our insurance.

My Husband (Larry) worked 35 years as a miner. He has had bypass surgery this last Aug 8, 2016, also has black lung—COPD—chronic idiopathic gout, acute bronchitis . . .

And other things.

I have history of cardiomyopathy and congestive heart failure. . . . We need members of all Congress to consider all that the Coal Miners has contribution to the welfare of this country. Now we ask that they remember commitments made to the Coal Miners. Please keep that promise made to the Coal Miners.

Over and over: Please keep that promise made to the coal miners. But instead we hear all kinds of excuses. Again, one man—the majority leader of the Senate, the Republican Senator from Kentucky—one man standing in the way.

Senator MANCHIN just said that if this came to a vote right now on the Senate floor, it would easily have enough votes to pass, but one man has blocked this in the continuing resolution. He has kind of distributed—dropped a few crumbs to a few miners for a few weeks on health care but not pensions. But it is one man standing in the way.

When I look at the other Senators—the two Senators from Pennsylvania, one Democrat, one Republican; two Senators from West Virginia, one Democrat, one Republican; two Senators from Ohio, one Democrat, one Republican; two Senators from Virginia, both Democrats—all of them want to move on this, but we keep hearing excuses from one man, the majority leader of the Senate, from Kentucky.

We were told by the majority leader we need bipartisan support. Well, we got it, the bill cosponsored by Republicans and Democrats. As Senator MANCHIN said, if it were brought up to a vote, we could pass it tonight.

Then we were told the bill needs to go through regular order, which is a way, in Washington-speak, of simply

saying: Send it to a committee, examine it, debate it, bring a couple witnesses in, bring in experts, talk about it. We did that.

Senators WARNER and CASEY and I also, on the Finance Committee, helped get this bill through with a bipartisan vote of 18 to 8—not even close. Again, the Republican Senators from Pennsylvania and Ohio joined the Democratic Senators from those two States. Eighteen to eight.

Then we were told by the majority leader—the one man who is stopping this—find a pay-for. Find a way to pay for it. We did. The bill is fully offset. As Senator MANCHIN said, as Senator CASEY said, as a number have said, this does not cost taxpayers a dime. This isn't a bank bailout that cost real dollars. This isn't even the auto rescue, which was so important to my State. That cost real dollars, although the money was paid back. This won't cost taxpayers anything. The Congressional Budget Office estimates it would reduce the Federal deficit by \$67 million over 10 years because they would get the right kind of health care rather than having to rely on other kinds of government programs.

These miners—again, we keep saying this over and over. They have done everything we have asked them to do.

Almost seven decades ago, President Truman made this commitment. We have lived up to this commitment through Presidents of both parties, including this President, Barack Obama, but one person—again, one person—has stood in the way. The miners in my State can't afford to have this reduced to political gamesmanship. They are hard-working people. They spent their careers doing dignified work.

I remember when we spoke at the rally on a really hot day earlier this year. There were thousands of miners there. I remember Cecil Roberts, the president of the United Mine Workers, stood up and said: Put your hand up if you are a veteran.

Hundreds of hands went up.

He said: Put your hand up if your father or mother was a veteran.

Again, hundreds more hands went up.

These are people who served their country. And those who weren't off to war were producing the coal to produce the electricity to power the war machine, whether it was World War II or Korea or Vietnam or anything since.

Not taking up the mine workers protection act is violating the promise made by President Truman, violating the promise we all made. The bill should ride on the continuing resolution. The majority party has the ability to make that happen right now.

I was talking a moment ago quietly, privately, with Senator CASEY. We were talking about—unlike the spouses of insurance agents or realtors or teachers or Senators or bankers, mine workers are much more likely to die at a younger age. When you talk about so many, by any cross section, by any analysis of who is most in need of this

kind of help, mine workers—there are a lot more mine worker widows than there are in other professions because of the danger of the work. There is a much greater likelihood of dying on the job, much greater likelihood of getting hurt on the job, much greater likelihood in later years of developing brown lung and developing various kinds of heart ailments and bronchial ailments because they worked in the mines. That makes it an even more fundamental moral question, that we do something about this.

How many mine workers are sick and need health care? How many need these pensions? How many mine workers die and their widows need this help? And we sit here doing nothing.

I just say again to Leader MCCONNELL: Get out of the way. Just let this come to an up-or-down—however you want to do this, however you want to schedule this, however you want to move this through the Senate, we should be doing it now. We shouldn't go home for our Christmas break until we take care of these miners. It is the right, moral thing to do. It is the right thing for our country. It is a promise we made, a pledge we made. We should honor it, starting this evening.

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.

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

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

MONTENEGRO MEMBERSHIP IN NATO

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, today the Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved the resolution to allow Montenegro to become a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. I am here this afternoon to urge that the full Senate take up this issue and give a prompt vote to the accession before we bring the 114th Congress to a close.

A top priority of the historic NATO summit that happened in Warsaw in July was bolstering the alliance's resolve and capacity to deter Russian aggression against the Baltic States and the rest of NATO's eastern flank. Also at the Warsaw summit, NATO formally invited Montenegro to become its 29th member nation. All 28 member states must now ratify the accession protocol according to our own procedures. In the United States, that means the Senate must ratify the protocol.

In the decades since the end of the Cold War, NATO has been a tremendous force for stability, democratization, and freedom in Europe. That is exactly why more countries, including those created by the breakup of Yugoslavia, are eager to join.

Montenegro has worked hard to prove its commitment to NATO, including by strengthening its democ-

racy, making significant progress in fighting corruption, and improving its defense capabilities. Montenegro's membership in NATO would have significant impact, including completing the alliance's unbroken control of the Adriatic coast. It will serve to further anchor the Balkan region in the security framework of NATO.

It speaks volumes that Vladimir Putin has fiercely opposed Montenegro's accession to NATO. During Montenegro's general election in October, authorities arrested 20 people suspected of plotting, with support from Russia, to overthrow the Cabinet and assassinate Montenegro's Prime Minister, Milo Djukanovic. While NATO is purely a defensive alliance, Russia has warned Montenegro of retaliation if the country continues to pursue NATO membership. By quickly approving the resolution on accession, the Senate can demonstrate that it stands firmly with Montenegro and that we will not allow Putin to bully European states with impunity.

Montenegro's membership would reaffirm that NATO's door remains open to aspirant nations that share the values of all NATO members and stand ready to contribute to NATO operations. NATO must stand firm on the principle that the decision to seek membership in the alliance cannot be blocked by a third party.

NATO is the most ambitious and successful alliance in history. Across nearly seven decades, it has risen to every challenge: deterring the Soviet Union during the Cold War; integrating former Soviet bloc countries into a Europe whole and free; restoring peace in the Balkans after Yugoslavia's breakup; invoking article 5 in defense of the United States after September 11; and most recently, taking the fight to the Islamic State terrorist group in Syria and Iraq.

Montenegro is a small nation with big strategic importance. Its accession to NATO would strengthen the alliance. In turn, membership in NATO would bolster Montenegro's democracy and independence.

As I said, today the Foreign Relations Committee approved the resolution of accession. I hope the full Senate will bring the resolution to the floor for a prompt, favorable vote. The United States has always stood strong for freedom and democracy in Europe, and it is time to stand strong for freedom and democracy in Montenegro.

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

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 3084

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I am pleased to come to the floor tonight to

talk about a bill, S. 3084, the American Innovation and Competitiveness Act. This is a piece of legislation that has taken several years of patience, perseverance, a lot of hard work, and testimony from both sides of the aisle.

I am pleased that Senator PETERS from Michigan and I have finally been able to come up with a product that has the strongest bipartisan support in both the Senate and the House. This is an effort that builds on the America COMPETES legislation. America COMPETES was first passed over a decade ago as an effort to make the United States more competitive economically, an effort to make sure we had the skills and our workers, the STEM force education to compete with nations around the world as global competition increases, as other nations try to gain an advantage over the United States in their manufacturing processes and in their innovation processes.

The America COMPETES legislation arose from a report that was put together by a group of individuals—very smart business leaders, scientists—known as the “Rising Above the Gathering Storm” report, the “RAGS” report, the idea being, how are we going to make sure the United States remains competitive and how do we make sure we have the education programs we need in this country to gear the next-generation workforce for a more competitive environment? So we put together this bill, a bipartisan bill, passing it out of the Commerce Committee for the first time in a decade—the America COMPETES legislation—to renew this policy effort.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 695, S. 3084. I further ask that the committee-reported substitute amendment be withdrawn; the Gardner substitute amendment be agreed to; the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, this legislation sounds pretty good. It is bipartisan, but I also know that in my State there are more than 1,000 retired mine workers and their widows. We know that people who have worked in the mines for 30, 35, or 40 years are more likely to be sick and die younger. These 1,000-plus mine workers have been denied their pensions. Their pensions and health care have been threatened. Many of them are widows of mine workers. Yet, we have bipartisan support. It passed out of the Finance Committee 16 to 8, and Senator MCCONNELL—one person in this body—has blocked the mine workers pension and health care legislation for weeks and weeks and months and months.

I would be very happy to support and help Senator GARDNER in this legisla-

tion, the American Innovation and Competitiveness Act. I hope he will speak to the Republican leader and ask him to do the right thing to help these pensioners, widows, and mine workers whose pensions are threatened and whose health care is about to be cut off.

Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, again, I want to reiterate that this legislation, the America COMPETES bill, is a bipartisan product. We have spent countless hours working with people from around the country to come up with a bill that focuses on giving workers and employees the skills they need to succeed.

I understand the objection of the Senator from Ohio, which is based on the need to move forward with the legislation they are talking about, but it is my understanding that there is at least an effort to work on that legislation, which would provide some time to come up with a longer term solution providing an extension of the health care coverage they have been seeking for some time, although not the entire benefit package they were hoping would be extended under the legislation they were also talking about.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I can't exactly speak for my colleagues, but I know a number of Senators on this side of the aisle will be pleased to work with the Senator on this legislation, and I am hopeful we can do both in the days ahead.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Ohio.

One of the challenges we have, of course, is the calendar, as this reaches toward the end. Again, I am committed to stay here as long as we can to fix this and make this work. I do worry about our colleagues across the hallway and their calendar and making sure that they are finding the time to process this legislation, along with the legislation that the Senator from Ohio is concerned about.

Again, I think this is something that we ought to be able to move on as we address the concerns of the Senator from Ohio—and the concerns that I think, at least to some degree, will be addressed in the continuing resolution—and to continue to work on legislation that is truly bipartisan and beneficial from a standpoint of providing more resources for manufacturing partnerships, more resources for commercialization efforts, additional resources for STEM education, and having more underrepresented minority community members involved in STEM education fields. These are things I think we can work on, and this place has to have the ability to work together on efforts that the Senator from Ohio is so concerned

about and also the efforts that we have through the America COMPETES legislation. I believe we can do both.

I understand the objection, and I appreciate the offer and willingness to work together. But I know when you have a House and a Senate that work under two different calendars, one of which is under our control—again, let's stay here until we get this done. There is one calendar that is out of our control, and I just hope we can move forward on this because all 50 States do benefit from the bipartisan work we have been able to put forward on the American Innovation and Competitiveness Act.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I appreciate those words. I also recognize that we have not seen a continuing resolution yet. There is a rumor that it has 4 months of health care but it doesn't have any pension assistance, and there is nothing about fully funding their pension and continuing with their health care. They have already gotten a notice saying their health care will be terminated. If we continue this for 4 months, they will get another notice in January. That is all hearsay because we still have not seen the bill.

I know we are working on separate calendars. I understand that, and maybe the House is going to take the ball and go home, showing a real maturity in its leadership. The fact is we need to stay here. I don't know why we need to get out and go home for Christmas tomorrow or even Friday. I think we should stay here until we finish. We have been here until December 24 before. I am fine with that. I want to be home. I have a wife whom I love and kids and grandchildren, and I want to see them all, but I want to take care of these miners.

Show us a bill. Let's talk about it, negotiate this, and follow regular order. I believe we had an 18-to-8 vote on taking care of this health care for miners. We can honor what Senator GARDNER, the Senator from Colorado, wants to do. I am fine with doing that, but we are not going to do any of those things until we take care of the miners. We have an obligation to them that President Truman had begun with a pledge. It is morally reprehensible to betray that commitment to 12,000 retired miners and their widows in the country.

I want to do all of that, and I know Senator GARDNER does too. It is up to my colleagues to push the majority leader, who, for whatever reason, is blocking this and is continuing to block our ability to do this. We should stay here until it is finished.

I yield the floor.

MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

TRIBUTE TO JAMES R. CLAPPER, JR.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, today I wish to pay tribute to a true leader in every sense of the word. James R. Clapper, Jr., has had a defining impact on the U.S. Intelligence Community over his past half-century of service. As of today, he has served 2,190 days as the Director of National Intelligence, DNI, which makes him the longest serving DNI, surpassing the combined time of all the Directors who served before him. Director Clapper has dedicated his life to the field of intelligence, and his contributions to the Nation are significant.

Jim Clapper began his distinguished career as a rifleman in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, before becoming a commissioned officer in the U.S. Air Force in 1963. For 31 years, he served this Nation in various intelligence capacities, commanding signals intelligence operations both inside the United States and overseas. From 1991–1995, he served as the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, retiring with the rank of lieutenant general. After 6 years in the private sector, he took over the reins of the National Imagery and Mapping Agency in 2001 and spearheaded its transformation into today's National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency.

In 2007, President George W. Bush nominated General Clapper to serve as the Department of Defense's chief intelligence officer as the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, where he served in both the Bush and Obama administrations. President Obama nominated Jim Clapper to serve as the Director of National Intelligence in 2010, only the fourth person to serve in that position since its creation in the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004.

As the chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, I was initially concerned that General Clapper's military background would be inappropriate to lead a mostly civilian intelligence enterprise. He made clear his intent to lead objectively and in the best interest of intelligence, and he did. He brought important stability to this position. During the next 6 years, he and I talked frequently and discussed many topics of critical importance to this Nation. We also discussed changes he sought to implement to improve the operations of the intelligence community. These changes had, and will continue to have, a positive and lasting impact on the intelligence community.

During his tenure as DNI, Director Clapper focused relentlessly on intelligence integration, with a definitive focus on mission. He made important changes in how the Office of the Director of National Intelligence operated, including creating National Intelligence Managers, who oversaw the in-

tegration efforts across the intelligence community for specific mission areas. He put in place a planning, programming, budgeting, and evaluation system that set priorities, managed resources, and evaluated effectiveness of each taxpayer dollar being spent. He also began the ambitious goal of creating a common information technology infrastructure, known as the Intelligence Community Information Technology Enterprise, IC ITE, that will dramatically serve to improve intelligence integration. In addition, Director Clapper brought increased transparency to the intelligence community so that the public can have greater confidence in our intelligence capabilities and their appropriate use. His accomplishments are too many to enumerate here, but suffice it to say that his positive legacy within the intelligence community will continue for years to come.

Part of Director Clapper's strength as the Director of National Intelligence has been his deep understanding of this Nation's intelligence activities and his extensive network of colleagues with whom he worked across the intelligence enterprise to help serve the users of intelligence, be they policymakers, warfighters, law enforcement, or national security officials. His commitment to advancing women and minorities in the field of intelligence is particularly noteworthy. He selected the first woman to lead a major intelligence agency, naming Betty Sapp to be Director of the National Reconnaissance Office. He also named Tricia Long to be Director of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency and recruited Stephanie O'Sullivan to be Principal Deputy Director for National Intelligence as his partner in creating and instituting change in the intelligence community.

While Jim Clapper portrays a somewhat gruff exterior, his concern for his employees and quiet sensitivities are well known to the countless staff who have received hand-written notes from him extolling exemplary work, congratulations on births and weddings, or heartfelt condolences for the loss of a loved one.

Today I want to congratulate him on his remarkable career and offer my gratitude for his decades of commitment and sacrifices to this Nation. I also thank his wife, Susan, who herself was an NSA employee, for her unfailing support over their 51-year marriage that allowed for the successes that Jim has achieved. The Nation owes this patriot a debt of gratitude.

RECOGNIZING THE JEWISH WAR VETERANS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Mr. KIRK. Mr. President, I would like to honor the Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America, JWV, as they celebrate their 120th anniversary. Their service has not only benefited the Jewish and veterans communities, but this Nation as a whole.

Since 1896, the JWV has been the Nation's leading organization representing those of Jewish faith who have served overseas in the military. The Jewish community has served in every war and conflict that this great country has fought, beginning with the Revolutionary War, including the Civil War, and with our current military engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan. In 1933, the JWV protested against Nazi Germany's policies towards Jews. JWV continued its legacy in advocacy in 1963, as the only veterans organization that joined Martin Luther King, Jr.'s March on Washington for civil rights.

The JWV continues its mission to preserve the Jewish American military legacy, protect veterans rights, and promote community with 250 posts across the Nation and in Israel. The JWV provides numerous contributions to society, including partnering with Boy Scouts of America and Girl Scouts of the USA; working with JROTC, ROTC, and other military college programs; providing disaster relief services to victims of natural disasters; and speaking out against anti-Semitism. The JWV has proven that Jews have been and continue to be a vital element in the preservation of American doctrine and the defense and maintenance of American security.

I congratulate and commend the JWV for their hard work and dedication in defending our free institutions, fighting against bigotry and prejudice, and honoring Jewish servicemembers, veterans and their families who have made great sacrifices for our country.

HONORING OFFICER COLLIN ROSE

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize Officer Collin Rose who tragically lost his life while serving as an officer for the Wayne State University Police Department in Detroit, MI.

Officer Rose was born on April 1, 1987, to parents Randy and Karen Rose in Pittsburgh, PA. Moving to Michigan, he attended Gull Lake High School in Richland, where he excelled in baseball and was a standout football player.

Always interested in law enforcement, Officer Rose continued his education at Ferris State University's Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement Academy. He was an active member of the Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity, eventually becoming president of his chapter and modeling the fraternity's principles of virtue, diligence, and brotherly love. He graduated from Ferris State University in 2010 and continued to live by the principles set forth by Sigma Phi Epsilon as he embarked upon his law enforcement career.

After graduating from Ferris, Officer Rose interned for the Springfield Police Department. He served as a cadet at the New Baltimore Police Department and held his first position as a police officer for the Village of Richland, home of his high school alma mater.

Officer Rose began working for the Wayne State University Police Department in 2011, where he was dually sworn in as a Detroit police officer. As a 5-year veteran of the department, he patrolled Wayne State University's campus, as well as a greater portion of the midtown Detroit area. He was also working to complete his master's degree at Wayne State University.

His greatest passion was working with canines; he was a proud member of the Metro Detroit Schutzhund Club. He also served as the K9 unit trainer for the Wayne State University Police Department. Officer Rose and his trained canines were often called upon by other law enforcement agencies, such as the FBI, ATF, Secret Service, the Detroit police, and Detroit public schools, to assist in searches for suspects, narcotics, and explosives.

Officer Rose was very much engaged with the community he served. He would go to nearby schools to give demonstrations and speak to students. Since 2013, he has been a memorial bicyclist for the Police Unity Tour to raise funds and honor fallen officers.

The tragedy that took his life occurred on November 22, 2016, while Officer Rose was responding to reports of burglaries in the area. While investigating, he questioned a person on a bicycle who opened fire on Officer Rose, leaving him critically wounded. On November 23, 2016, Officer Rose succumbed to his injuries and passed away at Detroit Receiving Hospital. He is the first fallen officer of the Wayne State University Police Department.

Again, today I wish to ask my colleagues to join me in tribute to a courageous young man, who undauntedly served his community, as well as the State of Michigan. Officer Rose and his family are owed a debt of gratitude for his tremendous sacrifice.

TRIBUTE TO BOB PROUD

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize Clermont County commissioner Bob Proud on a distinguished career serving the residents of Clermont County and southern Ohio.

A seven-term Clermont County, OH, commissioner, Bob is a lifelong Clermont County resident. He grew up on a small farm in Batavia Township and graduated from Amelia High School. After Bob graduated from Cumberland College, he began his career in public service working for Clermont Senior Services.

Bob is a champion of the community and a committed public servant to Clermont County, serving in a number of capacities, from the construction of a new Clermont County animal shelter in 2002, the reclamation of the former Ford transmission plant on State Route 32, to his service for senior citizens as a Meals on Wheels volunteer and his work on the Coalition for a Drug-Free Clermont County. For the last 25 years, Bob has served as chairman of the Ohio Valley Regional Development

Commission, OVRDC, a public regional planning commission that serves 12 southern Ohio counties. Bob has and continues to serve Clermont County with integrity and distinction.

Bob is also a champion for our troops, veterans, and their families. He has been nationally recognized for his work on behalf of our military, as he founded the "Whole In My Heart" military family support group. As he prepares to retire from this position, I commend him for his hard work and leadership to make southern Ohio a better place to live and work.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM "BILL" A. BAXTER

• Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize an Arkansan who has made a profound impact on the agriculture industry in my home State of Arkansas and the Nation.

William "Bill" A. Baxter earned his bachelor of science degree from the University of Arkansas in 1949. Since then, Bill has been a leader on agricultural issues and has served in various roles to advance the interests of the farming community.

As president of both Baxter Land Company and Camp Nine Company, Bill is the head of two family corporations that own 20,000 acres of land in southeast Arkansas and produce cotton, rice, soybeans, corn, wheat, grain, sorghum, timber, and catfish. He was also an organizer and partner in several cotton production organizations and is a past president of the Agricultural Council of Arkansas. He has been a director and chairman of the Cotton Board, a member and delegate of the National Cotton Council, and a board member of Cotton Council International.

Baxter has also received the "Arkansas Cotton Achievement Award," which recognized his many accomplishments within the agricultural community. He was inducted into the Arkansas Agricultural Hall of Fame in 1999.

In addition to being a promoter and political voice for cotton and agriculture in Arkansas and the United States, over the course of his life, Baxter has been an avid outdoorsman and conservationist. Bill's advocacy on behalf of Arkansas agriculture has made a significant impact on an industry that plays a vitally important role in our State's economy and culture.

This December, Bill is being inducted into the Cotton Research and Promotion Hall of Fame. This program recognizes U.S. cotton industry leaders who have made substantial contributions to the cotton industry.

I congratulate Bill on receiving yet another award acknowledging his support for and contribution to agriculture in Arkansas and throughout the country. This is a well-deserved honor, and I appreciate Bill's years of dedication to this industry. •

TRIBUTE TO LARRY K. JAMES

• Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize University of Central Arkansas Police Chief Larry K. James for more than 40 years of service in law enforcement. Chief James began his service at the University of Central Arkansas in 1993 and is retiring in January 2017.

Prior to taking his position at the head of UCA's police department, James served as deputy chief of police at San Jose State University, as well director of public safety for the Portland Community College District. He has committed his career to strengthening public safety on college campuses by cultivating professional law enforcement practices that have made campus communities safer.

Chief James has also represented Arkansas and the law enforcement community incredibly well. He is past president of the Arkansas Association of Chiefs of Police, which represents more than 200 chief law enforcement executives throughout the State. Additionally, he has served as governmental affairs representative and consultant-evaluator with the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators.

James has implemented community-oriented policing programs by bringing together various groups and organizations to resolve crime-related problems and enhance safety on the campuses he has been apart of. He is a proven and steadfast leader.

When a shooting occurred on the campus of UCA on October 26, 2008, James's work in preparing his department and the university community to respond to a threatening event was put to the test. Training to respond to this type of incident, directed by Chief James, resulted in the suspects being quickly apprehended before further loss of life could occur.

Chief Larry James has dedicated his entire career to public safety and protecting his community. I want to thank Chief James for his tireless dedication and wish him well in his retirement. I hope others in the law enforcement community will look to his record as an example of how rewarding and meaningful a career in public service can be. •

TRIBUTE TO MOREY AND SONDRAMYERS

• Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, today it gives me great pleasure to congratulate Morey and Sondra Myers of Scranton, PA, on their 60th wedding anniversary. Morey and Sondra have dedicated their lives to each other and their family, inspiring all of us through six decades of devotion to one another and have established themselves as true citizens dedicated to philanthropy. I congratulate Morey and Sondra on this anniversary of their lives together. I have had the honor to know both of them for 40 years, and I have benefited

greatly from their loyal friendship. Sondra and Morey have come to embody the spirit of public service, and I have no doubt that Pennsylvania and the Nation are better places due to their hard work, dedication, and passion.

Sondra and Morey served the people of Pennsylvania during my father's time as Governor of Pennsylvania. Sondra was cultural adviser to the Governor and Morey served as general counsel. The Commonwealth benefited greatly from their hard work and exemplary service.

Sondra Myers is currently a senior fellow for international, civic, and cultural projects at the University of Scranton and the director of the Schemel Forum. She has made it her life's work to bring about the integration of culture into public policy and to strengthen the culture of democracy worldwide. She has served as the chair of the Pennsylvania Humanities Council, president of the Federation of State Humanities Councils, and was the founding president of Citizens for the Arts in Pennsylvania and the State Arts Advocacy League of America. Her work ethic and passion were called upon in 1980 when President Jimmy Carter appointed her to serve on the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts and again in 2011 when President Barack Obama appointed her to serve on the Commission on Presidential Scholars. A frequent contributor to the *Scranton Times-Tribune's* opinion page and the author and editor of several books, Sondra has worked hard to eloquently spread her message of the central role that citizens play in a successful democracy and the crucial role of higher education in preparing an engaged citizenry. Sondra has traveled throughout the world to present programs on democracy and civil society, and through her numerous published works, symposia, lectures, and personal relationships, she has spread her influence to a wide array of countries, cultures, and people.

Morey Myers is one of the most respected lawyers in Pennsylvania, with decades of legal experience which began with his graduation from the Yale University School of Law. His career continued to grow through his time as general counsel and remains active today as a partner in the Scranton law firm of Myers, Brier & Kelly LLP, which he helped to found. He has served as adviser and counsel to businesses and governments, leaving his indelible mark on countless lives and causes. His dedication to the rule of law and social justice were forged in the 1960s when, during the Civil Rights movement, he travelled to the South to provide legal services for those taking on the forces of segregation and racism. He has served as consultant to the President's Commission on Campus Unrest, Pennsylvania assistant attorney general, chief counsel to Pennsylvania's Milk Control Commission, and he currently serves as a fellow for the

American Bar Association. He has remained active in academia as a visiting lecturer at Yale University, Rutgers University, the University of Scranton, Haverford College, Hamilton College, the University of Wyoming, Lafayette College, and Temple University.

This brief overview of the lives of Sondra and Morey Myers cannot fully encompass all they have accomplished, nor adequately describe the depth of their compassion, dedication, and love of community. As a Scrantonian who represents the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, I am proud to call them neighbors and friends. I would like to once again extend my congratulations to Sondra and Morey on 60 years of marriage and to commend them for their decades of public service. I wish them continued happiness in the years ahead.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

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

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

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

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

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

At 12:03 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bill:

S. 2577. An act to protect crime victims' rights, to eliminate the substantial backlog of DNA and other forensic evidence samples to improve and expand the forensic science testing capacity of Federal, State, and local crime laboratories, to increase research and development of new testing technologies, to develop new training programs regarding the collection and use of forensic evidence, to provide post-conviction testing of DNA evidence to exonerate the innocent, to support accreditation efforts of forensic science laboratories and medical examiner officers, to address training and equipment needs, to improve the performance of counsel in State capital cases, and for other purposes.

The enrolled bill was subsequently signed by the President *pro tempore* (Mr. HATCH).

At 2:44 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, without amendment:

S. 795. An act to enhance whistleblower protection for contractor and grantee employees.

S. 3395. An act to require limitations on prescribed burns.

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

H.R. 2726. An act to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint commemorative coins in recognition of the 50th anniversary of the first manned landing on the Moon.

H.R. 5015. An act to restore amounts improperly withheld for tax purposes from severance payments to individuals who retired or separated from service in the Armed Forces for combat-related injuries, and for other purposes.

H.R. 6415. An act to provide for the appointment of members of the Board of Directors of the Office of Compliance to replace members whose terms expire during 2017, and for other purposes.

H.R. 6427. An act to improve the operation of United States capital markets, and for other purposes.

The message further announced that the House has agreed to the following concurrent resolution, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H. Con Res. 179. Concurrent resolution directing the Secretary of the Senate to make certain corrections in the enrollment of S. 2943.

The message also announced that the House passed the following bill, with an amendment, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

S. 1635. An act to authorize the Department of State for fiscal year 2016, and for other purposes.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following concurrent resolution was read, and referred as indicated:

H. Con. Res. 40. Concurrent resolution encouraging reunions of divided Korean American families; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. THUNE, from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute:

S. 2997. A bill to direct the Federal Communications Commission to commence proceedings related to the resiliency of critical telecommunications networks during times of emergency, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 114-392).

S. 3097. A bill to establish the SelectUSA program, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 114-393).

By Mr. GRASSLEY, from the Committee on the Judiciary:

Report to accompany S. 2763, a bill to provide the victims of Holocaust-era persecution and their heirs a fair opportunity to recover works of art confiscated or misappropriated by the Nazis (Rept. No. 114-394).

By Mr. THUNE, from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute:

S. 421. A bill to amend the Communications Act of 1934 to provide for greater transparency and efficiency in the procedures followed by the Federal Communications Commission, and for other purposes.

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

S. 1685. A bill to direct the Federal Communications Commission to extend to private land use restrictions its rule relating to reasonable accommodation of amateur service communications.

By Mr. THUNE, from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute:

S. 2283. A bill to ensure that small business providers of broadband Internet access service can devote resources to broadband deployment rather than compliance with cumbersome regulatory requirements.

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

S. 2508. A bill to reduce sports-related concussions in youth, and for other purposes.

EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEE

The following executive reports of nominations were submitted:

By Mr. CORKER for the Committee on Foreign Relations.

*Kamala Shirin Lakhdhir, of Connecticut, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Malaysia.

Nominee: Kamala Shirin Lakhdhir.

Post: Ambassador to Malaysia.

(The following is a list of all members of my immediate family and their spouses. I have asked each of these persons to inform me of the pertinent contributions made by them. To the best of my knowledge, the information contained in this report is complete and accurate.)

Contributions, amount, date, and donee:

1. Self: None.

2. Spouse: N/A.

3. Children and Spouses Names: N/A.

4. Parents: Ann Hallan Lakhdhir (Mother): \$60.00, March 2015, Democratic National Committee (DNC); \$50.00, March 2015, Democratic Congressional Campaign; \$38.00, January 2015, Emily's List; \$40.00, January 2015, Democratic National Committee (DNC); \$40.00, March 2014, Democratic National Committee (DNC); \$38.00, January 2014, Emily's List; \$25.00, June 2013, Democratic National Committee (DNC); \$50.00, January 2013, Democratic Congressional Campaign; \$25.00, January 2012, Democratic Congressional Campaign.

5. Grandparents: Deceased.

6. Brothers and Spouses: David K. Lakhdhir (Brother): \$1,000, March 2016, Katie McGinty for Senate; \$300, November 2015, Tim Kaine via Kaine for Virginia; \$1,600, November 2015, Common Ground PAC; \$1,000, October 2015, Charles Schumer via Friends of Schumer; \$2,000, October 2015, Kaine for Common Ground; \$1,037.95, October 2015, Democratic Hope Fund; \$1,037.95, October 2015, Democratic Hope Fund; \$1,037.95, October 2015, Democratic Hope Fund; \$2,700, June 2015, Hillary Clinton via Hillary for America; \$1,000, May 2015, Charles Schumer via Friends of Schumer; \$1,000, April 2015, Kamala Harris via Kamala Harris for Senate; \$1,000, July 2014, Mark Begich via Alaskans for Begich 2014; \$1,500, April 2014, Ready PAC; \$2,400, February 2014, Timothy Kaine via Kaine for Virginia; \$2,600, February 2014, Timothy Kaine via Kaine for Virginia; \$2,600, July 2013, Cory Booker via Cory Booker for Senate; \$1,750, October 2012, Democratic Party of Virginia; \$2,916.73, September 2012, Democratic Executive Committee of Florida; \$20,000, September 2012, Obama Victory Fund 2012; \$2,500, September 2012, Elizabeth Warren via Elizabeth for MA INC; \$2,500, Sep-

tember 2012, Elizabeth Esty via Friends of Elizabeth Esty; \$1,361.15, September 2012, Colorado Democratic Party; \$2,333, September 2012, Democratic Party of Wisconsin; \$1,944.42, September 2012, Iowa Democratic Party; \$1,944.42, September 2012, Nevada State Democratic Party; \$583.31, September 2012, New Hampshire Democratic Party; \$2,500, September 2012, Obama/Biden via Obama for America; \$4,666.72, September 2012, Ohio Democratic Party; \$1,000, June 2012, Shelley Adler via Shelley Adler for Congress; \$1,000, June 2012, Elizabeth Esty via Friends of Elizabeth; \$2,500, March 2012, Esty Elizabeth Esty via Friends of Elizabeth Esty.

Linda B. Lakhdhir (Sister-in-law): \$2,700, June 2015, Hillary Clinton via Hillary for America; \$2,600, July 2013, Cory Booker via Cory Booker for Senate; \$500, April 2013, Americans for Responsible Solutions-PAC; \$5,000, January 2013, Off the Sidelines PAC; \$2,500, October 2012, Obama Victory Fund 2012; \$2,500, October 2012, Obama/Biden via Obama for America; \$1,000, July 2012, Carolyn Maloney via Maloney for Congress; \$1,000, June 2012, Timothy Kaine via Kaine for Virginia; \$2,000, February 2012, Democratic Party Committee Abroad; \$2,500, February 2012, Shelley Adler via Shelley Adler for Congress; \$2,500, February 2012, Shelley Adler via Shelley Adler for Congress; \$373, January 2012, Obama Victory Fund 2012;

7. Sisters and Spouses: N/A.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, for the Committee on Foreign Relations I report favorably the following nomination lists which were printed in the RECORDS on the dates indicated, and ask unanimous consent, to save the expense of reprinting on the Executive Calendar that these nominations lie at the Secretary's desk for the information of Senators.

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

*Foreign Service nominations beginning with Marva Michelle Butler and ending with Adonis Mariano Matos de Mello, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on November 15, 2016.

*Foreign Service nominations beginning with Stephen Donald Mull and ending with Victoria Jane Nuland, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on November 29, 2016.

*Foreign Service nominations beginning with Robert L. Adams and ending with Laura Ann Griesmer, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on November 29, 2016.

*Foreign Service nominations beginning with Robert Stephen Beecroft and ending with Marie L. Yovanovitch, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on November 29, 2016.

*Foreign Service nominations beginning with Tristan J. Allen and ending with William F. Zeman, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on November 29, 2016.

*Foreign Service nominations beginning with Anthony Abba and ending with Michael David Zgoda, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on November 29, 2016.

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

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:

S. 3503. A bill to decrease the cost of hiring, and increase the take-home pay of, Puerto Rican workers; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. HATCH (for himself, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. ISAKSON, and Mr. WARNER):

S. 3504. 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; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. REED (for himself, Mr. BROWN, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, and Mr. BLUMENTHAL):

S. 3505. A bill to require analysis of various bankruptcy proposals in order to determine whether those proposals would reduce systemic risk and moral hazard, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. HATCH (for himself and Mr. WYDEN):

S. 3506. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to make technical corrections, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. CORNYN:

S. 3507. A bill to extend the waiver of limitations with respect to excluding from gross income amounts received by wrongfully incarcerated individuals; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. LANKFORD:

S. 3508. A bill to prohibit the Secretary of Energy and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency from considering the social cost of carbon, the social cost of methane, the social cost of nitrous oxide, or the social cost of any other greenhouse gas in taking any action, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. RUBIO:

S. 3509. A bill to impose sanctions with respect to the People's Republic of China in relation to activities in the South China Sea and the East China Sea, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. FLAKE:

S. 3510. A bill to facilitate the creation of American jobs by immigrant entrepreneurs; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

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

By Mr. PETERS (for himself and Ms. STABENOW):

S. Res. 631. A resolution celebrating the history of the Detroit River with the 15-year commemoration of the International Underground Railroad Memorial Monument, comprised of the Gateway to Freedom Monument in Detroit, Michigan, and the Tower of Freedom Monument in Windsor, Ontario, Canada; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 299

At the request of Mr. FLAKE, the name of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 299, a bill to allow travel between the United States and Cuba.

S. 440

At the request of Mr. CRAPO, the name of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. DONNELLY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 440, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for an exclusion for assistance provided to participants in certain veterinary student loan repayment or forgiveness.

S. 1473

At the request of Mr. MARKEY, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1473, a bill to authorize the appropriation of funds to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for conducting or supporting research on firearms safety or gun violence prevention.

S. 1605

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1605, a bill to amend the Millennium Challenge Act of 2003 to authorize concurrent compacts for purposes of regional economic integration and cross-border collaborations, and for other purposes.

S. 1831

At the request of Mr. TOOMEY, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1831, a bill to revise section 48 of title 18, United States Code, and for other purposes.

S. 1911

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the names of the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL), the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON), the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) and the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) were added as cosponsors of S. 1911, a bill to implement policies to end preventable maternal, newborn, and child deaths globally.

S. 2085

At the request of Mr. PORTMAN, the name of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2085, a bill to clarify that non-profit organizations such as Habitat for Humanity may accept donated mortgage appraisals, and for other purposes.

S. 2268

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2268, a bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal to the United States Army Dust Off crews of the Vietnam War, collectively, in recognition of their extraordinary heroism and life-saving actions in Vietnam.

S. 2628

At the request of Mr. COONS, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY) was added as a co-

sponsor of S. 2628, a bill to authorize the National Emergency Medical Services Memorial Foundation to establish a commemorative work in the District of Columbia and its environs, and for other purposes.

S. 2649

At the request of Mr. ROUNDS, the name of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. DONNELLY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2649, a bill to modify the treatment of the costs of health care furnished under section 101 of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 to veterans covered by health-plan contracts.

S. 2763

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the name of the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2763, a bill to provide the victims of Holocaust-era persecution and their heirs a fair opportunity to recover works of art confiscated or misappropriated by the Nazis.

S. 2858

At the request of Mr. FRANKEN, the name of the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2858, a bill to amend part D of title XVIII of the Social Security Act to require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate for lower prices for Medicare prescription drugs.

S. 2957

At the request of Mr. NELSON, the names of the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT), the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN), the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY), the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING), the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL), the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL), the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND), the Senator from Virginia (Mr. Kaine), the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN), the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN), the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER), the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS), the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE), the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO), the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN), the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HEINRICH), the Senator from Delaware (Mr. CARPER), the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) and the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE) were added as cosponsors of S. 2957, a bill to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint commemorative coins in recognition of the 50th anniversary of the first manned landing on the Moon.

S. 2989

At the request of Ms. MURKOWSKI, the names of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY), the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO), the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO), the Senator from Maryland (Ms. MIKULSKI),

the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HEINRICH), the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY) and the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING) were added as cosponsors of S. 2989, a bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal, collectively, to the United States merchant mariners of World War II, in recognition of their dedicated and vital service during World War II.

S. 3065

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the names of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. CARPER) and the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL) were added as cosponsors of S. 3065, a bill to amend parts B and E of title IV of the Social Security Act to invest in funding prevention and family services to help keep children safe and supported at home, to ensure that children in foster care are placed in the least restrictive, most family-like, and appropriate settings, and for other purposes.

S. 3142

At the request of Ms. BALDWIN, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3142, a bill to require reporting on acts of certain foreign countries on Holocaust era assets and related issues.

S. 3237

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the names of the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER) and the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) were added as cosponsors of S. 3237, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to reform the low-income housing credit, and for other purposes.

S. 3256

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the names of the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) and the Senator from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN) were added as cosponsors of S. 3256, a bill to amend the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to provide assistance for developing countries to promote quality basic education and to establish the goal of all children in school and learning as an objective of the United States foreign assistance policy, and for other purposes.

S. 3328

At the request of Mr. BLUMENTHAL, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3328, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to reform the rights and processes relating to appeals of decisions regarding claims for benefits under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

S. 3353

At the request of Mr. SCOTT, the name of the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3353, a bill to amend title 31, United States Code, to prohibit the Internal Revenue Service from carrying out seizures relating to a structuring transaction unless the property to be seized derived from an illegal source or the

funds were structured for the purpose of concealing the violation of another criminal law or regulation, to require notice and a post-seizure hearing for such seizures, and for other purposes.

S. 3447

At the request of Mr. SULLIVAN, the names of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) and the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN) were added as cosponsors of S. 3447, a bill to direct the Secretary of the Army to place in Arlington National Cemetery a memorial honoring the helicopter pilots and crew members of the Vietnam era, and for other purposes.

S. 3486

At the request of Mr. WARNER, the name of the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3486, a bill to amend chapter 31 of title 5, United States Code, to establish in statute the Presidential Innovation Fellows Program.

S.J. RES. 40

At the request of Mr. BOOZMAN, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) was added as a cosponsor of S.J. Res. 40, a joint resolution approving the location of a memorial to commemorate and honor the members of the Armed Forces that served on active duty in support of Operation Desert Storm or Operation Desert Shield.

S. RES. 615

At the request of Mr. CASEY, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 615, a resolution expressing support for the designation of November 16, 2016, as "American Special Hockey Day".

AMENDMENT NO. 5130

At the request of Mr. MANCHIN, the names of the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER) and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 5130 intended to be proposed to H.R. 34, a bill to authorize and strengthen the tsunami detection, forecast, warning, research, and mitigation program of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and for other purposes.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. REED (for himself, Mr. BROWN, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, and Mr. BLUMENTHAL):

S. 3505. A bill to require analysis of various bankruptcy proposals in order to determine whether those proposals would reduce systemic risk and moral hazard, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, today I am introducing the Bankruptcy Fairness Act, with the goals of bolstering financial stability in the United States and requiring the necessary analysis to assess the consequences of potential changes we might make in the future to the Bankruptcy Code.

One of the many lessons that we learned from the financial crisis is that reckless Wall Street behavior can have devastating consequences on middle class Americans, too many of whom lost their jobs, their nest eggs, and their homes. Statistics bear this out. Nationally, over 750,000 jobs per month were lost between January and April 2009. In Rhode Island, over 1,800 jobs per month were lost during this same period. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped from an average of 13,677.89 in July 2007 to an average of 7,235.47 in March 2009, resulting in a 47.1 percent loss for many families who for years had set aside hard earned paychecks for emergencies, college tuitions, and retirements. Nationwide, there were nearly 7.5 million home foreclosures and short sales between July 2007 and November 2014. Unfortunately, the impacts remain to this day for some of our neighbors in Rhode Island and throughout the country as they continue to look for a decent paying job or are faced with gut-wrenching financial decisions like whether to turn the heat off or to skip feeding the family another day just to make ends meet.

That lesson of how many of our neighbors suffered due to the sins of the rich and powerful seems to be fading for some of my colleagues. Indeed, there appears to be an effort to further rig the system in favor of elites, this time through the Bankruptcy code. We must stop this effort cold in its tracks. Before we make changes to the Bankruptcy code, we should ensure that a thorough analysis is conducted so we have facts at hand. If anything, we should be seeking to restore fairness and balance to the Bankruptcy code, and this is what my legislation strives for.

Specifically, my bill directs the Financial Stability Oversight Council and the Office of Financial Research to do two things: work hand in hand with the Administrative Office of the United States Courts and the Executive Office for United States Trustees to ensure that bankruptcy judges have, on an ongoing basis, the necessary financial expertise to oversee the orderly resolution of a failed mega bank; and update the Administrative Office of the United States Courts' post-crisis review of the Bankruptcy Code's ability to resolve complex financial institutions and make recommendations to Congress regarding changes that would strengthen financial stability in the United States.

Second, my legislation permits the federal agencies that supervise large complex financial institutions to offer their advice and expertise to the bankruptcy court whenever a mega bank files for bankruptcy. This is important because these Federal agencies can assist the court in deciphering complex financial products while also providing the court with an independent assessment of how the court's decisions could affect financial stability in the United States.

Lastly, my legislation directs our financial regulators and experts to do the necessary homework to justify proposed changes to the Bankruptcy Code. Some proposed changes have drawn praise, and others have drawn concern. For example, should Wall Street banks still be able to cut to the front of the line and take more than their fair share, while ordinary creditors, such as employees and customers, have to wait in the back of the line? When a jumbo bank gets in trouble, why should those customers who place the riskiest bets, such as large Wall Street hedge funds, get paid back in full while ordinary customers may not get paid back at all? Should shareholders be prevented from holding the mega bank's board of directors accountable for most actions, when a mega bank files for bankruptcy? Is it really possible for a trillion-dollar jumbo bank to be processed through bankruptcy safely in just 48 hours without hurting our economy? Is it fair that ordinary creditors, such as small businesses, who are owed their hard earned dollars, would be given virtually no notice of a mega bank's bankruptcy, making it nearly impossible for them to fight for their rights?

These are important, incredibly complex, questions that need thorough answers. Many of my colleagues have called for greater deliberation and analysis before enacting legislation. My legislation heeds this call. Let's take a moment to ensure that we've really done our homework so that we can all be confident that we're really accomplishing what we're aiming to do: making our financial system safer and restoring fairness and balance to the Bankruptcy Code, especially for hardworking ordinary Americans.

I thank Senator BROWN, Senator MERKLEY, Senator WHITEHOUSE, and Senator BLUMENTHAL for joining me in introducing the Bankruptcy Fairness Act. I also thank the U.S. Department of the Treasury, Americans for Financial Reform, Harvard Law School Professor Mark Roe, Delaware Law School Professor Bruce Grohsgal, and MIT Professor Simon Johnson for their support. I urge our colleagues to join us in pressing for action on this legislation.

By Mr. HATCH (for himself and Mr. WYDEN):

S. 3506. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to make technical corrections, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, the Tax Technical Corrections Act of 2016 makes tax technical corrections and other corrections including clerical and deadwood-related corrections. The bill revises and updates S. 2775, the Technical Corrections Act of 2016, which was introduced on April 11, 2016. Ranking Member WYDEN and I have asked the nonpartisan Joint Committee on Taxation to make available to the public a technical explanation of the bill, JCX-91-16. The technical explanation expresses the Committee's

understanding and legislative intent behind this important legislation. It is available on the Joint Committee's website at www.jct.gov.

By Mr. CORNYN:

S. 3507. A bill to extend the waiver of limitations with respect to excluding from gross income amounts received by wrongfully incarcerated individuals; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. CORNYN. 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. 3507

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

SECTION 1. EXTENSION OF WAIVER OF LIMITATIONS WITH RESPECT TO EXCLUDING FROM GROSS INCOME AMOUNTS RECEIVED BY WRONGFULLY INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 304(d) of the Protecting Americans from Tax Hikes Act of 2015 is amended by striking “1-year” and inserting “2-year”.

(b) TECHNICAL CORRECTION.—Section 304(d) of such Act is amended by striking “application of this Act” and inserting “application of this section”.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect as if included in section 304 of the Protecting Americans from Tax Hikes Act of 2015.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 631—CELEBRATING THE HISTORY OF THE DETROIT RIVER WITH THE 15-YEAR COMMEMORATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL UNDERGROUND RAILROAD MEMORIAL MONUMENT, COMPRISED OF THE GATEWAY TO FREEDOM MONUMENT IN DETROIT, MICHIGAN, AND THE TOWER OF FREEDOM MONUMENT IN WINDSOR, ONTARIO, CANADA

Mr. PETERS (for himself and Ms. STABENOW) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources:

S. RES. 631

Whereas millions of Africans and their descendants were enslaved in the United States and the American colonies from 1619 through 1865;

Whereas Africans forced into slavery were torn from their families and loved ones and stripped of their names and heritage;

Whereas the faith and strength of character demonstrated by former slaves and the descendants of former slaves are an example for all people of the United States, regardless of background, religion, or race;

Whereas tens of thousands of people of African descent bravely and silently escaped their chains to follow the perilous Underground Railroad northward towards freedom in Canada;

Whereas the Detroit River played a central role for these passengers of the Underground Railroad on their way to freedom;

Whereas in October 2001, the City of Detroit, Michigan, joined with Windsor and Essex Counties in Ontario, Canada, to memorialize the courage of these freedom seekers

with an international memorial to the Underground Railroad, comprised of the Tower of Freedom Monument in Windsor, Ontario, and the Gateway to Freedom Monument in Detroit, Michigan;

Whereas the deep roots that slaves, refugees, and immigrants who reached Canada from the United States created in Canadian society are a tribute to the determination of the descendants of those slaves, refugees, and immigrants to safeguard the history of the struggles and endurance of their forebears;

Whereas the observance of the 15-year commemoration of the International Underground Railroad Memorial Monument was celebrated during the month of October 2016;

Whereas the International Underground Railroad Memorial Monument represents a cooperative international partnership dedicated to education and research with the goal of promoting cross-border understanding, economic development, and cultural heritage tourism;

Whereas over the course of history, the United States has become a symbol of democracy and freedom around the world; and

Whereas the legacy of African-Americans and their fight for freedom is interwoven with the fabric of democracy and freedom in the United States: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) celebrates the history of the Detroit River with a 15-year commemoration of the International Underground Railroad Memorial Monument, comprised of the Gateway to Freedom Monument in Detroit, Michigan, and the Tower of Freedom Monument in Windsor, Ontario, Canada; and

(2) supports the official recognition, by national and international entities, of the Detroit River as an area of historic importance to the history of the Underground Railroad and the fight for freedom in North America.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 5138. Mr. SANDERS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 34, to authorize and strengthen the tsunami detection, forecast, warning, research, and mitigation program of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 5138. Mr. SANDERS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 34, to authorize and strengthen the tsunami detection, forecast, warning, research, and mitigation program of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place in division A, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . NEGOTIATION OF LOWER COVERED PART D DRUG PRICES ON BEHALF OF MEDICARE BENEFICIARIES.

(a) NEGOTIATION BY SECRETARY.—Section 1860D–11 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395w–111) is amended by striking subsection (1) (relating to noninterference) and inserting the following:

“(i) NEGOTIATION OF LOWER DRUG PRICES.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary shall negotiate with pharmaceutical manufacturers the prices (including discounts, rebates, and other price concessions) that may be charged to PDP sponsors and MA organizations for covered part D drugs for part D eli-

gible individuals who are enrolled under a prescription drug plan or under an MA–PD plan.

“(2) NO CHANGE IN RULES FOR FORMULARIES.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Nothing in paragraph (1) shall be construed to authorize the Secretary to establish or require a particular formulary.

“(B) CONSTRUCTION.—Subparagraph (A) shall not be construed as affecting the Secretary's authority to ensure appropriate and adequate access to covered part D drugs under prescription drug plans and under MA–PD plans, including compliance of such plans with formulary requirements under section 1860D–4(b)(3).

“(3) CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this subsection shall be construed as preventing the sponsor of a prescription drug plan, or an organization offering an MA–PD plan, from obtaining a discount or reduction of the price for a covered part D drug below the price negotiated under paragraph (1).”.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall take effect on the date of the enactment of this Act and shall first apply to negotiations and prices for plan years beginning on January 1, 2017.

SEC. ____ . PRESCRIPTION DRUG IMPORTATION.

(a) IMPORTATION BY PHARMACISTS AND WHOLESALERS.—Section 804(b) of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 384(b)) is amended by striking “The Secretary,” and inserting “The Secretary, not later than January 1, 2017,”.

(b) IMPORTATION BY INDIVIDUALS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 804 of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 384) is amended—

(A) in subsection (f), by striking “within Canada”;

(B) in subsection (j)—

(i) in paragraph (1), in the matter preceding subparagraph (A), by inserting “from countries other than Canada” after “devices”; and

(ii) in paragraph (3)—

(I) in the heading, by striking “FROM CANADA” and inserting “FROM COUNTRIES OTHER THAN CANADA”; and

(II) in subparagraph (C), by striking “from Canada,”; and

(C) by striking subsection (1) and inserting the following:

“(1) IMPORTATION OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS FROM CANADA.—Individuals may import from Canada any prescription drug that meets the requirements of subparagraphs (A) through (F) of subsection (j)(3).”.

(2) REGULATIONS.—Not later than January 1, 2017, the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall promulgate regulations with respect to subsection (1) of section 804 of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 384) (as amended by paragraph (1)(B)).

(3) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by paragraph (1) shall take effect on the effective date of the final regulations promulgated in accordance with paragraph (2).

(c) FDASIA AMENDMENT.—Subsection (c) of section 708 of the Food and Drug Administration Safety and Innovation Act (Public Law 112–144; 126 Stat. 1068) is amended by striking “The amendment made by” and all that follows through the period at the end and inserting “The amendment made by subsection (a) and the regulations promulgated under subsection (b) shall apply beginning on the effective date of the regulations promulgated under section 804(b) of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 384(b)) and the amendments made by section 201(b) of the 21st Century Cures Act.”.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

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

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

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The Committee on Armed Services is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on December 6, 2016, at 9:30 a.m.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Committee on Foreign Relations is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on December 6, 2016, at 2:30 p.m.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

The Select Committee on Intelligence is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on December 6, 2016, at 2:30 p.m. in room SH-219 of the Hart Senate Office Building.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME AND TERRORISM

The Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Crime and Terrorism is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on December 6, 2016, at 2:30 p.m., in room SD-226 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled "Ensuring Independence: Are Additional Firewalls Needed to Protect Congressional Oversight Staff from Retaliatory Criminal Referrals?"

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Megan Howard, a fellow with Senator MURRAY's HELP Committee staff, be granted floor privileges for the remainder of the 114th Congress.

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

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that my intern, Emma Peterson, be granted privileges of the floor for the balance of the day.

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

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the military fellow from our office, MAJ Andy Anderson, be given floor privileges for the consideration of H.R. 34.

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

APPOINTMENTS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair announces, on behalf of the majority leader, pursuant to the provisions of Public Law 106-398, as amended by Public Law 108-7, and in consultation with the chairmen of the Senate Committee on Armed Services and the Senate Committee on Finance, the reappointment of the following indi-

vidual to serve as a member of the United States-China Economic Security Review Commission: Robin Cleveland of Virginia, for a term beginning January 1, 2017, and expiring December 31, 2018.

The Chair announces, on behalf of the majority leader, pursuant to the provisions of Public Law 114-224, the appointment of the following individuals to serve as members of the Virgin Islands of the United States Centennial Commission: the Honorable LISA MURKOWSKI of Alaska and the Honorable MARCO RUBIO of Florida.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, postcloture time with respect to the motion to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 34 expire at 2 p.m. on Wednesday, December 7; further, I ask that if cloture is invoked on the conference report to accompany S. 2943, that the postcloture time be counted as if cloture had been invoked at 1 a.m. on Wednesday, December 7.

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

ORDERS FOR WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2016

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 9:30 a.m., Wednesday, December 7; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, and the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; further, that following leader remarks, the Senate resume consideration of the House message to accompany H.R. 34 postcloture; finally, that the time from 3 p.m. until 4 p.m. tomorrow be reserved for tributes to the President of the Senate.

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

PROGRAM

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, Senators should expect votes in relation to the 21st Century Cures legislation as well as the conference report to accompany the National Defense Authorization Act beginning at 2 p.m. tomorrow.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:30 A.M. TOMORROW

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

There being no objection, the Senate, at 6:54 p.m., adjourned until Wednesday, December 7, 2016, at 9:30 a.m.

NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate:

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON AIRPORTS AUTHORITY

RICHARD A. KENNEDY, OF PENNSYLVANIA, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON AIRPORTS AUTHORITY FOR A TERM EXPIRING MAY 30, 2022. (REAPPOINTMENT)

LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

REBECCA EMILY RAPP, OF WISCONSIN, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION FOR A TERM EXPIRING JULY 13, 2019. VICE SHARON L. BROWNE, RESIGNED.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

THOMAS J. MURPHY, OF COLORADO, TO BE UNDER SECRETARY FOR BENEFITS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS, VICE ALLISON A. HICKEY, RESIGNED.

IN THE AIR FORCE

THE FOLLOWING AIR NATIONAL GUARD OF THE UNITED STATES OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE RESERVE OF THE AIR FORCE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 12203 AND 12212:

To be brigadier general

COL. JEFFERY D. AEBISCHER
COL. NATHAN B. ALHOLINNA
COL. BORIS R. ARMSTRONG
COL. KIMBERLY A. BAUMANN
COL. ROBERT L. BELL
COL. DONALD R. BEVIS, JR.
COL. SHAWN N. BRATTON
COL. JEFFREY L. BUTLER
COL. MICHAEL E. CALLAHAN
COL. KEVIN J. CAMPBELL
COL. THOMAS S. CAUTHERN
COL. LAWRENCE L. CHRISTENSEN
COL. SHAWN A. CLOUTHIER
COL. GERALD K. COLMER, JR.
COL. DARWIN L. CRAIG
COL. ROBERT C. DESKO
COL. JOHN R. DIDONNA, JR.
COL. KEVIN M. DONOVAN
COL. BOBBI J. DOORENBOS
COL. DAVID M. DZIOBKOWSKI
COL. RANDAL K. EPPERSON
COL. HOWARD L. ESSLER III
COL. SHAWN D. FORD
COL. JED J. FRENCH
COL. DANIEL E. GABRIELLI
COL. MARK P. GAUL
COL. RAINER G. GOMEZ
COL. PATRICK M. GUINEE
COL. PENNY C. HODGES-GOETZ
COL. JEREMY C. HORN
COL. CASSANDRA D. HOWARD
COL. PAUL D. JOHNSON
COL. EDWARD S. JONES
COL. GARY W. KIRK
COL. HEIDI L. KJOS
COL. MEAGHAN Q. LECLERC
COL. GREGOR J. LEIST
COL. SUZANNE B. LIPCAMAN
COL. PAUL S. LYMAN
COL. KEITH G. MACDONALD
COL. ROLF E. MAMMEN
COL. GERALD E. MCDONALD
COL. CHRISTOPHER G. MCGRAW
COL. MICHAEL R. MORGAN
COL. REBECCA L. O'CONNOR
COL. JEFFREY L. RYAN
COL. JON S. SAFSTROM
COL. WILLIAM L. SPARROW
COL. JAMES R. STEVENSON, JR.
COL. JEFFREY D. STOREY
COL. BRYAN J. TEFF
COL. EDWARD L. VAUGHAN IV
COL. APRIL D. VOGEL
COL. CHARLES M. WALKER
COL. CHRISTOPHER S. WALKER
COL. DAVID B. WALKER
COL. DAVID A. WEISHAAR
COL. WENDY B. WENKE
COL. GREGORY T. WHITE
COL. JEFFREY J. WIEGAND
COL. BRENT W. WRIGHT
COL. WILLIAM T. YATES
COL. DANIEL S. YENCHESKY

IN THE ARMY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY NURSE CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 624 AND 3064:

To be major

CHRISTOPHER K. BERTHOLD

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be major

SETH C. LYDEM

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be major

JAMES ROBINSON, JR.

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C. SECTION 624:

December 6, 2016

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—SENATE

S6763

To be colonel

CHRISTOPHER C. OSTBY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT
TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE RESERVE OF THE
ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

CALVIN E. FISH

To be colonel