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Senate

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

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Everlasting God, our light and salvation, You remain our strength and shield. Today, we claim Your great and precious promises as You sustain us with Your presence. Thank You for promising to supply our needs and to lead us toward abundant living.

Continue to sustain our Senators with Your eternal presence. Remind them that Your hand is on the helm of human affairs and that You still guide Your world. Renew their strength as You provide them with the courage to carry on. May they refuse to do anything which could bring them regret, remorse, and shame.

We pray in Your strong Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

THE PRESIDENT'S STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, tonight we will welcome the President of the United States for the State of the Union Address. It is his final address, and it gives us cause for reflection.

Many of us recall the moment in Boston when a State senator became a na-

tional star. His rhetorical gift was undeniable. It was a soaring elocution bathed in confetti that promised a new and more inclusive beginning. It inspired many. It propelled Barack Obama to the highest office in the land.

Americans assumed the campaigning would eventually come to a close and the serious work of governing would eventually commence, but it is now many years later, and the Obama for President campaign never really ended. Speeches still substitute for substance. Straw men still stand in for serious debate. Slogans still surrogate for governing.

We have been promised even more campaigning tonight, this time for the candidate President Obama would like to see succeed him. It leads Americans to wonder: When is the serious work of governing ever going to begin? Governing isn't easy. Governing often requires serious engagement with the Congress the American people elected, not the one the President wishes they had elected.

Here is a simple fact. "You don't make change through slogans." That is something President Obama once said. I wish he had taken his own advice because here is what we know as we enter the twilight of his Presidency. He has presided over a sluggish and uneven economic recovery that is failing too many of our citizens.

Health premiums and deductibles have continued to shoot ever higher. Wages have flatlined for too many. Inequality has grown. Manufacturing has shrunk. Poverty seems to entrench. The middle class has continued to collapse, to the point where it no longer even constitutes a majority of our country.

The Obama administration says it wants to help the middle class, but its policies often tell a different story. We have seen the negative impact ObamaCare has had on so many middle-class families. We have also seen

this administration declare a war on coal families who just want to get ahead.

I have invited a Kentucky miner from Pikeville, Howard Abshire, as my State of the Union guest tonight. He has watched as the Obama administration's heartless approach has helped contribute to devastation in his community and to the loss of thousands of jobs in Kentucky, one of which was his own job.

Here is what his message has been to President Obama. Howard Abshire said: "We're hurting [and] we need help," but "we don't want to be bailed out, we want to work."

Many Kentuckians feel the very same way. Many Americans feel similarly too. Today only 20 percent of our citizens think things are headed in the right direction in their country. Nearly three-quarters want the next President to take a totally different approach from the current one. These are the simple facts, and they present the President with a choice.

President Obama can try to blame others for it. He can try to convince Americans they are wrong to feel the way they do or he can take responsibility and chart a new course. Americans are losing faith in the future. They are losing hope that their children can lead a better life. They watch as challenges continue to mount around the world—like those from ISIL, Iran, Russia, Al Qaeda, an ever-aggressive China, North Korea, and of course the Taliban—while this administration seems to have no plan to deal with any of it.

This hurt in our country and the failing approach from the White House should be disheartening to all of us. Perhaps the worst part is, it didn't have to be like this. It really didn't have to be like this. I believe that when the American people elect divided government, they are not telling us to do nothing. They are telling us to work together in the areas where we

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



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can agree so we can make progress for our country.

This Congress has racked up a growing list of bipartisan accomplishments for the American people over the past year. Some thought the major reforms we passed in areas such as education, transportation, Medicare, and tax relief were all impossible in the current political climate. We proved those pundits wrong. We showed how significant bipartisan accomplishments can be achieved when good policy is the goal.

Perhaps we have inspired the President to finally try his hand at bipartisan achievement as well. We will see tonight when he delivers his last State of the Union Address. If he proposes real plans to do things such as defeat ISIL, grow economic opportunity, and strengthen the middle class—plans actually designed to pass this Congress, not just provide talking points for the next campaign—we will know he is ready to join us in meeting the challenges of tomorrow because Republicans aren't afraid of the future, and we don't think President Obama should be either. We want him to join us in recognizing the challenges of today while working for the solutions of tomorrow. It is true that we as a nation have a lot of challenges to confront. The pain and the worry in our country is real, it is palpable, but none of it is insurmountable.

That is the hopeful message I expect Governor Haley to deliver tonight. I expect her to contrast a failing Presidency that is stuck in the past with a Republican Party that is oriented to the future. Nikki Haley knows the American dream. She has lived the American dream. She believes in the continuing promise of our country, and she understands the importance of opportunity and upward mobility for our middle class. When Governor Haley talks about hope and change, she means it because she has actually worked to deliver it.

There is nothing wrong with inspirational speeches. We all need to be inspired, especially in trying times such as these. Soaring rhetoric matched with the right policies and hard work to actually achieve them is usually good for our country—just ask Ronald Reagan or Jack Kemp. Empty eloquence wrapped in leftwing ideas of yesterday that hurt the middle class—it is time to leave that behind. It is time to look to the future. We will see tonight if President Obama is ready to do so and move beyond the failed policies of the past.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

THE PRESIDENT'S LEADERSHIP

Mr. REID. Mr. President, if this were a card game, which it is not, I guess what I would do is trump what the Re-

publican leader has said. My friend lives in a world that doesn't exist. Let's talk about this person named Barack Obama. What has happened under his time in office, his 7 years, in spite of the unheard of, unrecognizable Senate that the Republicans have created—cloture had to be filed more than 500 times because they set out to block everything he wanted—in spite of that, the state of the Union now reflects the last 7 years. We have 14 million private sector jobs that have been created. During the Obama years, the economy has grown. The private sector created jobs for 70 straight months—the longest stretch in the history of our country. Unemployment is at 5 percent. When Barack Obama took office, in some States it was as much as 14 percent.

During the years of Barack Obama, 17 million uninsured Americans have gained access to health care—17 million—and the number is climbing. Renewable energy production has increased significantly. You drive across America today and you see wind farms in the middle part of this country, and farmers make more money from producing energy on their farms than they do harvesting corn and soybeans because of what the President suggested and what we legislated in the so-called stimulus bill.

Solar, wind, and geothermal has increased significantly, and it will continue to grow more because they have tax incentives now for as long as 7 additional years. You know what else we have done—not enough. The wealthiest Americans who don't mind paying more than their fair share—the only people in America today who believe that these rich people shouldn't pay a little more are the Republicans in Congress, not Republicans around the country, so we made sure the wealthiest pay a little bit more.

We have secured permanent tax relief that will help lift 16 million lower income, middle-income families out of poverty. The auto industry was on the brink of destruction. General Motors, this icon of American industry, was begging for help. Chrysler Motors was begging for help. The Republicans said no. We Democrats said yes. We were right. Republicans were wrong. Hundreds of thousands of jobs have been created in the auto industry. Last year more American cars and trucks were sold than any time in the history of our country. Why? Because of Barack Obama's leadership.

Osama bin Laden is gone. He has been killed, and we destroyed and degraded terrorist organizations in our Nation. We have more to do. Of course we do.

There have been historic agreements on climate change. We have stopped Iran from getting access to nuclear weapons. Within the last few days, Iran has shipped 12 tons of uranium out of Iran because of Barack Obama. While we have a lot more to do for America on behalf of the American people, we

can't ignore the progress that has been made.

My friend talks about the new Senate, and there is a new Senate because there is a constructive minority. We Democrats have been willing to work with them. The issues that we have been able to pass with rare exception have been issues that we should have passed years ago but we couldn't because Republicans filibustered and obstructed everything we tried to do.

I repeat: We have a lot more to do for the American people. It is a wonderful country, and I am so pleased with the progress we have made during the 7 years of Barack Obama.

Mr. President, I see no one on the floor. Please state the business of the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 12:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the first hour equally divided, and with the majority controlling the first half and the Democrats controlling the final half.

The Senator from Missouri.

FLOODING IN MISSOURI

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I want to talk for a few minutes at the beginning of my remarks about what the response to the flooding has been in our State of Missouri. I was in St. Louis County with Congresswoman WAGNER on Saturday. I was in St. Charles County the week before that. I was in Cape Girardeau following up on the work Congressman SMITH has done there. I was in St. Genevieve, Perryville, Cassville, and Monette. If you know anything about the geography of our State, those places are spread pretty far apart, but we had a flooding situation that was almost totally generated in our State—different from the floods we normally deal with—and the communities reacted with very little time in an impressive way. The Corps of Engineers was also there to help. The National Guard was there to do what they needed to do. Now we see FEMA and the SBA stepping in to see who qualifies for assistance.

There was loss of life. More often than not, the loss of life occurred when somebody drove around a sign that said "Don't pass this sign" and then got caught in a situation they didn't anticipate or thought was less than it turned out to be. Some families clearly are grieving that loss of life. We had five international soldiers who lost their lives near Fort Leonard Wood.

Maybe the whole idea of a low-water bridge that you and I would be used to was something they hadn't thought about.

We had three interstate highways close—Interstate 55, Interstate 70, and Interstate 44. They were not all closed at exactly the same time but within somewhere between a 24- to 36-hour timeframe. We will have to look at that to be sure people don't lose access to where their kids are, where their jobs are, and where their health care is. The economic impact of that Interstate System that comes together in so many ways in Missouri shutting down is something that clearly, once we get beyond the immediacy of dealing with the flood itself, we need to look at and see how we can prevent that problem from happening again. I don't know of a time when any two of those highways were closed at the same time before, but I know Interstate 70 and Interstate 44 were closed at the same time, and it had a real impact economically on people traveling east to west or economic things happening east to west anywhere in the country.

HEALTH CARE RESEARCH, MENTAL HEALTH, AND PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I was also able to talk about some good news. I am not sure how much good news we are going to hear over the next few days, but certainly there is the good news of stepping up and looking at health care research and the impact it can have in the country. There are things that are beginning to happen in mental health and things that we are trying to do to respond to prescription drug abuse and opioid abuse in all areas.

In health care research, the National Institutes of Health hadn't received an increase in their research funding since 2003. There was an effort made right before that to make a substantial increase. The fact that the Congress and the administration stopped research funding had always been frustrating, but we were able to see an increase this year for the first time in 12 years. That meant we had to create a priority. For too many people in government, when there is a discussion about funding priorities, a lot of our colleagues hear that and think that means we have to fund anything anybody has ever convinced the government we are interested in. Being interested in something doesn't make it a priority; it just makes it something that, if everything was going along the right way, maybe this is something to look at. But in funding NIH at a new level, we totally eliminated 18 programs, zeroed them out. We didn't eliminate the authorization for them, but we eliminated the money to run those 18 programs. Congress and eventually the President accepted the argument that for the greater good, these 18 programs did not need to continue. The President asked for 23

new programs that also did not receive funding, but that allowed us to make a commitment and to set priorities.

Why set a priority? The first funding increase in 12 years was 6.6 percent. We went from spending \$30 billion on health care research last year to \$32 billion this year. Hopefully this is a first step toward trying to solve health care problems.

There are many changing developments in health care, from smartphone technology, to individual medicine, to knowing more about the human genome. How did we find out about the human genome? We found that out through NIH research. If we hadn't had NIH research, it is likely that the human genome would still be a mystery to us. It had been a mystery on the planet until just a few years ago. The reason that happened was the National Institutes of Health and the Congress decided it would be helpful to figure out how all of us are different from each other, which also means trying to figure out a different approach to curing diseases such as cancer, Alzheimer's, and heart disease.

What difference does it make? Why is it a priority to spend taxpayers' money in this way? One reason is the clear impact health care research is having every day on individuals and families who no longer are dealing with problems they would have been dealing with 10 years ago. Moving forward, let's see if we can find ways to meet the challenges for families and caregivers. Let's see what we can do there.

Generally, for taxpayers, even if you aren't the individual beneficiary, estimates are that the Medicare system will be absolutely overwhelmed between now and 2050 by things such as Alzheimer's and cancer. If we can figure out a cure or delay onset of Alzheimer's by 5 or 7 years on average, the impact on the cost of that devastating disease—both the real cost to taxpayers and the emotional and psychological costs to everybody involved—will be overwhelming.

The Medicare system won't be able to withstand the projections of how much money will be spent if we don't find ways to deal with these new challenges. As people get older, Alzheimer's and cancer are more likely to end life than heart disease and stroke. That doesn't mean we don't need to be focused on neurological research or on heart research. All of those things are important, and a relatively small investment by the Federal Government on health care to try to do something about that matters.

It is generally understood that health care will dramatically change in the next 10 or 20 years. Where the research is done is likely to be where the jobs and economic impact of that research occurs.

I don't want to be going to the Chinese 10 years from now saying: Will you tell us how your investment in research has paid off? We are better at this than anybody else in the world,

and we need to continue to be better. There are reasons for us to be better.

I do visit some of the places where this research is being done. I was at the Siteman Cancer Center on the campus of Washington University, one of the premier cancer focus centers in the country. Washington University is where one-third of all research was done to understand the human genome.

I have met with the Alzheimer's Association and the American Cancer Association.

I met with the family of a young man who lost his fight with cancer before he was 10 years old. His mom and dad formed the Super Sam Foundation to encourage other families and to encourage research. They were there with his sister representing the Super Sam Foundation.

The Thompson Center for Autism and Neurodevelopment Disorders at the University of Missouri is another place where we are looking to see what we can do to intervene earlier and help solve problems. The new chancellor at the university, Hank Foley, was with me, as was the director of that center, Dr. Stephen Kanne. They are doing good work and will continue to do so.

In Kansas City, I met with an organization, MRIGlobal, that is doing incredible work in the field of environmental and cancer research and is making a big difference. The head of that company, Thomas Sack, was there as we were talking about what they were doing and what they hoped to do.

My hometown of Springfield is also the home location of the Alzheimer's Association Missouri Chapter. I had a chance to talk with them.

I also met with the people from the Alzheimer's Association, the American Cancer Society, the American Diabetes Association, and I then went on to Southeast Missouri State University, another autism center that is working to figure out how we can deal with autism disorders, including early detection.

I visited Truman State University in Kirksville, where I had the opportunity to learn more about the university's efforts to create an interprofessional autism clinic. I was able to hear stories about how frustrated young researchers have been with just a 6.6-percent increase—the first increase in 12 years. During that 12 years, the buying power of the research dollar went down by 20 percent. We restored a little of that 20 percent.

The Federal Government has been involved in research at least since the founding of the Department of Agriculture in 1862. Whether it is health care research or ag research or environmental research or energy research, there is a level of that research which should and will be done by the private sector, but there is another level of research by the Federal Government that benefits everybody by sharing the results of that research.

In mental health, there is a lot of excitement in Missouri and around the

country about the potential of being one of the pilot States in excellence of mental health. Senator STABENOW from Michigan and I introduced legislation a few years ago that would combine—that would treat behavioral health, treat mental health just like all other health. This is another way to save money, because of that mental health situation.

By the way, the National Institutes of Health says that one out of four adult Americans has a diagnosable and almost always treatable mental health issue. If that mental health issue is being treated, whatever your other health issues are, they are likely to be treated in a much more effective way.

We are looking for more choices to deal with the issues suffered by our Vietnam veterans to our youngest veterans, giving them more options and more choices.

Eight States are going to be doing that and 24 States have applied. Senator STABENOW and I will be talking more about what happens and what we might do to encourage those other 16 States.

The President says he wants to spend more money on mental health. It really doesn't matter how you share your mental health information or what your provider last told you or how many mental health care providers you have if there is no place to go and if there are no access points to treat behavioral health like all other health issues, and that is what excellence in mental health does for patients.

I will close with one final area. I think there has been a lot of response to understanding and addressing the opioid epidemic and the drug issue. Deaths from prescription opioids and other pain-related drugs quadrupled between 1999 and 2013, claiming more than 145,000 lives over the past 10 years, but a substantial portion of those deaths occurred over the last couple of years. These overdoses cost the economy an estimated \$20 billion in medical costs and lost work productivity. Some people die from overdosing, and many other people have to be treated by their health care provider. There is a personal loss to those individuals who become addicted to prescription drugs.

I mentioned that I had a chance to talk to the Missouri General Assembly last week, and I talked about how our veterans are often the victims just because of the serious injuries they sustain and the painkilling drugs they are given to help deal with the pain of those injuries. But that then leads to an addiction to that drug and other drugs.

Approximately three out of four new heroin users abused prescription drugs before switching to heroin. We have made a new commitment to this issue with new programs that are targeted to combat opioid abuse at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration with

almost three times the investment that the country made before. This is truly becoming an epidemic, and we need to deal with that epidemic sooner rather than later.

Many of our Members and their States have talked effectively about fighting heroin and drug addiction but also about dealing with the transition from taking drugs that they were prescribed to drugs that they shouldn't have. We are looking at new opportunities there. The new Republican-led Senate is looking at how to deal with these opportunities in new ways. I hope we haven't made those successes for the spending year we are in now a one-time only event but a new commitment to try to solve the problems early so that society and the programs which taxpayers fund aren't overwhelmed by those problems later.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

THE STATE OF THE UNION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I appreciate the Senator from Missouri, Mr. BLUNT, addressing some of the issues that the Republican majority has attempted to accomplish, including the advances made over the last year, which I think will lay a foundation for the future and for further successes in the coming year.

Tonight President Obama will come to Congress to deliver his final State of the Union Address, which raises this question: What is the state of our Union? The truth is that while the strength and spirit of the American people remain a beacon of hope for our future, our country is facing a number of serious challenges. Global unrest has grown over the course of the President's administration, most notably with the rise of ISIS, one of the most brutal terrorist groups in existence.

On President Obama's watch, we have experienced the worst economic recovery since the Eisenhower administration, with stagnant wages and millions dropping out of the labor force. American families are seeing their dreams for the future erode as they struggle under ever-increasing government burdens and a lack of economic opportunity.

Any serious discussion of the state of our Union needs to address these challenges and offer solutions. That is the kind of speech that I wish we were going to hear tonight, but unfortunately all indicators suggest that is not the kind of speech the President plans to give. Instead, the President apparently intends to take a victory lap despite the fact that the American people clearly don't think there is much to celebrate. A recent New York Times/CBS News poll found that 68 percent of the American people think our country is on the wrong track, and most Americans believe the next generation will be worse off, not better off.

In a preview of the President's speech, the White House notes: "We

have made extraordinary progress on the path to a stronger country and a brighter future." That is not how the American people are feeling, and it doesn't reflect the reality of the President's administration.

The President plans to talk about his supposed economic successes tonight. While our economy has recovered to a certain extent since the recession, it has never fully rebounded. Wage growth continues to lag. December marked the 77th straight month in which year-over-year hourly wage growth was at or below 2½ percent. Underemployment also continues to be a problem with millions of Americans continuing to work part-time jobs because they can't find full-time work. Almost 5 years after the recession ended, the percentage of Americans working full time has still not returned to prerecession levels.

While the most commonly mentioned unemployment rate is 5 percent, the U-6 unemployment rate, which measures the number of both unemployed workers and underemployed workers, is 9.9 percent. Of the unemployed, those who have been unemployed for 27 weeks or more, or those considered long-term unemployed, make up 26 percent. Labor force participation remains near record lows. In short, stagnation has become the new normal for the economy under the Obama administration and economic opportunities for families have been few and far between.

In addition to the lack of economic opportunity, families have had to shoulder new burdens thanks to the Obama administration. Chief among those burdens, of course, is ObamaCare, the President's disastrous health care law, which has failed to reduce the cost of health care, ripped away millions of Americans' preferred health care plans, forced families onto insurance plans they don't want and can't afford, reduced patients' access to doctors and hospitals, increased taxes, and wasted literally billions of taxpayer dollars.

Then there are the burdensome regulations the Obama administration has imposed, which have made it more challenging for businesses, large and small, to grow and create jobs.

The Obama Environmental Protection Agency, in particular, has done more than its fair share to make things difficult for Americans. During the course of the Obama administration, this Agency has implemented one damaging rule after another, from a massive national backdoor energy tax that would hurt poor and working families the most to a new rule that would subject ponds and puddles in Americans' backyards to a complex array of expensive and burdensome regulatory requirements.

Again and again, I have heard from South Dakota farm and ranch families, homeowners and small businesses about the difficulties they are facing thanks to the Obama EPA's massive regulations.

If the President's record on the economy and middle-class opportunity is

bad, his record on foreign policy is even worse. A White House preview of the State of the Union touts the President's work to "redefine American leadership for the 21st century." During the President's last year in office the White House says: "We can show the world what is possible when America truly leads."

Republicans couldn't agree more that America should truly lead. The problem is that the President's first 7 years in office have generally been distinguished by a lack of leadership. Back in June, former President and fellow Democrat Jimmy Carter described President Obama's successes on the world stage as "minimal." He said: "On the world stage, just to be as objective about it as I can, I can't think of many nations in the world where we have a better relationship now than we did when he took over." Again, that was a quote from former Democratic President Jimmy Carter. Well, neither can I.

The White House claims that the President ended two wars. Yet it neglects to mention that since the United States withdrew from Iraq, large sections of the country have gone into chaos thanks to ISIS. The President's failure to enforce his redline in Syria when President Bashar al-Assad used chemical weapons on his own people and the President's lack of a strategy to defeat ISIS have contributed to a massive refugee crisis with no easy solution. Meanwhile, Assad remains in power, and ISIS continues to thrive.

With the terrorist attacks in Paris, ISIS officially expanded its theater of operations beyond the Middle East. As we witnessed in the case of the San Bernardino shooting, as long as ISIS continues to exist, its demented ideology will inspire disturbed individuals to commit acts of terror. The United States is in desperate need of a comprehensive strategy to confront the threat posed by ISIS. Yet the President has so far made no move to develop one.

On another foreign policy front, the President has repeatedly touted his nuclear deal with Iran as one of the major foreign policy achievements of his Presidency. Yet the agreement he signed actually improves Iran's long-term prospects for developing a bomb. In a clear violation of U.N. restrictions, Iran tested a ballistic missile, demonstrating once again that it has in no way curbed its aggressive behavior. Elsewhere, Russian aggression has increased on the President's watch. North Korea recently conducted yet another nuclear test.

The Obama administration has left the American people with a host of problems at home and abroad, but once again, it sounds like President Obama's State of the Union Address will fail to offer any substantial solutions. More than that, it sounds as if the President will largely ignore the problems, and that is unfortunate.

The President is missing an opportunity to offer substantial solutions

before turning the problems of his administration over to his successors. I don't want to give credence to those Obama administration accusations that the Republicans are all "doom and gloom." As I said, I believe the strength and spirit of the American people mean that the future of America is always bright. But realizing that future requires understanding and developing solutions to the problems facing our Nation, and that is something the President has been unwilling to do.

Republicans have worked hard over the past year to make our economy stronger, our government more efficient and accountable, and our Nation and our world safer and more secure. But there is a lot more work that needs to be done, and we need a partner in the White House who is willing to meet us half way. We hope the President will use the last year of his Presidency to work with us as we seek to address the challenges that are facing the American people.

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

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

FUNDING FOR BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, a few months ago my colleague from Missouri, Senator BLUNT, took the floor and spoke to two issues we have in common. I will speak to one of them in a moment—the flooding in the Midwest—but I wish to also address another one that he raised.

Senator BLUNT is in an extraordinary position, having been given an opportunity to handle the appropriations bill for the Department of Health and Human Services. Within the Health and Human Services appropriations bill is funding for most of the biomedical research by the Federal Government.

I have spoken to Senator BLUNT over the past year and even before about my strong feelings on this subject. I feel, as most Americans do, that our investment in biomedical research is a wise investment, potentially sparing people from disease and death that could follow an illness but also making an investment in America's innovative economy, creating opportunities for jobs and for expanded research and new products and pharmaceuticals. Senator BLUNT took that challenge to heart, and when he was faced with the appropriations bill for this Department, he made a special effort when it came to medical research. I am so happy that he did.

It was only a few years ago that we had automatic, across-the-board cuts called sequestration. It was dev-

astating. As a net result of that, many of the youngest and most promising researchers gave up on the field because they didn't think there was a commitment from Congress, from the President, and from the government to continue to expand biomedical research. We saw the median age of researchers climbing because younger researchers looked for other jobs. That is a horrible waste of talent and a squandering of an opportunity, I am sure, to find ways to make life more bearable and to cure diseases across America.

Several years ago, when I visited the NIH, the head of the National Institutes of Health, Dr. Francis Collins, told me that if we could have 5 percent real growth in biomedical research at the NIH for 10 years, he could light up the scoreboard. We were on the cusp of so many discoveries that this was an opportunity, if the investment were made, to really have some medical breakthroughs. I took that to heart and introduced a bill called the American Cures Act, and I am sure Senator BLUNT and many of my colleagues are tired of hearing about it. The notion is 10 percent by Congress; 5 percent real growth each year when it comes to the NIH.

As it turns out, this year we are knocking on the door of doing just that with the investment that was made by the appropriations bill. This investment is almost \$42 billion in biomedical research, \$32 billion in the National Institutes of Health, a 6.6-percent increase over last year; \$7 billion for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a 4.5-percent increase over fiscal year 2015.

There are two other areas of research opportunities in biomedical research: the Veterans Medical and Prosthetics Research Program and the Department of Defense Health Program. That is an appropriations bill I have something to do with, working with the chairman, Senator COCHRAN. Both of those programs received a 7-percent increase over the previous fiscal year. These increases at NIH, CDC, Veterans, and Defense are a real turnaround. They bring to an end a decades-long downward trend when it comes to biomedical research.

Senator BLUNT has said—and I have, too—this shouldn't be a one-hit wonder. We have to repeat that this year when it comes to the appropriations for the next fiscal year beginning October 1. We have to make sure we make our promise and keep it when it comes to biomedical research. If we do it, I know this level of funding is going to result in dramatic, positive developments.

There are so many areas we need help with. I can think of a few that are obvious, including Alzheimer's. An American is diagnosed with Alzheimer's once every 67 seconds. When my staff told me that, I didn't believe it. I said: Go back, recalculate, and tell me the real number. It turns out they were right. Once every 67 seconds, a person is diagnosed with Alzheimer's.

Last year we spent over \$200 billion in Medicare and Medicaid for Alzheimer's care. That is just a fraction of the total cost. Think about what individual families spent, what private insurance sources spent, the charitable care that was given to Alzheimer's patients. So when we talk about increasing the NIH budget by \$2 billion for 1 year, it is a tiny fraction. It is 1 percent of the amount we are spending on Alzheimer's.

If we could find a way to detect Alzheimer's earlier, delay its onset, reduce the period of time of suffering, or perhaps even find a cure, God willing, it would have a dramatic, positive impact on so many lives and families and on our bottom-line Federal budget. Take that argument about Alzheimer's and apply it as well to cancer. How many of our families and friends are suffering and fighting cancer right now? My wife and I were struck over the holidays by how many of our close friends are battling cancer at this moment. We know they are looking for hope. They are looking for drugs. They are looking for something that will break through and give them a chance at life. That is why I believe this biomedical research is so critical.

Let me add one postscript. Stopping with these agencies is not enough. I recently visited the Department of Energy. The new Secretary there, Ernest Moniz, and I were talking about biomedical research. He said that when it comes to the technology for imaging that is making such a difference in the world, it isn't just in biomedicine; it is in engineering and science as well, in the Department of Science, within the Department of Energy. So let's not be shortsighted. Let's have an open mind about innovation and creation.

Last week I was in Peoria, IL, an area I am proud to represent. I went to visit OSF Hospital there. I went to what is known as the Jump Center. We don't forget that name very easily. What they have done in the Jump Center is they have combined the University of Illinois Medical School and the University of Illinois Engineering Department in a common effort to bring new engineering and new technology to medicine and medical breakthroughs. What they are doing there is amazing—first, training doctors and medical professionals to do their job effectively without mistakes. That, of course, is the ultimate outcome we are looking for. Over their shoulders are engineers and technicians who are looking at these doctors doing their work, finding new applications for computers and engineering technology that can make their work easier and more effective.

They showed me a model of the human heart. It was a heart of an infant with serious heart problems. This model they gave me was the actual human heart reproduced of an infant who was facing surgery. They took the MRIs and the CAT scans, put them into a 3D copier, and produced this little heart that you could hold in your hand.

They were able to give that heart to the surgeon to look at before the surgery, and they opened it so that the surgeon could look inside that heart model—a model which tracked the reality of that infant—and know before the surgery what he would find.

It meant less time on the heart-lung machine, a more likely positive recovery. It was the use of technology in engineering to move us forward and to give that little baby a fighting chance. So I thank Senator BLUNT. I want to especially thank my colleague Senator PATTY MURRAY. She has been a terrific leader in this field, both on the appropriations and authorizing committees, and also Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER.

I think we have all come to conclude that regardless of how much time we have in the Senate, we should leave a mark that makes a difference. When it comes to biomedical research, this year's budget, which Senator BLUNT referred to, will make a difference. Now, let's make sure it is not a one-hit wonder. Let's make sure we do it again in next year's budget as well.

FLOODING IN THE MIDWEST

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I would also like to speak for a moment about the flooding situation in the Midwest, and, of course, in my colleagues' neighboring State of Missouri.

Last month, right in the midst of the holidays, rain storms swept through my State, covering it with 7 inches of rainfall in a very short period of time. The heavy rainfall caused water levels on the rivers to reach record highs. We were surprised. We expect this in the spring, not in December. Communities had to evacuate their homes for their own safety. Sadly, these storms were so severe they flooded roadways, claiming the lives of 10 people whose vehicles were swept away by the floods. Many of them did not realize how high the water actually was in these flash floods or how fast it was moving. They got caught in dangerous waters.

Two areas that were some of the worst impacted were Alexander and Randolph Counties on the Mississippi River—Monroe County, I might add as well. Last Wednesday I went to visit two towns in these areas, Olive Branch and Evansville, to talk to the residents. In Olive Branch I met with Alexander County board vice-chair Lamar Houston and spoke with State representative Brandon Phelps. Both have been working diligently to help the community recover.

I have some photographs which I think will tell the story. This a photograph from Olive Branch. You can see water completely surrounding the home and covering the nearby areas. The levee that protects the communities of Olive Branch, Hodges Park, and Unity was breached and overtopped by a record crest at the Mississippi River. These overtops caused miles of flood damage, impacting ag lands as well as homes and businesses.

Before flooding occurred, local law enforcement and emergency responders tried to evacuate everybody as quickly as possible. Thankfully, a lot of people heeded the call and went to find shelter with family and friends, but many residents I spoke with in these towns were still concerned about being able to recover from the flood and the damage.

One man from Olive Branch, Bruce Ford, said his auto repair shop was engulfed by water. He worries he could be out of business for months. Bruce is working night and day to clean out the debris and to move his equipment back in. He was not sure when his shop would be ready to open. Even worse, if the levee breaches again this spring, which it might, he worries that he will not have the means to fix it all over again in just a few months.

In Evansville—and this photo is taken in that area; this was taken on New Year's Eve crossing the Mississippi River at St. Louis. It shows the devastation on the Illinois side. As you can see, these buildings are nearly completely submerged in water, and for many areas around St. Louis the damage you see here is typical. When I went to visit Evansville, about an hour south from here, I met with residents who worked around the clock to sandbag homes and businesses to keep the Kaskaskia River out of their town.

I met with Evansville mayor Craig Valleroy, emergency management coordinator Nancy Shilling, who did a great job in making a presentation to me, and State Representative Jerry Costello, Jr.

I was given a tour around the waterfront and flooded areas. As is often the case with disasters like these, I was impressed with the local residents, first responders, local officials, and volunteers, who just stepped up and started filling sandbags. By building a wall of sandbags around downtown, Evansville residents were able to hold off the worst of the flooding.

Last week, I spoke with the Illinois Emergency Management Agency director, James Joseph, and the FEMA Regional Administrator, Andrew Velasquez, about the rain and flooding. The Governor declared 23 counties State disaster areas. State and local emergency responders were dispatched to affected areas. The State provided almost 1 million sandbags—997,000; 4,000 tons of sand; and 117 DOT trucks for flood mitigation.

As the water continues to recede in the coming days, local officials and the Illinois Emergency Management Agency are working together to assess the damages. I might say there is one issue that Senator KIRK and I have looked at over and over again. We are blessed in our State to have about 13 million people. The largest percentage of them are around the Chicagoland area, but we have a vast State beyond Chicago. That is where I hail from—downstate Illinois, with hundreds of miles of small town and rural areas.

When they go through flooding like this, and they are making a calculation of how much damage there has to be in order for the Federal Government to step in and help pay for the damage, they take into account the entire State and its population. The net result is, had this flooding occurred in a sparsely populated State, they would have received Federal assistance. But we have to hit a threshold number of about \$18 million in public infrastructure damage before we qualify for Federal assistance.

Senator KIRK and I have both witnessed the damage of two tornadoes in Illinois, one in Washington, IL, and another one in Harrisburg, which at first glance we thought would clearly qualify for Federal assistance. In neither case did we make the threshold of \$18 million in damage. So I think this formula needs to be recalculated. The fact that we happen to have a great city like Chicago and the region around it as part of our State should not really inure to the detriment of people downstate in smaller rural areas who suffer this kind of damage from flooding and tornadoes.

I am proud of the volunteers who came forward. I want to thank our National Guard. They are always there when we need them. Local law enforcement never gets enough credit—our firefighters, police, first responders, hospitals, and volunteers.

When I went into Olive Branch—it is a tiny town—most of the activity in the community center that I went into was happening in the kitchen. They said: Go to that lady wearing the pink hat. She is in charge. She had been there every single day since this flooding started, asking all the neighbors to bring in covered dishes and some food for the volunteers and the people who were displaced from their homes. God bless them for caring so much for their neighbors and responding in this time of need.

I want to recognize the hard work of the Federal and State employees who have been engaged in this. I have no doubt that the people of my State who have been impacted by these floods are going to roll up their sleeves and clean up the mess and get ready to make life normal again.

Our thoughts are with the many people today who have lost their loved ones. There were about 25 who died in these floods in the Midwest. We will again stand with them and others as we prepare for the future, to rebuild as the people of Illinois and the United States always do, stronger for the experience.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MISSION TO MARS AND SPACE SHUTTLE FLIGHT 30TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, we are going to Mars—Mars or bust. We are going to send a human crew to Mars in the decade of the 2030s. We are right at the cusp of the breakthrough to show how this is possible. I have just returned from the Kennedy Space Center, meeting with its Director, Bob Cabana. All of the ground infrastructure—the two launch pads—are being reconfigured. Old abandoned launch pads on Cape Canaveral Air Force Station are being redone with new commercial launch pads.

Less than 2 years from right now, in September of 2017, we will be launching Americans again on American rockets to go to and from the International Space Station. Three years from now, we will be launching the full-up test of the largest and most powerful rocket ever invented by mankind, the Space Launch System, with its spacecraft Orion, which will be the forerunner that will ultimately take us to Mars.

This appropriations bill that we passed just before Christmas treats NASA with a decent increase of over \$1 billion and puts the resources into each part of NASA—its scientific programs, its technology programs, its exploration programs, its aviation, and especially aviation research programs—to keep us moving forward in our development of technology.

I am especially enthusiastic about bringing this message because 30 years ago today, I had the privilege of launching on the 24th flight of the space shuttle into the heavens for a 6-day mission. Let me tell you about some of the members of this crew, just to give you an idea of how accomplished these people are.

In NASA terminology in the space shuttle, the commander sits on the left seat; on the right seat, his pilot—in effect, his copilot. He handles all of the systems. In almost all cases, those pilot astronauts are military test pilots. They are so good that when they land that space shuttle without an engine, they have one chance; they are so good they can put it on a dime.

Of course, our crew, 30 years ago launching from pad 39-A—the same pad that I saw on Saturday that has now been transformed into a commercial launch pad under lease to SpaceX—that crew was the best of the best. The two pilot astronauts were naval aviators. In the left seat was CDR Hoot Gibson—Robert Gibson, the best stick-and-rudder guy in the whole astronaut office. He could put it down, and you would hardly know that the wheels had touched.

In the right seat, then Marine colonel, now Marine general, retired, Charlie Bolden, who then went on to command three missions thereafter, and today is—for the last 7 years—the Administrator of NASA. He is the one who has transformed NASA and has us going in the right direction now to go

to Mars and at the same time working out the arrangements for the commercial marketplace to flourish, as we are seeing with Boeing and SpaceX, which will be the two rockets that will launch in less than 2 years, taking Americans to and from the International Space Station.

Let me tell you about the rest of the crew that launched 30 years ago today. The flight engineer, Steve Hawley, an astrophysicist. By the way, he is the one who deployed for the first time the Hubble Space Telescope. An astrophysicist, Dr. George “Pinky” Nelson. By the way, all of these guys are doctors. They are Ph.D.s. Also, Dr. Franklin Chang-Diaz, an astronaut who came to America from Costa Rica—not speaking a word of English after high school and taught himself English. He has a Ph.D. in plasma physics from MIT. While he was still flying, seven times as an astronaut, he was building a plasma rocket. Today that plasma rocket is one of the propulsion systems that NASA is considering when we go to Mars. If you saw the Matt Damon movie, “The Martian,” the author of the book had consulted with Franklin about the technology that is referenced in the book as the propulsion that sent that spacecraft to and from Mars. Another is engineer Bob Cenker, an RCA engineer. We launched an RCA communications satellite in the course of the mission.

The seventh is yours truly. I performed 12 medical experiments, the primary of which was a protein crystal growth experiment in zero-g, sponsored by the medical school at the University of Alabama at Birmingham—their comprehensive cancer center. The theory was if you could grow protein crystals—and out of the influence of gravity—then you could grow them larger and more pure, so when you brought them back to Earth, examining them either through x-ray diffraction or an electron microscope, you could unlock the secrets of their architecture and get the molecular structure.

I also performed the first American stress test in space in an unmechanized treadmill. You wonder how in zero-g you can propel yourself running on a treadmill. I had to put on a harness with bungee cords that would force me down onto the treadmill, and I pulled and pushed with my feet. We were trying to see what happens to our astronauts who go outside on spacewalks. Their hearts would start skipping beats. So the idea was to get the heart rate up and use me as a comparison.

Indeed, what happened was I ran for 20 minutes, pulling and pushing. Lo and behold I discovered that the tape recorder was not working and had to repeat it. It made so much racket in that small confined space that our crew was mighty happy when I finished. Thus, the space doctors had additional data to study, and they have published that. We thought it was the first stress test in space, but later on we found out that the Soviets had done stress tests—we don’t know how long.

On this occasion, 30 years later, of something that was transformative to me, I wish to say I am so optimistic of where we are going because we are going to Mars. If you ask the average American on the street, they think the space program is shut down because they visualize it as the shutting down of the space shuttle, but they will be reminded, reenergized, enthused and excited—as only human space flight can do—when those rockets start lifting off at the Cape in September of 2017, in less than 2 years, and we are beginning on our way to Mars.

I thank the Presiding Officer for this opportunity on this 30th anniversary.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

FEDERAL RESERVE TRANSPARENCY BILL

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I rise this morning to speak about the legislation we will be considering this afternoon. Specifically, my understanding is we will be voting on a procedural measure which will allow us to take up legislation that is commonly known as auditing the Fed. I want to address that.

Let me start with the context that I think is important to think about when we consider whether we ought to even modestly change the relationship that exists between Congress and the Fed. It starts for me with the simple observation that the financial crisis of 2008 is over. It actually ended a long time ago. It has been a number of years now that our financial system and our economy has not been in the imminent-crisis-meltdown mode that it was in the fall of 2008. In fact, for several years now we have had meager but some economic growth. Our banking system has been massively recapitalized. There is no current or imminent wave of bankruptcies in really any segment of the economy.

Yet despite the fact that we are clearly not in a financial or economic crisis, we have crisis-era monetary policy, policy from the Fed that one would expect to occur—presumably—only in a crisis. The recent very modest change in Fed policy, the movement in the Fed funds rate from a target of zero to 25 basis points to 25 to 50 basis points is arguably the most modest tightening in Fed history. You couldn't even begin to suggest that this is a tightening of monetary policy. This is just a very slightly less easy money policy. That is what we have.

So in my view there are huge dangers and problems that are associated with the Fed pursuing this completely unprecedented and, I would say, radical experiment in monetary policy. I wish to talk about a few of those this morning.

One of the first and clearest problems is because the Fed has kept interest rates so low for so long, the Fed has caused a big misallocation of re-

sources. This undoubtedly caused asset bubbles that are existing today that would not have occurred had it not been for the abnormal monetary policy. For instance, take sovereign debt markets. In many cases—especially in Europe—we have debt issued by governments and the return on those instruments is negative. In other words it doesn't cost the government money to borrow money, which is abnormal. You have to pay interest to borrow money normally. In fact, the government gets paid to borrow money, which is ridiculous and it is extremely abnormal. It has happened in the United States, not at the moment but in recent history. As a result of this Fed policy, we have had the bizarre world of negative interest rates. That is just one category that has clearly been in the bubble.

Most observers believe that the high-yield market, the junk bond market, was in a bubble. That has gone through a very turbulent time and a big selloff—arguably, some of the years coming out of that bubble, but who knows. There has been considerable speculation that there are real estate bubbles, other financial assets. This is inevitable when the Fed distorts monetary policy, and it is a disturbing echo of the distortion that occurred back in the early part of the very beginning of this century, when the Fed's extremely low monetary policy of very low interest rates contributed to a housing bubble which of course ended up collapsing in the financial crisis, but that is just one category of problems the Fed causes with these ultra-low interest rates.

Of course, the second is the corollary that people who have saved money and want to invest in a low-risk investment are completely denied an opportunity to get a return. The savers are forced to—the expression is—reach for yield, which is to say: Take your money out of the bank and buy something else because you are earning nothing with the bank.

Well, you know what, for a lot of people a savings account at the bank is appropriate for their circumstances, for their risk tolerance, but they are driven away from that because bank deposits yield pretty much zero.

Consider the case of an elderly couple who lives in Allentown, PA. They worked their whole lives, saved whenever they could, sacrificed, chose not to squander their money, and they lived modestly rather than lavishly. They did it in the expectation that when they retired, this nest egg that they had worked decades to build, this savings account at the bank, was going to yield a little bit of income to help them make ends meet in their retirement, to help supplement whatever Social Security and whatever pension they might have.

What we have done to those folks—and they are all over America—who have spent a lifetime living prudently, carefully, sacrificing savings, we have

said: Well, you made a huge mistake because the government is making sure you earn nothing on those savings.

Joseph Stiglitz is a very respected economist. His research has demonstrated that this zero interest rate and quantitative easing—as it is described, this Fed monetary policy—has contributed significantly to expanding income and wealth inequality. It is not a surprise.

This Fed policy has been very good for stocks. Stock prices have gone up, generally. It has been terrible for people with a bank account. While wealthy people have a lot of money in stocks, people of much more modest means tend to have more of their money sitting in a savings account which, as I have just described, earned zero. So the income inequality problem is exacerbated.

In addition, what the Fed has been doing is encouraging fiscal irresponsibility in Washington. What the heck, borrowing is free, which it basically has been for the Federal Government. Why not run big deficits and borrow lots of money? That is an attitude that some people have. It frankly diminishes the pressure on Congress to pursue sensible and responsible monetary policy. When the Fed is willing to just buy up all the debt and buy it at an extremely low interest rate, it encourages irresponsible behavior.

Now, of course, because the Federal Government has accumulated this \$18 trillion mountain of debt, if and when interest rates return to something like normal—which one day they will, whether the Fed likes it or not—then that is a devastating problem for our budget outlook.

So all of this is particularly disturbing to me when you consider that this massive creation of money, this flooding the world with dollars that the Fed has engaged in, does not create wealth. It is the difference between money and wealth.

So some people might feel wealthier when they see stock prices rise if they have stocks, but that can be a very artificial phenomenon. It is an inflation in asset prices. It is not an improvement in productivity. It is not an expansion in our economic output. It is not actual wealth. It is numbers on a piece of paper.

Of course, what the Fed is able to inflate in this artificial means by creating lots of money, well, that can eventually deflate. Whatever good they think they were accomplishing on the way up, why should we think we couldn't see the reverse on the way back down? This is what I think is the fundamental problem. The fact is, we have factors that are holding back our economy that are very real and very important, and the Fed's monetary policy can't correct that.

We have a Tax Code that is completely uncompetitive. It discourages work. It discourages savings. It discourages investment. It makes us less competitive in countries around the

world that have more sensible tax codes than we have. We need to fix the Tax Code. Monetary policy cannot make up for a badly flawed Tax Code.

We have unsustainable entitlement programs. They are the ultimate drivers of large and growing deficits, and we will not be on a sustainable path until we fix these programs, and monetary policy can't make up for the cloud they cast over our economy. We have a declining percentage of Americans who are participating in the workforce. This is a huge problem for us. Again, monetary policy does nothing about that.

Finally, we have been overregulating this economy on a completely unprecedented scale. The massive wave of overregulation that this administration, and on some occasions Congress, has inflicted on our economy clearly contributes a great deal to the subpar economic growth we have been living through. Again, monetary policy doesn't reverse that. It doesn't change that. It seems to me that, despite all their good intentions, their intentions themselves were flawed in that the Fed seems to be trying to compensate for the flawed policy in these other areas.

Given the magnitude, the persistence, and the dangers of pursuing this kind of monetary policy, I think it is time that Congress reassert its authority over monetary affairs. The Constitution clearly gives Congress the responsibility to mint coins and to print money. In 1914, Congress delegated the management of our currency to the Fed. For a long time there was a sense that we ought to just leave them to their own devices and not pay very much attention. I think those days are past. I think the Fed's behavior obligates us to take a different approach.

One good beginning step is the legislation we are considering today, which would audit the Fed. All it really does is give Congress and the American people the opportunity to examine and understand the mechanics and the thinking behind changes in monetary policy in something close to real time. I think we absolutely need that. I will say that I was a skeptic about this for a long time. I thought: I am not so sure it is such a good idea to have Congress looking over the shoulders of the folks making monetary policy. But I think the dangerous behavior that the Fed has engaged in for years now means they have squandered the right to be independent. We need to have more supervision.

A next step which I think would be very important is for Congress to require the Fed to adopt a rule that would govern monetary policy. If we let the Fed decide what that rule should be and if circumstances require it, in the opinion of the Fed, they ought to be able to deviate from that rule. But they should come and explain to the American people and to Congress when and why they are deviating, rather than have year after year of this bizarre, unnatural policy that is very hard to explain and understand.

So I am going to support the legislation we are considering this afternoon, the audit the fed bill. It is one of many important steps we can take to restore the accountability that the Fed ought to have. It is important that we get on a different path with our monetary policy. I understand it is not going to occur overnight, and it is not going to occur entirely as a result of this legislation. But this policy has been going on too long, and it is time for Congress to reassert its authority.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. HELLER. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to offer my strong support for the legislation we are debating today that would finally audit the Federal Reserve.

Since I came to Congress, I have supported auditing the Fed. When I was first elected to the House of Representatives, I would attend briefings hosted by Congressman Ron Paul, Senator PAUL's father, and I learned why more accountability and transparency was needed at the Fed.

I remember talking to Congressman Paul on the House floor about various issues at the Fed, and that is when I started to support this bill to audit the Fed, just as I am supporting his son's bill today. I thank Senator PAUL for continuing to take up this cause and for building the momentum to audit the Fed that has led us to where we are today.

Since its founding, the Federal Reserve has often operated in secrecy, even though it is the biggest influence on our country's economy. The Fed's actions affect every American family and their hard-earned income. I am fortunate to be chairman of the Economic Policy Subcommittee on the Senate banking committee, where I have direct oversight over the Federal Reserve's monetary policies. I can say that the Federal Reserve's actions warrant passage of this legislation. For several years we have seen unprecedented monetary and regulatory policies come from the Fed. One of the riskiest policies I have ever seen is the Fed's stimulus program of quantitative easing. The Federal Reserve essentially turned on their computers, fired up their electronic printing presses, created new money out of thin air, and started to buy assets.

Now, we may ask ourselves this: How big is this stimulus program? It is an unbelievable number. As of today, it is nearly \$4.5 trillion. Let me say that again: \$4.5 trillion. And that is with a "t." That is more than four times the cost of President Obama's own failed stimulus program. And who has benefited from this quantitative easing? I can tell you in two words: It is Wall Street. That is right. Wall Street hit the jackpot because the Fed's easy money policies drove everybody into the equities market to get any return they possibly could on their investments. Wall Street won, and Main Street, savers, and workers lost.

The scary part is the Fed won't rule out buying more assets in the future. If we ask the Fed today when or how they would begin to reduce their \$4.5 trillion balance sheet, there is nothing but silence. Is that being transparent? Is that accountability? No, absolutely not. This is just one of the reasons why we must pass this bill to audit the Fed.

I find it ironic that the Federal Reserve is so opposed to being audited, because they themselves go around auditing lending institutions all the time. I frequently hear from community lenders in Nevada who have either the Federal Reserve, the FDIC, the National Credit Union Administration or the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau knocking on their door all the time. These community lenders have not caused the financial crisis, yet they are the ones feeling the brunt of all these audits. Why should there be a double standard that government agencies can examine every American's bank account but the American public can't examine those same agencies back? Again, this is why we must pass this legislation to audit the Fed.

I remind my colleagues that even though most of the news about the Fed revolves around interest rates and the Fed's monetary policy, the Fed is also responsible for major regulations that touch on almost every aspect of our financial system. Now, I support reasonable regulations, but only after thoughtful and careful evaluations. I think it should be mandated that the Fed conduct a cost-benefit analysis of all their proposed regulations and always allow for public comment on proposed regulations.

I am also very concerned that the Fed is getting involved in financial sectors in which they have not been in the past. We have a long tradition here in the United States of having a time-tested and effective State-based insurance regulatory system. Unfortunately, Dodd-Frank has changed all that, and now the Federal Reserve has new authorities over the insurance sector.

Right now, as we speak, the Fed is attempting to regulate capital standard requirements for insurance companies in the United States. This will be the first time the Federal Government imposes domestic Federal capital standards on the State-regulated insurance industry.

I worked very hard to ensure bank-centric standards are not inappropriately applied to the insurance industry by the Fed. But not only does the Fed want to add their own domestic layer of rules on top of State-based insurance regulations, they even want another layer of one-size-fits-all international capital standards on top of that. I almost have to laugh, because it is only in Washington, DC, where a Federal agency can put the trailer in front of the truck.

Unfortunately, that is exactly what the Fed is doing by working on international capital standards before they

complete their own domestic standards. I have serious concerns about these international efforts. Together with Senator TESTER of Montana, we introduced the bipartisan International Insurance Capital Standards Accountability Act, which would compel the Federal Reserve and the Treasury Department to complete a study on consumers and markets in the United States before supporting any international insurance proposal or international insurance capital standard.

These are just a few of the examples of some of the Fed's questionable actions. As I said earlier, this legislation to audit the Fed is critical to bring transparency and accountability to the Fed, but even more fundamental changes need to be made.

A few months ago, Chairman SHELBY put together an impressive bill that the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee passed with my support, which would make important reforms to the Fed. One provision would establish a commission to study the potential restructuring of the districts in the Federal Reserve System. Chairman SHELBY's bill would also require the Fed's Federal Open Market Committee to make more frequent and detailed reporting requirements to Congress and to increase transparency by reducing the time lag for Federal Open Market Committee transcripts from 5 years to 3 years. These are very reasonable changes that I think Democrats and Republicans alike can support, and I hope that Chairman SHELBY's bill will be brought to the Senate floor soon.

The Federal Reserve recently celebrated its 100th anniversary, and in many aspects the Fed has not changed much since Woodrow Wilson's time. As most of us know, a few months ago we cut a very specific dividend that banks receive for buying stock of the Federal Reserve System in order to pay for the highway bill. While the debate mostly centered on how to cut the dividend, I was trying to figure out why the Federal Reserve requires banks to buy these so-called stocks to begin with. After all, it doesn't look like the Fed is in desperate need of funds, because over the past half dozen years the Fed has sent nearly half a trillion dollars of profits to the U.S. Treasury.

One hundred years ago, these stock purchases and dividends were meant to incentivize banks to join the Federal Reserve System. Since that time, laws have been passed that essentially don't give a bank the choice as to whether or not they want to be supervised by the Federal Reserve System because, by law, the Fed has gained authority over all banks that are eligible for FDIC insurance. Just because something was standard practice over 100 years ago does not mean it is still needed today. I think it is time to review and examine these Federal Reserve membership requirements even further.

My colleagues, it is essential that Congress exercise its constitutional re-

sponsibility to conduct oversight and scrutinize of the Federal Reserve in an open and transparent way, which is why I will proudly vote today to move forward with auditing the Fed, and I encourage my colleagues to join me.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I rise today to speak in opposition to S. 2232, the Federal Reserve Transparency Act. I am concerned that, out of all the issues before the Senate and out of all the issues we need to work on—in terms of growth, in terms of ISIS, in terms of wage inequality, in terms of transportation, and so many other issues—this is the first bill the Senate considers at the beginning of the year.

I will talk for a moment about the direction in which we should go, but I want to talk about this issue. There are so many issues we are not talking about—national security, job creation, college affordability, student debt, and immigration.

In my time in Ohio over the past several weeks, people talked to me about all kinds of different issues that Congress should be addressing. But it, frankly, comes as no surprise to anybody watching or any of my colleagues that not one person came up to me and said: "Congress needs a greater say in monetary policy." There is no demand for that, except from those who want to score political points. There is no reason for this. There is no legitimate public function that we should even do this legislation, the Federal Reserve Transparency Act. And don't be fooled by the name of the bill because it really isn't about transparency. It is about the Federal Reserve but not about transparency. But let me move on.

Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen recently wrote to Senate leaders, copying all of us in the Senate, and spoke to the central problem with this legislation:

This bill risks undoing the steady progress that has been made on the economic recovery over recent years in an environment with low and stable inflation expectations; progress that was made in part because the Federal Reserve is able to make independent decisions in the longer-term economic interest of the American people.

"Audit the Fed" legislation, if enacted, would undermine the independence of the Federal Reserve and likely lead to an increase in inflation fears and market interest rates, a diminished status of the dollar in global financial markets, increased debt service costs for the federal government, and reduced economic and financial stability.

Janet Yellen is exactly right. This legislation is about 535 Members of Congress getting involved in Federal monetary policy. I can't imagine that the American people want a Federal Reserve where Congress is so involved that it is disruptive and where it becomes so political. That is really what this is all about. It is about a handful of Members of the House and Senate who want to govern monetary policy in a way so that it ultimately won't work

in the public interest. It is about their political talking points. It is about all of that.

Let's go back. When President Obama took office—you will hear about this in tonight's speech, I assume, down the hall in the House of Representatives—our country was losing about 800,000 jobs a month when he took office. In February 2010, we did the Recovery Act and the auto rescue. Since February 2010, we have seen job growth for about 69, 70, 71 straight months since the auto rescue. I know what the auto rescue meant in my State. I know we see an auto industry that is doing very well and we see a lot more people back to work.

Supporters of auditing the Fed claim they want to make the Fed's operations and activities more transparent. We know that is not what this is about. In a statement in July, the Senate banking committee chairman—the Republican chair of the committee, RICHARD SHELBY, hit the nail on the head. Here is what he said:

A lot of people called for an audit of the Fed for years, but they already audit the Fed for years . . . I don't believe they're just talking about an audit, like you'd audit the books of somebody—they're talking about monetary policy. They're talking about . . . 435 members of the House and 100 Senators getting into the day-to-day business of the monetary policy of the Fed. We created the Fed, Congress did, to get politics as far as we could out of it. I don't believe we need politics back in it.

Chairman SHELBY is right. We don't need 535 Members of Congress on the Federal Open Market Committee. One of the most important components we need for sound monetary decision-making policy is political independence.

Senator PAUL—the sponsor of this—argues that we need to understand the "extent of the Fed's balance sheet."

Congress already requires the Federal Reserve to have its financial statements audited every year by an external auditor, someone who is outside, independent of all matters relating to the Fed. The Fed releases a quarterly report presenting detailed information on the Fed's balance sheet and information on the combined financial position and results of operations of the Federal Reserve Banks. That report is released to Congress. The report is available to the public on the Fed's Web site. Anyone can go to federalreserve.gov right now and read it.

Each week the Fed publishes its balance sheet and charts of recent balance sheet trends. There are legitimate criticisms of the Federal Reserve. There always have been. There probably always will be because of its reach and complexity, but since the crisis the Fed has gotten better. It has gotten better in part because of the last two Chairs of the Federal Reserve—Ben Bernanke, a Bush appointee and then an Obama nominee the second time, and with Janet Yellen, an Obama

nominee. Since the crisis, the Government Accountability Office has conducted over 100 audits of the Federal Reserve's activities. Many of these audits relate to the financial crisis, including the Fed's emergency lending activities. There is more and there should be more.

The Fed is transparent and accountable in the following ways. Let me list them again. This is not an out-and-out defense of the Fed. They should be open to criticism. There is still much to criticize about them, but this legislation solves nothing, except to politicize the Fed. These are the ways the Fed is transparent and accountable: The Chair of the Federal Reserve is required to testify before the Senate Banking Committee and the House Financial Services Committee twice a year on monetary policy. In practice, she will testify at additional hearings and other topics. The Governors of the Federal Reserve and senior staff—that is, others of the nine members of the Federal Reserve—testify dozens more times every year.

The Fed releases a statement after each Federal Open Market Committee meeting to describe the FOMC's decisions and the reasoning behind those decisions. The Chair holds press conferences four times a year after FOMC meetings. Minutes of FOMC meetings are released 3 weeks after each meeting and are available on the Federal Reserve's Web site. Transcripts of FOMC meetings are released earlier than before—5 years after each meeting and are available on the Fed's Web site. That is much earlier than most other central banks release transcripts, for obvious reasons.

Summaries of the economic forecasts of FOMC participants, including their projections for the most likely path of the Federal funds rate, are released quarterly. The Board's Office of the Inspector General audits and investigates all of the Fed's Board and Reserve bank programs, operations, and functions. These completed audits, assessments, and reviews are listed in the Federal Reserve Board's annual report.

The Fed releases detailed transaction-level data on the discount window lending and open market operations. This is relatively new. This was required by the Dodd-Frank Wall Street reform law. Clearly, Congress knew the Fed was not as responsible and open as it should be. One of the things we did in Dodd-Frank was this reform. All securities that the Fed holds are published on the Federal Reserve Bank of New York's Web site.

The New York Fed, the most important district regional Federal Reserve—there are 12 of them, including one in the city I live in, Cleveland. The New York Fed is the most important for a number of reasons. It publishes an annual report of the system open market account that includes a detailed summary of open market operations over the year, and it includes balance sheet and income projections. I would

add, this Chair of the Federal Reserve is more open to the public. This Chair of the Federal Reserve is out and about the country, as was her predecessor, Chairman Bernanke, and Chair Yellen even more so. She was in Cleveland not too long ago last summer making a speech to the City Club of Cleveland. Afterward she and I went to visit a large Cleveland national manufacturer with a large site in Cleveland so she could see the real economy, talk to workers, and see how important manufacturing is, especially in the middle of the country, to all things Federal Reserve.

I wonder how many of those claiming the Fed is not transparent have actually taken the time to read some of these reports I mentioned—whether it is the annual report, whether it is some of the audits, whether it is some of the transcripts of FOMC, and I wonder if they have listened to very many of these hours of testimony from Chair Yellen or from Governor Tarullo, Governor Powell or others on the Federal Reserve. The Fed is far from perfect. I have been one of its major critics in this body, as the ranking Democrat on banking, but I argued, for instance, that it should be a stronger regulator of the Nation's large bank holding companies. I appreciate what it is doing with living wills. I think that is very important. I especially appreciate what the Fed has done for stronger capital standards. To me, that is the most important thing we can do. It is more important than reinstatement of Glass-Steagall, more important than my amendment of 5 years ago to break up the largest banks, making sure banks have significant enough capital to make the system safer and sounder, but it is hard to dispute that this Fed is one of the most transparent central banks in the world.

What is this truly all about? I know some of people are unhappy about decisions the Federal Reserve made during the financial crisis, including holding interest rates near zero for 7 years. They want to show their anger at the Fed by taking away independence, but without the Fed's extraordinary monetary policy actions, which might not have been possible if its actions were micromanaged by Congress, our economy would likely be in a far worse situation today.

Several months ago I was asked by C-SPAN to interview Chairman Bernanke on one of its shows called "After Words." We sat for an hour at a studio in Washington and discussed the memoir that Chairman Bernanke began to write on the day he left the Federal Reserve a couple of years ago. It was clear then that because Congress had pursued, in terms of fiscal policy, such austerity, he saw the economic growth that had started with the auto rescue and the Recovery Act, he saw that economic growth—immobilized is perhaps not the right word, but he saw that economic growth stall. He knew, because Congress was starting to

squeeze the economy at that point with the wrong kind of fiscal policy, that he had to make up for it by low interest rates and ultimately by quantitative easing, which is what he did. So understanding that he knew he would offend some Members of Congress with that action, he also understood that because he was independent, he could do the kinds of things, as Chair Yellen has been able to do, to get this economy growing. Hence, in large part because of QE that the Federal Reserve has done through the last two Chairs of the Federal Reserve—one a Republican appointee and one a Democratic appointee—the Fed has been independent enough to do the right thing.

Inflation remains low. We have something called a dual mandate, where the Federal Reserve is responsible for working to keep inflation at no more than 2 percent and unemployment at no more than 5 percent. The Fed has balanced that well. Inflation remains low, despite the doomsday prediction by many of this bill's proponents. We know our economy still has a way to go and that too many Americans are struggling, but it is clear that an increase in interest rates before last month would have been premature and would have been harmful to working Americans. If Congress were involved in that, in the way that the sponsor of this bill seems to want, our economy would be in much worse shape. I don't think there is much question about that.

Audit the Fed legislation, there is also a backdoor, piecemeal way of instituting something called the Taylor rule, which is an attempt to impose a monetary policy role on the Fed. To me, this is the heart of this legislation that when they look at the dual mandate, they think way more about inflation, which is what the bondholders of Wall Street want them to do, and way less about fiscal policy and way less about low interest rates and way less about employment. The dual mandate is inflation and employment.

If you lean far too much toward inflation, which is what Wall Street wants, then people on Main Street are left out. Frankly, that has been the story of the Fed for far too many years. That is why what Chairman Bernanke did and what Chairwoman Yellen have done is so important, but if the audit the Fed sponsors have their way, we will see some kind of Taylor rule.

In November, House Republicans passed a Federal Reserve reform bill that imposes the Taylor rule. The enforcement mechanism? GAO reviews, audits, and reports. Is there any doubt that this is where the audit the Fed effort is headed next?

I urge my colleagues to vote no this afternoon. This vote will take place in a couple of hours. It is in the interests of all of us to understand the role, the operations, and the activities of the Federal Reserve. We can do that better

in this body. This is not the way to do it. We can do it better. It is also in the interest of the American economy for Congress to keep its political hands, if you will, out of monetary policy decisionmaking.

If Republicans were serious about making the Fed work better, they would confirm the two pending nominees to the Board of Governors—a Republican community banker named Al Landon, who has been waiting for a nomination hearing for a year, and Kathryn Dominguez, a Democratic nominee, who has been waiting for nearly 6 months. Yet, instead of working to improve the Fed's operations, we are considering this bill to undermine it. It is a big mistake that most people I know who have any expertise in the Federal Reserve reject. I ask my colleagues to vote no.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican whip.

THE PRESIDENT'S STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, tonight the President of the United States will offer his last State of the Union speech and one that I know we will all be listening carefully to. I couldn't help but reflect on the first speech he gave to a joint session of Congress back in 2009, shortly after his inauguration. It was a hopeful speech, it was an optimistic speech—one that appealed to the better angels of Republicans and Democrats and the whole Nation alike. He said we needed to pull together and boldly confront the challenges we face, but somewhere along the way he seems to have forgotten the benefit of finding common ground where folks can agree. It seems we have seen the Obama administration more involved in dividing the American people when facing opposition and then preferring to go it alone rather than to work with Congress under the constitutional scheme created by our Founding Fathers.

Tonight in his final address on his priorities as President, I am sure President Obama will want to talk about what his legacy looks like once he leaves office, and that will invariably include times when he has simply done an end run around Congress. We have seen it time and time again. It is a mistake. It is shortsighted, but it is his method of governing and presumably being able to tell people: Well, I have gotten my way and I haven't had to do the hard work of working with people of different points of view to find the areas where we agree.

I have said it before, but I think it is worth noting the comment by the senior Senator from Wyoming, when I said to him: You are on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions with Teddy Kennedy, the liberal lion of the Senate, whom I served with for a while before he unfortunately passed away. How is it that you are able to work with somebody whose world view is so opposite from yours and you are still able to ac-

tually get things done? To this he replied: It is simple. It is the 80-20 rule. We look at the 80 percent of things we can agree upon, and we do those and forget the 20 percent we can't agree on.

I fear that our country and the Congress has become a Congress that looks at the 20 percent we can't agree on and as a result can't do the 80 percent that we do agree on because we disagree on the 20 percent, and that is a mistake. It is also not the scheme of government that was created by America and our Constitution, and it would be a mistake to do nothing because we can't agree on the 20 percent when we can agree on the 80 percent.

I know there are some areas where we are going to have a fundamental disagreement, and we are going to continue to fight and oppose each other's points of view, but I have been around here long enough to know that there are people of goodwill on both sides of the aisle, some of whom I disagree with strenuously, but by working together, we can find ways to solve problems and help move the country's agenda forward. But somewhere along the way, the President forgot that, and so I suspect he will be talking about some of his Executive orders, which have been a terrible mistake.

First of all, on his Executive order for immigration, there was a lawsuit. A Federal judge issued an injunction, which has been upheld so far. It bars implementation of his Executive order. So what did the President accomplish other than to enrage and polarize people and poison the well when it comes to actually trying to begin the process of solving and fixing some of our broken immigration system? The President has poisoned the well and made it virtually impossible for us to work with him on solving or fixing our broken immigration system because of what? Because of an Executive order that was subsequently enjoined by a Federal court. So he wasn't able to accomplish his goal, but he was able to kill meaningful immigration reform debate in the Senate.

Of course, as we have on the Iranian nuclear negotiation, the President seems content not to engage in a treaty process, which is actually binding on his successor. It is simply a political document which is not even in writing. It tries to freeze out the American people, whom we represent, and the sort of educational and consensus-building process that is good for our country. I mean, that is how we have become unified as a country—by looking at the things we can work together on and not just focusing on our differences. If we are just going to focus on our differences, we are never going to get anything done. There are some people who may be OK with that, but, frankly, I think the American people voted for Republicans and a new leadership in the last election not because they didn't want to get anything done, but because they wanted to give us the responsibility for setting the agenda and

doing the things that were their priorities, which doesn't entail doing nothing. That entails doing those things that reflect the priorities of the American people and by working together where we can.

Nobody here is a dictator, not even the President of the United States. It is shortsighted. It is a mistake, and it is in contravention of the whole constitutional framework that was set up 230-something years ago.

We saw it most recently on the President's announcement on gun issues where he, again, ignored Congress and said: Well, I am going to do it my way. Maybe he is impatient. Maybe he doesn't believe in consensus building. Maybe he just doesn't like his job very much. Sometimes I think that is true. Temperamentally, I think the President may not be suited for the kind of consensus building and legislative process that is necessary to actually get important things done.

I was thinking, as we were celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act a short time back, do you actually think we could do something like that, given this polarized political environment and a President unwilling to work with Congress? I would say Lyndon Baines Johnson was a lot of things, but he knew how to get things done. He was the antithesis of this President when it came to rolling up his sleeves and working with Congress and people with different points of view and actually trying to find the possible and the doable—not to focus on failure but to focus on where we can make progress.

Unfortunately, as a result, I think the President's legacy is going to be discussed in a way that he probably isn't going to fully appreciate.

I was reading the Wall Street Journal this morning and was reminded of how his political legacy will be remembered. Since President Obama took office, his party has lost 13 Senate seats, 69 House seats, 910 State legislative seats, and has lost majority party status in 30 State legislatures. Those are amazing statistics, given that the President came out of the starting gate so strong. Unfortunately, he used his political capital by passing legislation like ObamaCare with just Democratic votes. That is not a way to build durable or sustainable policy or to build consensus. That is a way of jamming it down the throat of the minority party and then saying: Well, you are just going to have to live with it. Well, that is not the case.

As we reflected on the recent vote we had on appealing ObamaCare, which the President vetoed, we have the political will and votes to change that ill-considered and misguided health care law and to replace it with something that makes more sense, is more affordable, and suits the needs of individual Americans. What we do need is a new President, and I think we have demonstrated that.

If you look at item after item and our struggling economy—after the terrible events of 2008, I admit the President had a tough hand because America's economy cratered, and we went into a recession. Typically what economists will tell us—and I take some of my economic advice from former Senator Phil Gramm who is a Ph.D. economist. He wrote in the *Wall Street Journal*, or maybe it was the *Washington Post*, that following recessions, typically what you have is a v-shaped bounce of the economy. But what we have had under this President's policy—because of overregulation and political uncertainty, just because of his unwillingness to work to build consensus to get things done, we have seen an economy struggling to recover with stagnant wages and slow economic growth.

Then there is the issue of foreign policy. I just had the privilege of meeting with a group of people, including the King of Jordan, where we talked about the battle against the Islamic State and Syria, which is right outside the King's back door, and the work they have been doing with us to try and deal with the Russians that are taking advantage of the chaos. There is a lack of a master strategy or plan to deal with this threat. It is not just a threat over there, as we have learned; it is a threat over here because of the use of social media and the ability to radicalize people who live in the United States and convince them to commit acts of violence right here in our country. So we have a mess in Syria and no real strategy to fight ISIL.

I mentioned ObamaCare just a few moments ago because I can't help but remember when the President was selling ObamaCare and jammed it through on a purely partisan vote. I remember he said: If you like what you have, you can keep it. Well, that was not true. I was a former attorney general in Texas. We had a consumer protection division that sued people for consumer fraud. When people are lied to about what it is they are going to get in exchange for their hard-earned money and they don't get it because they have been deceived, that usually ends up in court, and you end up getting sued. Well, we know that premiums didn't come down an average of \$2,500 for a family of four. Instead, they skyrocketed. And we have been reading stories in the press which show that a lot of younger people who need to be part of the pool in order to keep rates down—because, frankly, you need young, healthy people as part of that insurance pool to hold down rates for the whole country—didn't buy it because they don't think it suits their needs, and it is it too expensive. They are being forced to buy coverage that they can't use.

I say all of this because I think in some ways the President has squandered his mandate when he was elected. I remember in 2008 when the President talked about hope and change. I wasn't

quite sure what he meant, but we all agree that hope is a good thing, and frequently change is a good thing. We were hopeful for the new President—the first African-American President elected in American history. It was a very positive thing for so many of us. It represented a huge transition for a country that unfortunately committed the original sin of treating African-Americans as less than fully human, and we paid a terrible price for it, and we continue to pay a terrible price. But I was hopeful, like many others were, that he would actually use his position as President to bring people together and work with us.

I will tell you that I am an optimistic person, and so despite the last 7 years, I hope the President talks tonight about what he plans to do in his last year in office. He still has one full year left in his two terms, or 8 years, in office. He has a choice to make, just as we all have choices to make. The President can decide to double down on his go-it-alone strategy, which has proved to be a disaster. It doesn't work. It is not enduring, and it polarizes the political parties and the American people. I think, actually, the way this President has chosen to govern is more responsible for the polarization we see among the American people when it comes to politics and some of the sorts of craziness of our current political process, which we all talk about privately. I think he is actually largely responsible for that—maybe not entirely, but largely.

The President can decide whether he actually wants to do something during his last year in office. He can actually want to try to work with Congress.

I will suggest an area where we can find common ground and work together, and that is by reforming our criminal justice system. Actually, I have been involved for several years, as have many Members on the Democratic and Republican side, on looking at our criminal justice system and saying: How can we do better?

For example, for too long we have treated our prison system at the State and Federal levels as a warehouse for people, and we have forgotten some of the basic tenets of the goals of the criminal justice system, which is to rehabilitate people. You can't rehabilitate everybody. You have to have a willing heart, and you have to have people willing to change and take advantage of an opportunity to turn their lives around. There are people like that, and we have demonstrated that in many of our State penal systems, such as Texas, where we have seen that if you provide the right incentives, people will take advantage of opportunities to turn their lives around and deal with their addictions, lack of education, and lack of skills so they no longer have to live a life—as one person in Houston told me. He called himself a frequent flier in the criminal justice system. Every time he got out, he ended up coming back, until he finally

took advantage of the opportunity to turn his life around. So we do have legislation that passed out of the Senate Judiciary Committee 15 to 5.

There are some things we still need to continue to work on with our colleagues. But I think it represents a great opportunity—something the President himself has said he wants to see us do—and I think it could be a genuine legacy item for him and something that offers hope to people without much hope. It is also good for the taxpayers. We have actually been able to shutter three different penitentiaries in Texas and save the taxpayers billions of dollars, so it strikes me that it is a win across the board. So I think reforming our criminal justice system is a great opportunity.

I also believe, as I mentioned yesterday when I spoke on the floor, that addressing our broken mental health system is another area that we could deal with productively on a bipartisan basis and that could be a legacy of this President and certainly of this Congress.

We know our mental health delivery system is broken. All we have to do is look at people living on our streets, homeless people. These people frequent our emergency rooms because they have various medical conditions, but because of their mental illness, they never get the treatment they need, so they go in and out of that turnstile.

We also know that some people tragically become a danger not only to themselves but to their loved ones and the communities where they live. I know it is a simple fact borne out by public opinion polls that most people understand that some of the acts—not all but some of the acts—in fact, public opinion in the polling I have seen said that 70 percent of respondents in public opinion polls said that mental illness is a factor in incidents of mass violence, including shootings in places such as Sandy Hook; Aurora, CO; Charleston; and others. We can name those incidents and those tragic circumstances, but until we get serious about working together to try to improve access to mental health services and give families the additional tools they need in order to get their loved ones compliant with their doctor's orders and their medication, we are never going to be able to make progress in this area.

I think about Adam Lanza, the shooter at Sandy Hook, who stole his mother's own gun, killed her with it, and then went on to that elementary school and killed those poor, innocent children—a horrific tragedy. But Adam Lanza's mother knew he was sick. She knew he was basically living downstairs and descending into his mental illness and getting sicker and sicker. She didn't have much in the way of options, so she tried to find common ground with him and work with him, but obviously that wasn't enough to overcome his mental illness. If we could just do some simple things, such as provide outpatient, court-ordered

mental health treatment—that is something that is included in a piece of legislation on which we will be having a hearing in the Senate Judiciary Committee. That will provide families additional tools other than involuntary commitment, which is just temporary and doesn't serve the long-term problems.

One of the biggest problems, I have learned, with our mental health system is that so often people who need treatment refuse treatment. In other words, frequently they don't take their medication. As long as it is purely a voluntary matter, particularly for people who are a threat to their own safety as well as the community's safety, then we are going to continue to see repetitions of this and more and more tragedies, more families torn apart by mental illness, when we could actually offer them some help and some hope.

There is a gentleman named Pete Earley who is an award-winning journalist who wrote a book called "Crazy." This is not about his son, although his son did suffer from mental illness; this is about our broken mental health system. He called it "Crazy." He wrote a book, which I would commend to anybody, about his own family's experience dealing with a mentally ill son and how hard it was to get him to comply with his doctor's orders and take his medication and the like.

I hope Pete Earley will come testify in front of the Senate Judiciary Committee later this month, along with some really innovative programs like those in San Antonio, TX, where they found a way to not just warehouse the mentally ill in our jails but to actually divert them for treatment and to get them in a better place and out of this turnstile of the criminal justice system.

So those are just a couple of ideas about what this President could do, and I hope they are areas he will perhaps address tonight that he would be willing to work with us on: criminal justice reform and mental health reform. I think if he were willing to do that, he would find Republicans and Democrats alike willing to work with him to try to build that common-ground consensus, and actually that would be one of the lasting legacies of his final year of his administration.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DAINES). The Senator from Iowa.

Mrs. ERNST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 10 minutes in morning business.

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

SCRUB ACT

Mrs. ERNST. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about the Searching for and Cutting Regulations that are Unnecessarily Burdensome Act—more affectionately known as the SCRUB Act. This past summer, my colleague Senator HATCH and I introduced this legis-

lation to help free American families and small businesses from the unnecessary burdens of our regulatory system. I am pleased to mention that the bill passed the House last week on a bipartisan basis.

For too long, our Nation's innovators and employers have been trying to comply with a swath of outdated, duplicative, or obsolete regulations that hamper their growth and creativity. Many of these regulations also come with stacks of paperwork requirements that force our small businesses to spend time on filling in the blanks rather than filling in jobs. The SCRUB Act would peel back these types of regulations so our businesses can focus on doing what they know best: innovating and creating jobs.

The purpose of this bill is to take an objective and in-depth look at major regulations that are at least 15 years old and could be repealed because they have, No. 1, achieved their goal and there is no threat to the problem reoccurring; No. 2, technology or market changes have made the regulation unnecessary; or No. 3, they are ineffective or overlap with other Federal or State regulations.

For decades, lawmakers and Presidents on both sides of the aisle have recognized the need to unleash our small businesses and job creators from rules and regulations that don't make sense. When new rules are proposed, there is very little, if any, attention paid to how the new rule will work with the hundreds of other rules that came before it. This buildup of rules is a cumulative burden on our businesses which ultimately slows job growth and hits families even harder who are already struggling to make ends meet. In fact, according to one study, if the cost of all of these regulations was considered in an independent country—all of the costs of these rules and regulations—it would be about the 10th largest economy in the world.

Let's face it: The more expensive it becomes to make a product or deliver a service, the more money the consumer will have to dig out of their own pockets to pay for it. It is those families who are working multiple jobs to provide for their kids who are going to be hit the hardest.

This bill is how we start to solve that problem. The SCRUB Act establishes a bipartisan, blue ribbon commission to give a fair and thoughtful review of our Nation's existing regulations. Once the commission is finished with their review, they would provide recommendations to Congress and we would have an opportunity to vote on them.

If an agency wants to impose a new regulation, they can do that under the SCRUB Act, but they would have to offset the cost of that new regulation by repealing an existing one that is of equal cost and has been deemed unnecessary or outdated by the commission.

I know Iowa families do this. They know how to prioritize. Why can't our Federal agencies? We simply cannot

allow the buildup of unnecessary and costly regulations over time.

I will end with just one last comment. Rules and regulations often have unintended consequences. It is our responsibility as lawmakers to not only recognize when this happens but to then proactively fix it.

The SCRUB Act is a commonsense solution that forces lawmakers and our agencies to be honest about their regulatory system by fixing the rules that need fixing and dropping those that have outlived their useful purpose.

I thank Senator HATCH for his leadership on this, and I urge all of my colleagues to support this legislation.

RECESS

Mrs. ERNST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess as under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 12:27 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PORTMAN).

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

FEDERAL RESERVE TRANSPARENCY ACT OF 2015—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 2232, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 289, S. 2232, a bill to require a full audit of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System and the Federal reserve banks by the Comptroller General of the United States, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 2:30 p.m. will be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, I rise today in opposition to secrecy. I rise today in support of auditing the Federal Reserve. I rise in opposition to the lack of accountability at the Reserve, an institution that has for too long been shrouded in secrecy. The objective of the Federal Reserve Transparency Act is simple: to protect the interests of the average American by finding out where hundreds of billions' worth of our dollars are going.

The Federal Reserve has the ability to create new money and to spend it on whatever financial assets it wants, whenever it wants, while giving the new money to whichever banks it wants. Yet if the average Joe and Jane from Main Street printed their own money, they would be imprisoned as counterfeiters.

Nowhere else but in Washington, DC, would you find an institution with so much unchecked power. Creating new money naturally lowers interest rates, or the price of using money. Put another way, the Federal Reserve's unchecked printing press creates a price control on the cost of using money.

Throughout our country's history, price controls have never worked, and the Fed's price control on interest rates has also not worked. Think back to the housing bubble. Artificially low interest rates led to many individuals buying, selling, and investing in the housing industry. This in turn led prices to soar, which ultimately led the economy to spiral down to the great recession of 2008.

Since the 2008 financial crisis, the Fed has increased its balance sheet from less than \$1 trillion to over \$4 trillion. Although the Fed has created trillions of new dollars, it has become apparent that most of this money is not finding its way into the hands of average Americans. From 2009 to 2012, the incomes of the top 1 percent increased by a whopping 31 percent, while everyone else's income increased by only 0.4 percent. The reason for this is simple: Big banks, corporations, and government entities receive the Federal Reserve's money long before anyone else, and they bid up the price of assets before any of the rest of us can get to purchase them.

Former Federal Reserve Governor Kevin Warsh once referred to the Fed's easy-money policies as the reverse Robin Hood effect. "If you have access to credit—if you've got a big balance sheet—the Fed has made you richer," he said in an interview. "This is a way to make the well-to-do even more well-to-do."

The side effect of this uneven distribution of money is painfully apparent to anyone who shops at a grocery store. Over the past 15 years, the price of white bread has increased by over 50 percent, while the price of eggs has more than doubled. The cost of housing has also appreciated significantly in many areas. When adjusting for inflation, the price of housing in San Francisco has increased by 58 percent over just 25 years.

Real household income for regular Americans has declined 10 percent over the past 15 years. Higher rent and higher grocery bills cause low-income workers to incur more loans and credit card debt, which involve far higher interest rates than what the banks and Wall Street are currently paying. These low-income workers do not get the luxury of receiving the Fed's newly created money first, nor do they have the luxury of receiving the near-zero interest rates the wealthy do. As a result, one thing is for certain: The Fed's price control on interest rates acts as a hidden tax on the less well-to-do.

The Fed also exacerbates income inequality by paying large commercial banks \$12 billion in interest. This is a departure from nearly a century of

practice. While individual savers earn practically no interest, the big banks are given \$12 billion per year in interest. There often is a revolving door between the Fed, the Treasury, and Wall Street. It is a revolving door in a building that is all too eager to enrich big banks and asset holders at the expense of everyone else.

I think it is about time we pull back the curtain to uncover this cloak of secrecy once and for all. Who is receiving the loans from the Fed today? To whom is the Fed paying interest? Are there any conflicts of interest about how these payments are determined? Are there any checks and balances on the size of these payments?

The Federal Reserve Act actually forbids the Fed from buying some of the troubled assets they bought in 2008; yet they did it anyway.

Given all of these unanswered questions and given the sharp increase in the risk of the Fed's balance sheet, it is unquestionably necessary for the Fed to be audited more thoroughly than it has been in the past. Audit the Fed is just 3 pages long, and it simply says that the Government Accountability Office, the GAO, which is a non-partisan, apolitical agency in charge—that they be allowed to audit the Fed, a full and thorough audit.

Currently the GAO is not allowed to audit the Fed's monetary policy deliberations or the Fed's Open Market Committee transactions. The GAO was also forbidden from reviewing agreements with foreign central banks. During the downturn in 2008, trillions of dollars were spent, much of it or quite a bit of it on foreign banks, and we are not allowed to know what occurred, to whom it was given, and for what purpose. The Fed audit in its current form is virtually futile.

When these restrictions were added to the audit in the 1970s, the GAO testified before Congress, saying: "We do not see how we can satisfactorily audit the Federal Reserve System without the authority to examine [its] largest single category of financial transactions and assets. . . ."

To grasp just how limited the current audit is, recall that in 2009 Democratic Congressman ALAN GRAYSON asked then-Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke which foreign countries received \$500 billion in loans from the Fed. Bernanke was unwilling to name which countries or banks received half a trillion dollars' worth of funds.

That is right. The Fed swapped half a trillion dollars to foreign countries in secret and did not even have the decency, under testimony before Congress, to report the details. But it gets worse. Democratic Senator BERNIE SANDERS asked Bernanke: Who received \$2.2 trillion that the Fed lent out during the financial crisis? Again, Bernanke refused to give an answer.

In the 2011 Dodd-Frank law, Congress ordered a limited, one-time GAO audit of Fed actions. During the financial crisis, that audit uncovered that the

Fed lent out over \$16 trillion to domestic and foreign banks during the financial crisis.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent for an extra 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I reserve the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, does Senator PAUL—how much time do we have?

Mr. PAUL. I would be happy to ask unanimous consent for equal time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Senator PAUL's time has expired. The time of the majority has expired.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I only need 5 minutes, so I am willing to cede whatever remains so he can have enough time, but I would like to reserve 5 minutes, and I lift my objection.

Mr. PAUL. Well, the unanimous consent would be to have 5 extra minutes and to give the Senator as much time as he needs to conclude.

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

The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Both Republicans and Democrats agree that it is absurd that we do not know where hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of our money is going. In fact, last year my audit the Fed bill received the support of nearly every Republican in the House and over 100 Democrats.

Some say an audit will politicize the Fed. I find this claim odd given the support of both sides of the aisle for the bill. The GAO is nonpartisan, independent, and works for Congress. It does not lean Republican or Democratic, and it is not interested in influencing policy. I can't seem to understand how a simple check by the GAO to ensure that there are no conflicts of interest will politicize anything.

Instead of criticizing a standard audit, though, maybe the individuals who work at the Fed and within our central bank should begin curbing their own actions. Unlike the actions of current Fed officials, my bipartisan bill will not politicize anything. I simply want the Fed overseen to ensure that our central bank isn't picking favorites, and I want to ensure that it remains solvent.

Like every agency, the Federal Reserve was created by Congress and is supposed to be overseen by Congress.

Auditing the Fed should not be a partisan issue. Regardless of one's monetary policy views, regardless of whether one thinks interest rates should be higher or lower, everyone can and should agree that for the sake of the country's economic well-being, we need to know what has been going on behind the Federal Reserve's cloak of secrecy. It is time we quit this guessing game. It is time we audit the Federal Reserve once and for all to restore transparency to our Nation's checkbook.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I do not support Senator PAUL's bill to audit the Federal Reserve.

In 2010, I supported an amendment to the Dodd-Frank financial reform legislation included in the final law which required an audit of the Federal Reserve's actions during the financial crisis. That report was released in 2011 and found no significant problems with the Fed's activities.

Dodd-Frank not only authorized the 2011 audit, it also expanded the scope for future GAO audits which any Member of Congress can request. Also, the Fed includes an independent audit of its financial statements within its annual report to Congress.

The Federal Reserve has taken independent actions in recent years to be more transparent about its operations. Since 2009, the Fed has publicly released its economic projections, and since 2011, the chairman has held quarterly press conferences following Federal Open Market Committee meetings. Two recent studies found the Fed to be one of the most transparent central banks in the world.

Transparency and openness in government is essential to a healthy democracy, but by requiring more audits and more disclosures, we risk politicizing a nonpartisan institution that plays a uniquely significant role in the global economy.

Fed Chairman Janet Yellen recently wrote that a similar bill that passed the House of Representatives "would politicize monetary policy and bring short-term political pressures in the deliberations of the FOMC by putting into place real-time second guessing of policy decisions. . . . The provision is based on a false premise—that the Fed is not subject to an audit."

Since there are already many means for audits, disclosure, and transparency at our disposal, I do not support Senator PAUL's bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I rise to oppose the audit the Fed bill.

One of the things that we learned around here as new Members of the House and Senate—and I served with the Presiding Officer almost my entire time in the House, and we learned this—is that if you can name the bills here, you have a tremendous advantage. You call the estate tax the death tax, even though about 1 percent of Americans pay it, and you may have won the debate. Calling this bill audit the Fed—and how can you be against auditing the Fed—may win the debate, but this time I don't think so.

I am concerned in this way. It won't make the Fed stronger. It won't make the Fed more effective. It won't make the Fed more accountable. It will impair the Fed's functions. It will give conservative Members of Congress more tools to second-guess the Fed's decisionmaking. It will make the system ultimately less sound, flexible, and responsive.

Think about what happened in 2009. President Obama took office. We were losing 800,000 jobs a month. Congress passed the Recovery Act, passed the auto rescue, which mattered so much to the Presiding Officer's State, to my State, and, frankly, to the Senator from Kentucky and his State too, but then, with the changing time and the elections of 2010, this Congress engaged in austerity, and we saw what that meant. It took a Bush-appointed Federal Reserve Chair, Ben Bernanke, who engaged in enough pump priming, if you will, through low interest rates and then QE to get the economy going.

I think we asked ourselves, would we have wanted a Federal Reserve then where Congress had its tentacles in monetary policy? Congress failed on fiscal policy. Chairman Bernanke and now Chair Yellen have had to move on monetary policy in that way. I don't want to straitjacket this Congress and straitjacket the Federal Reserve by doing that with Congress.

I know some of you have supported audit bills in the past. Many supported the Dodd-Sanders amendment during Wall Street reform. But this one is different. It doesn't include provisions to review the Independent Foreclosure Review Program process, and it doesn't include protections on some of the sensitive information that GAO could review, such as transcripts.

What this is about, in addition to Congress meddling in monetary policy, is ultimately this: We know the Fed is charged with a dual mandate—to deal with the tension between combatting inflation and combatting unemployment. We know that in past years the Fed has leaned far more toward the bondholders and Wall Street in combatting inflation than it has toward Main Street in employment and combatting unemployment.

We also know that with the pressures in this town, when President Obama signed Wall Street reform, the chief lobbyist for the financial services industry said it is now half time, meaning that conservative Members of this Congress, people in this Congress influenced by Wall Street, would immediately go and try to weaken these rules going directly to the agencies.

We will see the same thing here. We will see many Members of Congress pushing the Fed to side with the bondholders and Wall Street on combatting inflation rather than siding with Main Street and small businesses and workers in dealing with unemployment. That is fundamentally the biggest problem with the Paul proposal. I ask my colleagues to defeat it.

I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time has been yielded back.

CLOTURE MOTION

Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 289, S. 2232, a bill to require a full audit of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System and the Federal reserve banks by the Comptroller General of the United States, and for other purposes.

Mitch McConnell, John Barrasso, Roy Blunt, John Cornyn, Cory Gardner, David Vitter, Shelley Moore Capito, Rand Paul, Johnny Isakson, Steve Daines, Patrick J. Toomey, John Boozman, Chuck Grassley, Mike Crapo, Mike Lee, David Perdue, Rob Portman.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to proceed to S. 2232, a bill to require a full audit of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System and the Federal reserve banks by the Comptroller General of the United States, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Indiana (Mr. COATS) and the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN) is necessarily absent.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 53, nays 44, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 2 Leg.]

YEAS—53

Alexander	Flake	Perdue
Ayotte	Gardner	Portman
Baldwin	Graham	Risch
Barrasso	Grassley	Roberts
Blunt	Hatch	Rounds
Boozman	Heller	Rubio
Burr	Hoeven	Sanders
Capito	Inhofe	Sasse
Cassidy	Isakson	Scott
Cochran	Johnson	Sessions
Collins	Kirk	Shelby
Cornyn	Lankford	Sullivan
Cotton	Lee	Thune
Crapo	McCain	Tillis
Daines	McConnell	Toomey
Enzi	Moran	Vitter
Ernst	Murkowski	Wicker
Fischer	Paul	

NAYS—44

Bennet	Heinrich	Nelson
Blumenthal	Heitkamp	Peters
Booker	Hirono	Reed
Boxer	Kaine	Reid
Brown	King	Schatz
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Schumer
Cardin	Leahy	Shaheen
Carper	Manchin	Stabenow
Casey	Markey	Tester
Coons	McCaskill	Udall
Corker	Menendez	Warner
Donnelly	Merkley	Warren
Durbin	Mikulski	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murphy	Wyden
Gillibrand	Murray	

NOT VOTING—3

Coats

Cruz

Franken

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 53, the nays are 44.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn not having voted in the affirmative, the motion is rejected.

The Senator from Utah.

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

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

SCRUB ACT

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I rise to urge my colleagues to take up a piece of legislation that I am sponsoring which has recently passed the House of Representatives, the Searching for and Cutting Regulations that are Unnecessarily Burdensome Act—or SCRUB Act.

Federal regulations today impose—by some estimates—a crushing burden of \$1.88 trillion on our economy. That is roughly \$15,000 per household and more than the entire country's corporate and individual income taxes combined. Excessive and often unnecessary rules imposed by unaccountable Washington bureaucrats strain family budgets and create conditions where small businesses struggle to create jobs.

Nevertheless, the regulatory burden keeps growing year after year. The Code of Federal Regulations is now more than 175,000 pages long and contains more than 200 volumes. Since 2008, regulators have added on average more than \$107 billion in annual regulatory costs. And as we near the end of President Obama's time in office, Americans should be prepared for a deluge of new rules. As has been widely reported, about 4,000 regulations are working their way through the Federal bureaucracy, with some experts predicting their costs to exceed well over \$100 billion.

Every President since Jimmy Carter has affirmed the need to review our existing regulations to make sure that they are efficient and no more intrusive and burdensome than is absolutely necessary. Nevertheless, administrations of both parties have failed to make meaningful reductions in the regulatory burden, with some retrospective review efforts even adding costs to the economy. Most notably, according to a study by the American Action Forum, the Obama administration's much-touted efforts to review old rules actually added more than \$23 billion in costs on the economy and mandated nearly 9 million additional hours of paperwork.

With family budgets stretched thin and our economy badly in need of job creation, we need to act to turn this longstanding bipartisan commitment to effective retrospective review into a reality. But to do so, we need to take the responsibility of reviewing old rules away from the bureaucrats who keep failing to make the reductions to

the regulatory burden. That is why I have joined my colleagues, the junior Senators from Iowa and Missouri, to introduce the SCRUB Act.

The SCRUB Act establishes a bipartisan, blue-ribbon commission to review existing Federal regulations and identify those that should be repealed to reduce unnecessary regulatory burdens. It prioritizes for review regulations where major rules have been in effect more than 15 years, impose paperwork burdens that could be reduced substantially without significantly diminishing regulatory effectiveness, impose disproportionately high costs on small businesses, or could be strengthened in their effectiveness while reducing regulatory costs. It also sets other basic, commonsense criteria for recommending repeal of regulations, such as: whether they have been rendered obsolete by technological or market changes; whether they have achieved their goals and can be repealed without target problems recurring; whether they are ineffective; whether they overlap, duplicate, or conflict with other Federal regulations or with State and local regulations; or whether they impose costs that are not justified by benefits produced for society within the United States.

Once the commission develops a set of recommendations, our bill requires that these recommendations be presented to the House and the Senate for approval by joint resolution. If Congress votes to approve the commission's recommendations, repeal must take place.

Mr. President, I have served long enough to know that Washington's preferred solution to a tough problem is to create a commission that, once established, is rarely seen or heard from again, no matter how compelling its recommendations. Therefore, I want to lay out a few key features of how SCRUB avoids the pitfalls of so many do-nothing commissions as well as the problems encountered with other attempts to implement retrospective review.

First, our bill sets a hard target for the commission: the reduction of at least 15 percent in the cumulative costs of Federal regulation with a minimal reduction in the overall effectiveness of such regulation. The Obama administration's efforts at retrospective review—perhaps by mistake, perhaps by design—lacked a quantified cost reduction mandate. The result was the manipulation of the review process into a charade in which highly suspect new benefits were touted as a reason for adding costs. Our bill structures the retrospective review process in a way that prioritizes cost cutting while maintaining a responsible respect for benefits by calling for a minimal reduction in general overall effectiveness.

Second, our bill does not artificially limit what costly and unjustified regulations could be repealed. Under some superficially similar but fundamen-

tally unsound proposals for retrospective review, review would be arbitrarily limited by time or subject. Such limits would not only seriously hinder the prospect of meeting a meaningful cost reduction target, but also put numerous regulations off limits for review just because they have seen minor tweaks after a certain arbitrary cutoff.

Third, our bill guarantees an up-or-down vote on the Commission's package of recommendations as a single package. This element of our bill represents the single most important feature that distinguishes it from a do-nothing commission that far too often characterizes Washington's approach to intractable problems. We should be under no illusions that every single special interest in town is going to fight to preserve the favors they have won by manipulating the regulatory process over the years, and gathering the votes to get the Commission's recommendations enacted will certainly be a difficult endeavor.

Following the models of other successful means by which Congress has addressed situations in which the costs are concentrated but benefits are widely dispersed, it is absolutely vital that the Commission's recommendations be packed together as a single bill and not subject to dismemberment by amendment.

Further, to put it simply, an up-or-down simple majority vote requires an actual viable pathway to repealing these regulations. Subjecting the package to the supermajority threshold would represent nothing but a death knell for the prospect of repealing these onerous rules. Moreover, because extended debate in the Senate exists to allow Senators to modify a proposal under debate, the lack of amendment opportunities seriously undermines the rationale for subjecting it to the supermajority threshold typically required to end debate. And this carefully tailored exception to the cloture rule is hardly a wild departure from precedent; rather, it follows the precedents set by numerous other pieces of legislation such as trade promotion authority and the Congressional Review Act, both of which have long earned bipartisan support.

Fourth, for any given regulation, the Commission is authorized to recommend either immediate repeal or repeal through what we call cut-go procedures, whereby agencies, on a forward basis, would have to offset the costs of new regulations by repealing Commission-identified regulations of equal or greater cost. These procedures allow immediate repeal in the most urgent cases and staggered repeals of other regulations to assure a smoother process for agencies and affected entities.

Mr. President, a process such as cut-go proves critical for two particular reasons. First, it provides an avenue for addressing the many regulations on the books that impose unjustifiable costs in pursuit of a legitimate goal. While some regulations on the books

could undoubtedly be repealed without any meaningful negative consequences, numerous others provide important protections but in an inefficient and costly manner. The cut-go process allows agencies to repeal costly rules and replace them with more sensible ones—for example, prescribing performance standards instead of specific, oftentimes outdated technology—in a manner that reduces costs on the economy while maintaining or even improving regulatory effectiveness.

Second, the cut-go process holds agencies accountable to Congress's laws, a perennial problem in the regulatory process. Bureaucratic agencies—so often devoted to increasing their own power and insensitive to the costs they impose on the economy—frequently use the excuse of limited resources to avoid retrospective review. By imposing a reasonable limit on prospective rulemaking until an agency complies with congressionally enacted repeal recommendations, cut-go ensures that the agency cannot simply ignore its duty to repeal.

Mr. President, these are just a handful of the numerous reasons why the SCRUB Act provides a uniquely visible pathway to accomplishing the long-standing bipartisan goal of repealing outdated and ineffective regulations. I wish to thank my colleagues from both sides of the aisle—and both sides of the Capitol, by the way—who have joined in support of this bill, especially Senator ERNST for her leadership on this issue on the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee. Even though she has only been in the Senate for a year, her strong and effective leadership on this issue has been a model for how to hit the ground running. I call on my colleagues in the Senate to follow the House's lead and pass this effective, commonsense approach to rooting out unjustifiably burdensome regulations. Also, as I understand it, the House has passed this bill just today.

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Mr. President, I also wish to address another subject—the subject of religious liberty. Congress is convening for the second session of the 114th Congress at a moment in time rich with significance for religious freedoms. January 6, for example, marked the 75th anniversary of President Franklin Roosevelt's famous “Four Freedoms” speech. During the depths of World War II, President Roosevelt used his 1941 State of the Union Address to describe a world founded on what he called “four essential human freedoms.” One of these is the “freedom of every person to worship God in his own way.”

At the end of the week, on January 16, is Religious Freedom Day. It commemorates the 230th anniversary of the Virginia General Assembly's enactment of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom. Thomas Jefferson authored the legislation and, after he left to serve as U.S. Minister to France, his colleague James Madison secured its enactment.

Of his many accomplishments—and Jefferson had a lot of accomplishments—Jefferson directed that three of what he called “things that he had given the people” be listed on his tombstone. One of them was the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, which laid the foundation for the protection of religious freedom in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Mr. President, last fall I delivered a series of eight speeches on the Senate floor presenting the story of religious freedom. I explained why religious freedom itself is uniquely important and requires special protection. At no time in world history has religious freedom been such an integral part of a Nation's character as it is here in the United States.

The story of religious freedom includes understanding both its status and its substance. The status of religious freedom can be summarized as both inalienable and preeminent. As James Madison put it, religious freedom is “precedent, both in order of time and in degree of obligation, to the claims of civil society.”

Madison also explained that religious freedom is the freely chosen manner of discharging a duty an individual believes he or she owes to God. As we have affirmed so many times in statutes, declarations, and treaties, it includes both belief and behavior in public and in private, individually and collectively.

Tonight, President Obama delivers his final State of the Union Address. According to the Washington Post this morning, President Obama will speak about unity, about coming together as one American family. Until very recently, religious freedom was such a unifying priority. Last month, I described to my colleagues the unifying statement about religious freedom called the Williamsburg Charter. Published in 1988, it brought together Presidents and other leaders in both political parties, the heads of business and labor, universities and bar associations, and diverse communities to endorse the first principles of religious freedom.

The charter boldly proclaims that religious freedom is an inalienable right that is “premised upon the inviolable dignity of the human person. It is the foundation of, and is integrally related to, all other rights and freedoms secured by the Constitution.” It asserts that the chief menace to religious freedom is the expanding power of government—especially government control over personal behavior and the institutions of society. And the charter also declares that limiting religious freedom “is allowable only where the State has borne a heavy burden of proof that the limitation is justified—not by any ordinary public interest, but by a supreme public necessity—and that no less restrictive alternative to limitation exists.”

Congress made these principles law 5 years later by almost unanimously en-

acting the Religious Freedom Restoration Act—an act that I had a great deal to do with. One way to know the value of something is by the effort made to protect it. In RFRA, government may burden the exercise of religion only if it is the least restrictive means of furthering a compelling government purpose. That is the toughest standard found anywhere in American law. By this statute, we declared that religious freedom is fundamental, it is more important than other values and priorities, and government must properly accommodate it. The Coalition for the Free Exercise of Religion supporting RFRA was the most diverse grassroots effort I have ever seen in all of my years in the U.S. Senate.

Five years after RFRA, Congress unanimously enacted the International Religious Freedom Act. Twenty-one Senators serving today voted for it—12 Republicans and 9 Democrats. So did Vice President JOE BIDEN and Secretary of State John Kerry when they served here. That law declares that religious freedom “undergirds the very origin and existence of the United States.” It calls religious freedom a universal human right, a pillar of our Nation, and a fundamental freedom.

That is what unity looks like. With a Presidency no less than any other aspect of life, however, actions speak louder than words. While President Obama has paid lip service to religious freedom, as I assume he will in his annual Religious Freedom Day proclamation this week, the actions of his administration tell a different story.

In 2011, the Obama administration argued to the Supreme Court that the First Amendment provides no special protection for churches, even in choosing their own ministers. The Court unanimously rejected that bizarre theory. The administration ignored religious freedom and RFRA altogether when developing the Affordable Care Act and its implementing regulations. When religious employers argued that the administration's birth control mandate did not adequately accommodate their religious freedom, the administration fought them all the way to the Supreme Court. The Court again rejected the administration's attempt to restrict religious freedom.

Yesterday, 32 Members of the Senate and 175 Members of the House of Representatives filed a legal brief with the Supreme Court supporting religious organizations that are again arguing that the Obama administration's birth control mandate violates the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. I want to thank my friend from Oklahoma, Senator LANKFORD, for working with me on this important project. I know religious freedom was important to him when he served in the House and he is already a leader on this critical issue in the Senate and I am pleased to see him in the chair today.

This mandate requires religious organizations to violate their deeply held religious beliefs or pay crushing monetary fines. The plaintiffs in these cases

include Christian colleges, Catholic dioceses, and many organizations that minister to the elderly and disadvantaged as part of their religious mission. They want to provide health insurance for their employees and students in a manner that is consistent with their religious beliefs.

The Obama administration, however, is working hard to make those religious groups knuckle under to its political agenda. It provides blanket exemptions for churches that do not object to the birth control mandate but denies exemption to religious employers that do object. The administration exempts for-profit companies employing more than 44 million workers, including some of America's largest corporations, even if they have no objection to the mandate. Yet it is fighting to force compliance by religious non-profit organizations that do object to the mandate on the basis of deeply held religious beliefs. Not only is that policy simply irrational, but it treats religious freedom as optional.

Here is how I put it last month: Subjugating religious beliefs to government decrees is not the price of citizenship. To the contrary, respecting and honoring the fundamental rights of all Americans is the price our government pays to enjoy the continued consent of the American people.

If that is true, then religious freedom must be properly respected and accommodated. And I believe it is true.

Religious freedom should be a primary consideration, not an afterthought. Religious freedom should be given the accommodation that a preeminent right requires, rather than begrudgingly be given the least attention politically possible.

If our leaders wish to abandon the religious freedom that undergirds America's origin and existence, they should say so. If Members of Congress now reject what they once supported and insist that religious freedom is less important than the political reference of the moment, they should make that case.

If the Obama administration wants to repudiate treaties we have ratified, asserting that religious freedom is a fundamental human right, the President should be upfront about it.

As with many things that happen in the twilight of a Presidency, I expect to hear much in the State of the Union Address tonight that speaks to President Obama's legacy. What will he be remembered for? What great principles or causes will be associated with the Obama Presidency?

Part of President Roosevelt's legacy is that State of the Union Address 75 years ago that affirmed that practicing one's faith is an essential human freedom. What a tragedy to have President Obama be remembered for hostility to—rather than protection of—religious freedom.

In the coming days, I will be presenting to each of my Senate colleagues the collection of speeches on

religious freedom that I offered on the floor last fall. I hope they will encourage us in Congress, as well as our fellow citizens, to unite in our commitment to this fundamental right.

This is important. Even though we may agree or disagree with certain religious beliefs, they still ought to have the right to believe them. They still ought to have the right to worship the way they want to. The fact of the matter is that is what has made America the greatest country in the world—bar none. I don't want to see it destroyed because we are doing everything we can to undermine religious freedom in this country. I refuse to allow that to happen, and I hope my colleagues will take this seriously as well. I know a number of them do, including the current Presiding Officer.

I just want everybody to know that as long as I am in the Senate, I am going to be fighting for religious freedom and I hope that all of us will also. God bless America.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

OBAMACARE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, tonight President Obama will be coming to Congress to deliver his final State of the Union Address. His advisers have been all over television talking about what the President is planning to say. Tonight, I expect President Obama will talk a little about the health care law. Last year in his State of the Union Address, the President bragged—he actually bragged—that more people have insurance now than when he took office. I expect he will probably say something similar tonight.

I wish to talk a little bit about the other side of the story. I want to talk about what President Obama is not going to say tonight to the American people. The President is not going to admit that many Americans are actually worse under his health care law. He is not going to say that under the health care law there is a very big difference between health law insurance and being able to actually get health care. The President focuses on the word "coverage" and, as a doctor, I focus on the word "care."

The New York Times had an article about this just the other day. The article on page 1 of Monday, January 4, says: "Many Holdouts Roll the Dice And Pay I.R.S., Not an Insurer." They would rather pay the penalty to the Internal Revenue Service rather than pay the insurance company. Why?

Turn to page A9 of the same day, January 4, 2016: "Many Who Refuse Insurance See I.R.S. Penalty as Most Affordable Option." The most affordable

option for the American people is not the Obama health law insurance. It is actually paying the IRS the penalty. The article tells the story about a number of different people. One is named Tim Fescoe from Culver City, CA. He and his wife had an insurance plan that cost them more than \$5,000 a year, but it came with a deductible of over \$6,000 for each of them—\$5,000 for the policy, \$6,000 for the deductible for him and another \$6,000 for her. Well, they decided to drop the insurance last year.

Mr. Fescoe told the New York Times: "It literally covered zero medical expenses."

I wonder if President Obama is going to talk about this man tonight, Tim Fescoe. Will we hear anything about him in his speech tonight? Will the President point to him in the gallery as somebody who the President claims to have helped by making insurance so expensive and so unaffordable that it was much better to just pay the penalty than deal with what the mandates of the President's health care law call into play? Is he going to talk about the deductibles and how the out-of-pocket costs have become so high for Americans all across the country?

The article also talks about Clint Murphy of Sulfur Springs, TX. Clint Murphy expects that he will have to pay a penalty of about \$1,800 for being uninsured this year. The article says that in his view, paying the penalty is worth it if he can avoid buying the President's law health insurance, a policy that costs \$2,900 or more.

This man in Texas went on to say: "I don't see the logic behind that, and I'm just not going to do it."

Is President Obama going to talk about these people—people who think that it is better to pay the steep IRS penalty than buy the President's expensive and, in many ways, useless insurance? There are millions of Americans in this same situation as Clint Murphy, as Tim Fescoe, and other people who are mentioned in a story in the New York Times. If the New York Times is writing about it—they are supporters of the health care law—even they are pointing to the damage that this very unpopular law continues to do to the American people.

According to a report by the Kaiser Family Foundation, about 7 million Americans were finding it cheaper to pay the tax penalty than to pay for this unusable insurance. Look at this chart. Of those people who don't get subsidies and are not eligible for subsidies, 95 percent would pay—all of these people—less for the tax penalty than for an ObamaCare bronze plan, which is the cheapest level of plan that there is.

So for people who don't get a subsidy from Washington, 95 percent of them would pay less by paying the tax penalty than they would for an ObamaCare bronze-level plan with high deductibles and high copays—so high that the people who look at it say: It is unusable.

Now, remember, again, these bronze plans are the cheapest option, and the people are just saying no because even the cheapest option under ObamaCare is more expensive than dropping insurance and paying the penalty. Bronze plans are the ones most likely to have a \$5,000 to \$6,000 deductible per individual on the plan.

Do we expect President Obama to talk about any of these things tonight or any of these people who have been harmed by his law?

After the President gives his State of the Union Address, much has been made that he is going on a tour of America. He is going to visit Baton Rouge, LA, and Omaha, NE. What the President may not know and certainly won't mention is how much ObamaCare premiums have increased in those States he is going to visit.

In Louisiana, prices for the benchmark silver plan on the ObamaCare exchange went up over 9 percent this year. In Nebraska, the same benchmark silver plan rates went up almost 12 percent this past year. Now that is for the people who are willing to actually shop around and switch their insurance from last year to try to hold down the costs.

Remember when the President said this: If you like your plan, you can keep your plan. Well, if you only want a 9-percent or a 12-percent increase, you can't keep your plan. You have to try to shop around and switch to a different plan, maybe even change your doctors and the hospital you go to. That is the only way you can find rates of insurance that still go up a lot but don't go up even higher by staying with what you had.

The President probably won't mention that when he goes to Louisiana or Nebraska. He probably won't mention either that the ObamaCare co-ops in both of the States that he is visiting collapsed last year—fundamentally collapsed. Tens of thousands of people lost the insurance they had in those States, and now the taxpayers are on the hook for over \$100 million.

The law has not come anywhere near what President Obama promised the people of Louisiana or the people of Nebraska or the people of America. All across the country, the American people know that ObamaCare was not what they wanted. They know that it has never been the right answer for the problems in our health care system. That is why majorities in both Houses of Congress voted recently to repeal the key parts of the Obama health care law. We passed the legislation, and we sent it to the President's desk. When President Obama vetoed the bill, he rejected the judgment of the American people.

In his speech tonight, I expect the President to continue to pretend that there are no problems at all with American health care under his law. Well, Republicans are going to keep offering solutions to fix health care in America. Almost 6 years ago President

Obama sat down with Members of Congress to try to sell us his health care law. I was part of that roundtable discussion. I told the President at the time that low-cost catastrophic plans could be a good option for people as long as they could use health savings accounts to help pay their day to day medical bills.

The President had no interest in that idea or in any of the Republican ideas that we brought forward that day.

So now, under his law, people are left with the equivalent of catastrophic coverage and they are paying far too much for it because of all of the law's mandates. On top of that, the law cuts back on health savings accounts. The law specifically cut back on that so people all across the country have fewer options to help them pay for their care.

Republicans are going to continue to bring up better ideas. We will talk about real solutions that give people more options, not more mandates. We will talk about the ideas that help people get the care they need from a doctor they want at lower costs, not just as the President talks about coverage—coverage that most Americans find they cannot use.

Tonight President Obama is probably going to make a lot more promises. When he does, I think everybody should remember Clint Murphy from Sulfur Springs, TX, who doesn't see the logic in paying for overpriced ObamaCare insurance. They should remember all of the broken promises from the health care law and all of the hardworking Americans who have been hurt by the Obama health care law. Even though President Obama won't admit it tonight, America can do much better. If the President won't say it, then it will be up to Congress to lead on the issue. That is exactly what Republicans intend to do. President Obama's speech tonight will be looking to define his legacy. Tonight and for the rest of the year, Republicans will be offering solutions for the American people.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be able to enter into a colloquy with a number of my colleagues, including Senators from Virginia, Florida, and New Jersey.

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

DELEGATION TO THE MIDDLE EAST AND IMPLEMENTING THE NUCLEAR AGREEMENT WITH IRAN

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I have just returned from a trip to the Middle East—an absolutely important and eye-opening trip at this vital moment when the threat of extremism, the threat of violence, and the risks posed to regional stability by Iran and its regional ambitions could not be clearer. Senator GILLIBRAND of New York led this delegation, and a group of eight of us had an opportunity to visit Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Austria.

Let me begin by saying that all of us were deeply moved and concerned when we heard this morning news of a terrorist attack in Istanbul, literally in an area we had just visited Saturday morning. I reached out, as have a number of others on this trip, to express our condolences and concerns both to the Turkish Ambassador, the American Ambassador, and to others we met with on our visit there.

This is just another brazen reminder of the instability raging throughout the Middle East and of the threats to our concerns and interests and to regional stability posed by terrorism.

I invite the Senator from Virginia to join me in making some comments based on his insights and his experience on this trip. The very first place we visited left an important and lasting impression on me. We visited with the IAEA, the International Atomic Energy Agency, in Vienna to hear about their progress towards implementing the nuclear deal with Iran and what they are going to be doing, now and in the future, to ensure full, thorough, and valuable inspections of the entire cycle of Iran's nuclear efforts.

If Senator Kaine would offer any additional comments as a member of the delegation and someone who joined in the trip, what were some of the things that the Senator saw and what were some of the concerns that the Senator came home with that we ought to share with our constituents and colleagues?

Mr. Kaine. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Delaware for the opportunity to engage in a colloquy. It was a remarkable visit with eight Senators to Israel, Vienna, Turkey, as well as Saudi Arabia, to dig into two issues that I would like to address. The issues are Iran and the war against ISIL.

With respect to Iran, since the conclusion of the negotiation and the green light for the deal to go forward, there have been some positive developments and there have been some troubling developments. I wish to spend time talking about both.

On the positive development side, because of the deal that the United States and other nations entered into with Iran, as of yesterday they have permanently decommissioned the plutonium reactor at Arak, which is one half for them to make a nuclear weapon. That is a very positive result of the negotiation.

Second, they have disabled a huge percentage of the centrifuges, which was also a requirement under the agreement—the centrifuges that are used to enrich uranium, another path to nuclear weapons.

Third, Iran has worked with the IAEA to structure the level of inspections. Under the inspections required by the agreement, Iran will be the most inspected nation in the world, because the inspections will not only go to nuclear sites, but they will go to the entire supply chain of uranium mills and uranium mines. Those are inspections not required of any other nation.

The IAEA is ready to move forward on those inspections.

Finally, there is the last bit of positive news, which in my view, personally, is the most compelling. Iran took more than 28,000 pounds of low-enriched uranium, which is sufficient for multiple nuclear weapons. Because of this deal, they have shipped that uranium out of Iran. It is held in a facility in Russia that is closely monitored 24/7, 365 by the IAEA. So any movement of that material will be understood.

Having that nuclear material—sufficient for multiple nuclear weapons—out of Iran's hands and out of that country would not have happened without this deal, and it makes the world safer.

There are some challenges. In October, Iran fired a missile, and a number of us on the Foreign Relations Committee immediately wrote to the President and Secretary of State that we think this violates a separate U.N. Security Council resolution. The United Nations empaneled a team of experts to dig into the factual and technical evidence, and they concluded in mid-December that Iran had in fact fired a missile in violation of a U.N. Security Council resolution separate from this deal. We all think it is very important—for both Congress and the administration and our global partners—to make sure that there is a consequence for that. Whether we supported the deal or didn't, the strategy should be strict enforcement and strict implementation, requiring that Iran meet every last detail—not only of the deal but of their other international obligations. We need to continue to press the administration and Congress to do that.

So on Iran, that was basically the gist of the conversation. We had a lengthy discussion with Prime Minister Netanyahu, where we said: Look, we disagreed on the deal. But now the important thing is to make sure we implement it and we are strong and united on implementation issues. I think that is critically important.

Finally, I have a word about ISIL. Everywhere we went in the region we heard about the threat of ISIL. The bombing this morning in a tourist square in Istanbul, where some of us were standing just 72 hours ago, although all of the investigative work hasn't yet been done, clearly has the earmarks of an ISIL-related bombing, much as the bombings in the Sinai, in Beirut, and the attacks in Paris. So it is very critical that we take this seriously because we are not only seeing ISIL extend their field of battle beyond Syria and Iraq; we are seeing them engage in one-off or rogue terrorist activities around the globe.

The U.S. is at war with ISIL, and we have been at war since August 8, 2014. We are in the 17th month of that war. We have spent billions of dollars, we have deployed thousands of troops, and we have seen both American hostages and servicemembers killed in this war.

But as I hand it back to my colleague, I will conclude and say that Congress has been strangely silent during this war. It is Congress under article I that should declare war, and yet we have not been willing to have a debate and vote—even as we are deploying people, even as Americans are being killed, even as we are spending billions of taxpayer dollars. The only vote that has taken place in this body on the war directly on the authorization question was in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in December of 2014. It was a vote to move forward to an authorization. But when it came to the floor, it got no action.

I am reminded of the great Irish poet W.B. Yeats, who talked about a time where “the best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity.” We see every day efforts that ISIL is, at worst, filled with passionate intensity. I believe America is the best. I believe Congress should be the best. Yet we have been strangely silent and have lacked conviction in the face of an enemy that is dangerous and threatens us abroad and at home.

With that, I hand it back to my colleague, the Senator from Delaware.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Virginia for his service on the Foreign Relations Committee and for his real leadership on the question of our prosecution the war against ISIL and the roll of this Senate in confirming that we are in fact engaged in a conflict, for his role on the Armed Services Committee, and for the important and tough questions he asked on our visit to the four countries that I just referenced in opening. I appreciate the Senator detailing the four different, big positive moves forward that are happening as the JCPOA, the Iran nuclear deal, moves towards into full implementation.

I wish to encourage my colleague from Florida, the second-most senior Democrat on the Armed Services Committee, to also offer his thoughts on how this deal contributes to our security and what concerns are remaining.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President and my fellow Senators, I just want to point out what the Senator has already brought up and underscore that the fact is that the plutonium reactor in Arak has now been filled with concrete. The fact is that 12 tons—or 24,000 pounds—of enriched uranium has been shipped out of Arak to another destination, mostly to Russia.

Before the agreement, it would only take 3 months to build a nuclear weapon. Now, it would take at least 12 months. So we would have a 1-year advance notice in order to determine what we needed to do to deter Iran.

May I say it is irritating that we are going to continue to deal with an Iran that is going to do things that are going to provoke us. And they have certainly done this in the Strait of Hormuz just a few days ago, doing a live-fire exercise while we have the aircraft carrier battle group going

through the Strait of Hormuz—not even 29 miles wide. That is a provocation. There is the provocation of shooting off two missile tests, which is a violation of U.N. sanctions. I hope the President will follow through and sanction them for that, regardless of their protests that say: Oh well, then, you are violating our nuclear agreement.

No, it is a nuclear agreement. They have now stretched the time to 12 months before, if they decided today that they wanted to build a nuclear weapon. That was the whole purpose of the nuclear negotiations in the first place—to take off the table that Iran would be a nuclear power and upset the balance of power in that part of the world.

I thank my colleague for yielding. I thank all of my colleagues for making these insightful comments.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Florida.

I would invite my colleague from New Jersey, who also joined us in the Middle East and is on the homeland security committee, to offer his comments on how the Iran deal actually contributes to regional and global security, and I ask what remaining concerns there are that we have to tackle together.

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, first, I echo the concerns of my colleagues here. It was extremely valuable to be able to travel with Senators HEITKAMP, KAINE, and COONS as part of the eight-Member delegation to the IAEA, and meet with the individuals in charge of the inspections, as well as to go to Israel, and meet with Benjamin Netanyahu in a private setting about the concerns Senator KAINE articulated. In addition to that, we visited with other allies: Saudi Arabia, as well as Turkey.

Let's be clear. As has been said already, we are seeing important steps being taken that, in the immediate term, reduce the threat of a nuclear-armed Iran. The steps they are taking are definitive, measurable, and specifically aligned with the JCPOA.

It is important to understand—whether it is moving uranium out, blocking their plutonium pathway, and setting up the inspections regime along the entire supply chain—that these are all important steps toward implementing the JCPOA. But I want to make two very clear points.

The first point is that last summer, as I and many of my colleagues were immersed in evaluating the JCPOA, the Administration promised clear and firm responses to even the smallest violation. Like many of my colleagues, this played a role in my decision to support the nuclear agreement. We expect to see a follow-through on that promise of accountability. We expect enforcement. If we allow Iran—as this agreement goes on—to push the bounds and cross the lines laid out in this deal without a response, we are undermining the strength of this agreement

and, I believe, actually putting in jeopardy the security of the region.

The second point I want to make relates to the provocative behavior Iran is engaging in right now. Separate and apart from the nuclear sanctions that will be lifted, there are other sanctions in place for other issues related to Iran's behavior. Iran is a dangerous actor and has proven so throughout that region. They are a state sponsor of terrorism and other destabilizing activities in that region. While the immediate threat of the nuclear issue might be off the table, they are still a regional threat.

So when we have clear transgressions that are measurable, that have been done in violation of international law—such as two separate instances of ballistic missile testing—there must be a response. I am calling on the administration not to hesitate any longer. We must respond with sanctions appropriate to these violations of international law. To not do so, to me, is unacceptable.

The U.S. must make the consequences for Iranian regional aggression clear and follow with robust response, if necessary. We cannot lose sight of Iran's use of surrogates and proxies in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen to further undermine the security of the region. Let's not lose sight of the fact that there are Americans being held in Iran right now, such as Siamak Namazi, a graduate of Rutgers University in New Jersey, arrested in October, and being held by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard for, as of yet, unspecified reasons. Let's not forget about Jason Rezaian, who continues to languish in jail without a clear and justifiable rationale for his imprisonment, as well as Saeed Abedini, Amir Hekmati, and Robert Levinson. These Americans are being held by a regime for no justifiable reason.

These are particularly egregious violations. In my opinion, Iran should be held accountable. So I repeat, the Senate should collectively call on the administration to take action against Iran and to sanction Iran for their violation of Security Council Resolution 1929.

I want to finally say that my colleagues and I observed in our meetings with Israeli officials, as Senator Kaine mentioned, an Israeli administration that understands the nuclear deal will go into effect. Let's make sure it is enforced. Let's make sure we have the eyes and ears in place so we can make sure the nuclear threat is removed. But let's stay united with Israel and our other allies in holding this dangerous actor to account if they violate international law, if they threaten their neighbors, if they engage in destabilizing activities, if they support terrorism. We must share intelligence. We must double down our efforts to interdict the movement of arms. And we must work together for a larger piece in that region.

With that, I will turn it back to Senator COONS.

Mr. COONS. I wish to thank my colleague from the State of New Jersey and to briefly recognize a success in the fall, in September—a raid off the coast of Yemen that seized a large cache of Iranian arms destined for the Houthi rebels who are working to undermine the legitimate Government of Yemen. This massive weapons shipment of 56 tube-launched, optically tracked, wire-guided TOW missiles, and the associated sights, mounts, tubes, and batteries—those are all the different components for these advanced and sophisticated anti-tank weapons—was successfully interdicted in international water. This is an example of what my colleague the Senator from New Jersey was just talking about, which is the need for more and more aggressive and more successful interdiction to push back on Iran's destabilizing actions in the region.

I am grateful now to be joined on the floor by my colleague from the State of New Hampshire, who is also my colleague on the Foreign Relations Committee, who wants to contribute to our conversation today about the positive progress that is being made in the implementation of this deal and what remains ahead in the work we have to do to make sure we are implementing it effectively.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I am pleased to join my colleague Senator COONS and others on the floor today, especially those of you who had a chance to travel to the Middle East. I didn't get a chance to go with you on this trip. But, like Senator Kaine, I do serve on both the Armed Services and the Foreign Relations Committees, and I supported the nuclear deal with Iran because I was convinced and continue to be convinced that it is the best available option for preventing Iran from developing a nuclear weapon.

As my colleagues have already spoken to, to some extent, we already see the effects of this nuclear deal in Iran's actions. On December 28, Iran shipped over 25,000 pounds of low-enriched uranium to Russia, including the removal of all of Iran's nuclear material enriched to 20 percent that was not already fabricated into reactive fuel. We know this was one path for Iran to get a nuclear weapon. They have removed this low-enriched uranium. It is in Russia.

The IAEA has increased the number of its inspectors on the ground in Iran. They are deploying modern technologies to monitor Iran's nuclear facilities, and they have set up a comprehensive oversight program of Iran's nuclear facilities. The IAEA is now inspecting all of Iran's declared nuclear facilities 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and they will have access not just to the facilities where we know Iran was trying to build a weapon but also to the uranium mines and mills, which will give the IAEA and the rest of the world complete access to the entire nuclear fuel cycle.

The Iraq reactor, which has been spoken to already, will be completely disabled. Its core is being filled with concrete. Once the IAEA verifies that Iran has completed the steps related to the Arak reactor, Iran's plutonium pathway to a bomb will have effectively been blocked. Iran has been dismantling its uranium enrichment infrastructure, including the removal of thousands of centrifuges.

Again, taken together, these and other steps will effectively cut off Iran's four pathways to a nuclear weapon, and they will push its breakout time to at least a year for the next 10 years.

What should Congress be doing? My colleague from New Jersey, Senator BOOKER, was very eloquent in talking about some of the actions that we need to take, both Congress and the administration, to continue to address Iran's terrorist activities throughout the region. But I think one of the other things we ought to be doing as a Congress is confirming key Obama administration foreign policy and national security nominees because many of these nominees are critical as we look at the implementation of the Iran agreement. They are critical as we think about what we need to protect this country, to protect our national security.

I would ask my colleague on the Foreign Relations Committee, Senator MURPHY, what does it mean that we have failed to confirm Adam Szubin as the Treasury Department's Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Crimes? I was a cosponsor, with Senator RUBIO, of the Hezbollah sanctions bill, the additional sanctions we can put on Hezbollah to limit their activities, and yet we are still missing one of the key players in making that work at the Treasury Department. What does that mean, I ask Senator MURPHY, the fact that Congress has failed to confirm these nominees?

Mr. MURPHY. I thank Senator SHAHEEN for the question. I would hope that regardless of how any individual Senator voted on this deal, we would all be rooting for its success because success in the end is an assurance that Iran never obtains a nuclear weapon. But the results of this Senate failing to confirm Adam Szubin as the Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Crimes undermine the implementation of not only this important achievement but also of all our efforts to try to root out the financial sources of terrorism all around the world.

The fact is that this gentleman, Adam Szubin, is particularly qualified for the job. There is no one on the Republican side who has raised any individual objection to him. He has been doing the job very well for the United States under President Obama. He was the senior advisor to this appointee under President Bush's administration. He has done and worked in this field under both Republican and Democratic Presidents. It seems as if it is just politics that are holding this up. He is not

the only one who is on that list. Laura Holgate has been appointed to be our U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. offices in Vienna, which includes the IAEA. She was nominated on August 5. Her nomination hasn't even gotten out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Wendy Sherman's replacement, Tom Shannon, was nominated on September 18. His nomination is on the floor today. We could vote on that this week if it was our pleasure.

If we want this agreement to succeed, if we want to make sure Iran does not get a nuclear weapon, if we want to cut off the flow of funds from Iran to groups like Hezbollah, then we actually have to have people in place to do those jobs.

I wanted to quickly come to the floor to make the point that in addition to the important points that are being made by my colleagues about the success so far of the agreement with respect to implementation, if we all are hoping that the end result of this is despite the predictions of many Republicans that Iran doesn't obtain a nuclear weapon, then we have to have these people in these important roles.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Would my colleague yield for another question briefly? I didn't give the date that Adam Szubin was nominated, and he has been before the banking committee. Does the Senator have that information to share with everybody?

Mr. MURPHY. I said that Holgate was August 5, and Shannon was September 18. Adam Szubin has been before the banking committee since April 16. He is a few months away from being before the Senate for almost a full year in a job that we can all agree is one of the most important when it comes to protecting the national security of this country. That is pretty astounding.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. I thank all three of my colleagues on the Foreign Relations Committee. I will close and yield back to Senator COONS with saying that I would hope that one of the things we would all agree to, as Senator MURPHY has said, is that regardless of where we stood on the Iran nuclear agreement, the goal now is to make sure that is implemented in a way that makes sure that at least 10 years from now we have at least a year's breakout before Iran—if they decided to do that—could go back and have a nuclear weapon. I would hope that we all share that as our most important priority with respect to Iran.

I yield back to my colleague Senator COONS.

Mr. COONS. I thank my colleagues from Connecticut and from New Hampshire. I invite my colleague from North Dakota, who also serves on the homeland security committee and who was part of our delegation that just had the opportunity to travel to Israel, to Saudi Arabia, to Turkey, and to Austria, and in Austria to hear from the IAEA.

The references just made by my colleagues on the Foreign Relations Com-

mittee were in one part to the vacancy in the position of the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. offices in Vienna. I want to reemphasize that. Ever since August 5 of last year, that mission the Senator from North Dakota and I just visited that is responsible for directing and supporting the work of the IAEA to the extent the United States helps fund it and supports it and is a participating member—they have been waiting for a new confirmed ambassador for more than 6 months.

I wish to invite my colleague to make comments based on her experiences and her reflections based on this recent trip.

Ms. HEITKAMP. Mr. President, thank you to my great friend from the State of Delaware. I wish to first make a comment on Adam Szubin because I also serve on the banking committee and have had a chance not only to meet with him personally but to witness the excellent testimony he provided during his confirmation hearing.

We all see very smart people. They come through and they agree to serve their country in these appointed positions which frequently get bogged down here. And not taking anything away from anyone else who has ever appeared before the banking committee, I would say that he is one of the brightest America has to offer. He has a wonderful family, he is deeply devout in his religion—he is Jewish—and a friend to Israel, a friend to this country, using his enormous talents to keep this country safe. There is nothing that would recommend that we not confirm Adam Szubin in one of the most critical positions we have in the Treasury Department. If we are serious about stopping Iran from getting a weapon, if we are serious about enforcing a regime of sanctions, then we need our best and brightest. He clearly is our best and brightest.

One of the points I want to make coming to the floor is that we cannot allow incremental creep, incremental violations, small, little violations. You know how it is. We are all parents, and we watch kids take advantage and take advantage until pretty soon we don't really have the role anymore of a parent. We want to make sure that when we are enforcing this agreement and when we are looking at this agreement, we send a clear message from the very beginning, which is we will not tolerate a breach.

I think it is disturbing that somehow this has become such a partisan issue. We should all be on the floor today encouraging the administration to not let this agreement be eroded by the failure to enforce.

An agreement is only as good as the enforcement capability, and we need to fund the IAEA. We need to make sure they have adequate resources. My great friend from Delaware has suggested a long-term strategy for funding. We need to make sure they have the political support, not just in this body, but across the world to do the right thing.

We have been talking about the reason we, in fact, agreed to allow this agreement to go forward, and the biggest agreement was the enforcement regime. We believed that because of the unprecedented access that the IAEA would have in Iran, we would know more about this program and we would have access to more. We were reassured about that access when we went to Vienna. We were reassured that, yes, they were not going to back down, but if they do back down and don't give access, we need enforcement. We should all be joining together to talk about what that enforcement should look like, how we fund that enforcement, and what a difference it could make.

I share a level of optimism that we are moving in the right direction, but being someone who has negotiated deals, I know it is not over when you sign on to the agreement. It is never over when you sign on to the agreement. It is going to take a level of absolute myopic focus on enforcement to make sure we realize the promise of this international agreement and that we work with our allies and work with our colleagues. We can't do that if we don't have people in those positions who can have a dialogue and speak for the administration, and we certainly can't do it if we allow an incremental breach.

I am joining with my colleagues to provide a unified voice that says: We stand ready to do what it takes to enforce this agreement and prevent breach and make sure we realize the promise of the joint agreement.

Mr. BOOKER. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Ms. HEITKAMP. I will be glad to yield to the Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. BOOKER. I was with the Senator when you heard from Prime Minister Netanyahu about the priorities and the partnership between our two nations, including support for the Iron Dome and David's Sling. What was also critical, was our cooperation to prevent terror tunnels. One of the other challenges we had before this deal was even executed, was Hezbollah's vast arsenal of rockets that could be fired toward Israel. Those missiles are getting more sophisticated and their range is getting longer.

I don't think people put the connection together between the importance of us doing the work of the Treasury Department to stop the flow of money that can purchase those weapons and have Israeli citizens scrambling for bomb shelters. When we say a name like Adam Szubin, most folks in America have no idea who he is and the work that he is doing. Now that the Senator has been to Israel, I wonder if she can make the connection as to why the work he is doing is so important to stop the growing sophistication and source of those missiles.

Ms. HEITKAMP. I thank my good friend from New Jersey for that question. The surest way to prevent acts of terror is to make sure acts of terror

are never funded. That takes an international banking sophistication and an understanding of every potential loophole you have in every country out there, and that is what Adam Szubin does. He spends all day getting briefings and reports about where those potential failures could be and how to plug those holes. How do we do what is necessary to unfund terrorism? Whether it is ISIL—ISIS—Hezbollah or Hamas, we need to take away the money. That is the surest way toward success.

If we do not confirm someone in this critical position, what is the message? I will be the first person to say that if he is not up to the job, let's find somebody else, but after having met him and watched his testimony and the level of dialogue he has not only with the Democrats but also with the Republicans—this isn't about the caliber of this gentleman to serve our country. It is about a political fight over this deal. The deal is done—not done, but the deal is in its infancy. If we are going to realize the promise of this deal and the commitment this country made, we absolutely need people in place to make sure this deal is enforced, and that is in fact Adam Szubin.

My colleagues who were on the trip with me know we received a number of briefings that went to the heart of taking a look at the international banking system, where the weakest links are, and how we can attack those weakest links in shutting down the terrorist network for financing this terrible behavior.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I thank my colleagues who have come to the floor to join with one voice in recognizing the very strong progress that is being made so far in implementing the JCPOA, in implementing the nuclear deal with Iran.

I wish to particularly thank my colleague from North Dakota who has taken her experience on the banking committee to help us understand why it is so important to have confirmed senior administration figures who can enforce the sanctions that were on the books before this deal, were enforced during this deal, and should be enforced going forward.

In closing, let me briefly make some reference as to what that means. The JCPOA was an agreement about constraining Iran's nuclear program, but the sanctions the United States has on the books to stop Iran's support for terrorism, to stop Iran's ballistic missile program, and to stop Iran's human rights abuses or to hold them accountable and sanction them for those abuses will remain on the books.

I will briefly mention that during the negotiation of the JCPOA, the Treasury Department, where Adam Szubin is the nominee to be the top sanction enforcement person, utilized multiple authorities and sanctioned more than 100 Iranians and Iran-linked entities, including more than 40, under its ongoing terrorism sanction authorities.

Just this past July, three senior Hezbollah military officials were sanctioned in Syria and Lebanon because they provided military support to the Assad regime. In November, the Treasury Department designated procurement agents and companies in Lebanon, China, and Hong Kong, and just this last week, on January 7, the Treasury Department targeted a key Hezbollah support network by designating a Hezbollah financier and member, Ali Youssef Charara, and Spectrum Investment Group.

As my colleague from New Jersey has said, we are all optimistic that the administration will take the next step and soon impose sanctions in response to recent ballistic missile launches.

I celebrated earlier because I recognized the success the administration had in interdicting a weapons shipment from Iran to the Houthis rebels, their proxies in the region. The fundamental point is this. If we want to have the positive successes of the JCPOA, and if we want to continue to have the opportunity to constrain Iran's nuclear program and its bad behavior in the region, we have to be vigilantly engaged in oversight and in support for the enforcement of that agreement and for our exercise of the prerogatives and capabilities the American Government has to push back on Iran.

I think by working together in a bipartisan and responsible way, we can get this done. There are folks in this Chamber who opposed the deal and folks who supported it, but what we heard on our recent delegation trip to Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey was that our regional allies are looking for clarity—clarity that the United States stands together in fighting Iran's regional ambitions to support terror and in constraining Iran's nuclear program. We can do that best by confirming these nominees, by funding the IAEA, by exercising the sanction authorities that this administration and this Congress have put in place, and by continuing to make progress under this agreement.

With that, I thank my colleagues and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

THE PRESIDENT'S ECONOMIC AND FOREIGN POLICIES

Mr. PERDUE. Mr. President, tonight President Obama will deliver his final State of the Union Address, a closing argument for his Presidency. This President, who promised change, will attempt to point to his administration's accomplishments, as many Presidents have done in the past. However, this will prove to be difficult because Georgians and Americans have seen change but in the wrong direction.

When President Obama took the White House, he promised fiscal responsibility, but right now he is on track to more than double the debt in his tenure. He promised to work together in a bipartisan way, but he used the Democratic supermajority in those

first 2 years to force through ObamaCare and Dodd-Frank on the American people. He promised to bring us together, but he has served to divide us as a country. He promised to focus on defeating terrorism, but he created a power vacuum in the Middle East for others who wish to do us harm. There is no denying it, under this President's failed leadership, the American people have had a tough several years.

Today more Americans have fallen into poverty under this Presidency. Too many individuals and families have seen their health care premiums and their deductibles rise to points where they can no longer afford them. Our national debt is almost \$19 trillion, which is well past any reasonable tipping point, and we have a global security crisis on our hands that makes the world possibly more dangerous than at any point in my lifetime. These are all symptoms of the President's failed economic policies as well as a lack of leadership in foreign policy.

Even by his own accord, the President has saddled our country with an irresponsible amount of debt which he described in the past as unpatriotic. Before he took office, then-Senator Barack Obama reviewed President Bush's tenure in office saying:

The way Bush has done it over the last eight years is to take out a credit card from the Bank of China in the name of our children, driving up our national debt from \$5 trillion for the first 42 presidents—number 43 added \$4 trillion by his lonesome, so that we now have over \$9 trillion of debt that we are going to have to pay back—\$30,000 for every man, woman, and child. That's irresponsible. It's unpatriotic.

Those are the words of this President, Barack Hussein Obama.

Let's be clear, under this President, our national debt has ballooned to almost \$19 trillion from \$10 trillion. That means that President Obama has added almost \$9 trillion already and is on track to more than double this debt before he is through.

Before President Obama leaves office, he will have nearly added as much debt as all of the other Presidents before him. This is even more outrageous when you factor in how much revenue or tax dollars the Federal Government has collected.

In 2015, we collected over \$3.4 trillion in taxes for our Federal Government. This is more than any year in our history. Washington does not have a revenue problem, it has a spending problem, and it is focused on the wrong priorities.

Equally concerning, this massive debt isn't interest free. If interest rates were to rise to the 30-year average of only 5.5 percent, the interest on this debt would amount to over \$1 trillion each year. That is more than twice what we spent on all nonmilitary discretionary spending. It is more than twice what we spend on our military and defending our country. It is totally out of control and this is unmanageable.

In reality, this debt crisis will only get worse because this President and

Washington have not tackled the government's largest expense—mandatory spending programs such as Social Security and Medicare. This debt crisis does not only present a fiscal problem, it is inextricably linked to the global security concerns we are seeing today.

In order to have a strong foreign policy, we have to have a strong military, but to have a strong military we have to have a vibrant and growing strong economy. There is no secret that down through history the countries that have had the strongest militaries, and therefore the most secure foreign policy, are those that had the most vibrant economies of their day. Under this President's foreign policy decisions, he has created a power vacuum and put the country in a much weaker position.

Today our enemies don't fear us and our allies don't trust us. Just three decades ago we brought down the Soviet Union with the power of our ideas and the strength of our economy. Look at the world today. Over the past 7 years, we have seen the rise of a global security crisis that is unrivaled in my lifetime. We have seen the rise of traditional rivals such as China and Russia grow more aggressive. We have seen North Korea and Iran actually collaborate on nuclear proliferation. We have seen Syria cross red lines and terrorism fill power vacuums in the Middle East and around the world.

Last week North Korea claimed to have successfully completed its fourth nuclear weapons test with a much more powerful weapon than they possessed before. This is a sobering and stark reminder of the true consequences our country faces when our President shows weakness in the face of these radical regimes. And not only have we witnessed weaknesses, but we have also seen this President naively trust a country like Iran, the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism today.

Since President Obama announced his dangerous Iran deal in July despite strong bipartisan opposition, Iran has actively accelerated its ballistic missile program and continued financial support for terrorism in the region, in violation of the very sanction we just heard on this floor.

Iran has fired rockets near U.S. warships, fomented unrest in Yemen, taken more Americans hostages, refused to release an American passenger who has been held for 3 years, convicted an American journalist of spying, banned American products from being sold in Iran, and renewed its support for Hamas and Hezbollah terrorists.

From the beginning, President Obama didn't listen to military advice and prematurely pulled our troops out of Iraq, creating another power vacuum. ISIS, of course, we now know, grew into that power vacuum and sprouted influence not only in the Middle East but in Africa and Asia as well.

Last November, this President told the American people in a news interview:

We have contained them. They have not gained ground in Iraq. And in Syria if they'll come in, they'll leave. But you don't see this systematic march by ISIL across the terrain.

Well, we now know ISIS is not being contained in their ability to wage war against the West and will stop at nothing to deliver terrorism even to the shores of America. The President's plan has failed, it is plain and simple, and we sit here today with no strategy to defeat ISIS.

The world needs to see decisive action from the United States, not empty rhetoric that can't be backed up. We need a new leader who takes every threat of any size seriously. Moving forward, nothing can go unchecked and unmet without relentless American resolve.

No matter how we measure it, President Obama's economic and foreign policies have indeed failed. Time and again, he has refused to change course when his policies didn't work, when they didn't help the American people, whom he claims to champion. Instead, this President has created the fourth arm of government—the regulators—and they are sucking the very life out of our free enterprise system today. Now, fewer people are working, wages are stagnant, incomes aren't growing, the debt is soaring, and the world is much more dangerous than it was 8 years ago.

But tonight we will also hear from this President about his optimism for the future. Well, I get that. I share that optimism but only because I believe we can do better. We can do a lot better. We can tackle our national debt crisis. We can save Social Security and Medicare. We can defeat terrorism once and for all. We cannot do it without bold leadership, however. We cannot do it without a sense of urgency or responsibility. We cannot do it unless the political class in this town—Washington, DC—finally puts national interests in front of self-interests. We cannot do it without the will and support of the American people.

I believe in America. Georgians believe in America. Americans believe in America. Americans have always risen to the crisis of the day, and I believe we will rise to this crisis. But Washington needs to really listen to the American people, focus on solutions they support, and unite our Nation to make sure our best days are indeed ahead of us. We owe it to our children and our children's children, and the time to move is right now. The time for rhetoric has ended.

We need to face up to the two crises we have today: the global security crisis and our own debt crisis, which are interwoven together.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. AYOTTE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I withdraw the motion to proceed to S. 2232.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion is withdrawn.

AMERICAN SECURITY AGAINST FOREIGN ENEMIES ACT OF 2015—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 300, H.R. 4038.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 300, H.R. 4038, a bill to require that supplemental certifications and background investigations be completed prior to the admission of certain aliens as refugees, and for other purposes.

CLOTURE MOTION

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

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 300, H.R. 4038, an act to require that supplemental certifications and background investigations be completed prior to the admission of certain aliens as refugees, and for other purposes.

Mitch McConnell, Rob Portman, John Thune, Tom Cotton, Steve Daines, James M. Inhofe, Mike Crapo, Thom Tillis, Roger F. Wicker, Lindsey Graham, Pat Roberts, John Cornyn, Shelley Moore Capito, John Boozman, Michael B. Enzi, James E. Risch, John McCain.

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call be waived with respect to this cloture motion.

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

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I further ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, the cloture vote occur at 2:30 p.m. on Wednesday, January 20, and that if cloture is invoked, then the time be counted as if it had been invoked at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, January 19.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam 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 THOMAS BURR

Mr. HATCH. Madam President, today I wish to honor and congratulate Mr. Thomas Burr, the Salt Lake Tribune's Washington correspondent and newly inaugurated president of the National Press Club. Tommy has worked for the Salt Lake Tribune for 14 years, including 10 years as a correspondent here in Washington. Utah is privileged to have such a reputable journalist covering our Nation's capital.

In addition to his role as the Tribune's Washington correspondent, Tommy has also served as the president of the Regional Reporters Association and chairman of the Congressional Standing Committee of Correspondents. Moreover, he is one of the youngest members ever to join the Gridiron Club & Foundation.

Tommy is a native of Salina, UT, and the son of Ann Burr and the late James Burr. A graduate of Snow College and Southern Utah University, Tommy covered the Presidential campaigns of Mitt Romney and Jon Huntsman and was named the top regional reporter in Washington for a record three times by the National Press Club. He is the second Utahn to hold the title of press club president.

Founded in 1908, the National Press Club bills itself as the "World's Leading Professional Organization for Journalists." Since its inception, the organization has hosted monarchs, heads of state, U.S. Presidents, and prominent thought leaders such as Martin Luther King and the Dalai Lama. As president, Tommy will focus on building the press club's long-standing efforts to expand press freedoms worldwide. He also intends to boost membership and speak out for journalists who face government restraints.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the achievements of Tommy Burr and thank him for his contributions to the great State of Utah. On a personal note, I am grateful for my friendship with Tommy and look forward to many more stories to come. I wish him the very best in his new role as president of the National Press Club.

REMEMBERING DIANA TABLER FORBES

Mr. McCAIN. Madam President, today I wish to pay tribute to a dedicated, long-time public servant, wife, and mother, Diana Tabler Forbes. Diana died peacefully at her home in Alexandria, VA, on December 28, 2015, after a courageous 3-year battle with esophageal cancer.

Diana was a truly remarkable public servant. For over three decades, she served senior government leaders from both the executive and legislative

branches of government in the areas of military health and personnel policy.

Throughout her career, Diana often played a central role in responding to both international crises and domestic challenges. From 2004 until her retirement in 2013, she served as the senior professional staff member primarily responsible for oversight of the military health system on the Senate Armed Services Committee, serving me as ranking member and previously Chairman John Warner. In that role, she helped shape the legislative response to improving care and services to wounded, ill, and injured military servicemembers following a series of Pulitzer prize-winning Washington Post stories on health care support provided at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. Additionally, Diana played an instrumental role in developing legislation that established TRICARE benefits for military reservists and their families; provided community support for military families with disabilities; expanded combat casualty care research; and ensured access to healthcare services for servicemembers suffering from behavioral health conditions, like post-traumatic stress, and from traumatic brain injury.

In 2001, Diana was the senior health leader in the Pentagon on September 11. After relocating to other government buildings following the attack on the Pentagon, she oversaw the coordination of military medical support in both Washington, DC, and New York City.

Shortly after the U.S. invasion of Iraq and the toppling of Saddam Hussein's regime, Diana volunteered to serve in Iraq as a civilian in 2003, where she played a key role in the reconstruction of health systems in Iraq while serving as an adviser to the coalition provisional authority with U.S. and coalition forces in Iraq.

During the 1990s, Diana served in executive positions within the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Health Affairs, and helped oversee and implement many of the major components of the military health system now in place today, to include the establishment of TRICARE—the military's global health benefit that serves 9.5 million Americans today.

Following her retirement from Federal service, Diana continued to serve others. She remained closely connected with the Department of Defense, and she supported military servicemembers and families on the board of the National Military Family Association.

Diana's limitless energy and passion for the well-being of servicemembers and their families was legendary. She ensured everyone in Congress remembered who we served and why we served them. She knew how to cut through the bureaucracy and provide real solutions for those in need.

I express my sympathy to her husband, Ripley Forbes; her daughter, Meredith, a schoolteacher in Alexandria; and son, Jonathan, a junior at

Virginia Commonwealth University. As they mourn, they should know that Diana's legacy lives on in them and in the many thousands of servicemembers and their families that she selflessly served.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message from the President of the United States was communicated to the Senate by Mr. Pate, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGE REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate a message from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the Committee on the Judiciary.

(The message received today is printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE

REPORT ON THE STATE OF THE UNION DELIVERED TO A JOINT SESSION OF CONGRESS ON JANUARY 12, 2016—PM 36

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

To the Congress of the United States:

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice President, Members of Congress, my fellow Americans:

Tonight marks the eighth year I've come here to report on the State of the Union. And for this final one, I'm going to try to make it shorter. I know some of you are antsy to get back to Iowa.

I also understand that because it's an election season, expectations for what we'll achieve this year are low. Still, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the constructive approach you and the other leaders took at the end of last year to pass a budget and make tax cuts permanent for working families. So I hope we can work together this year on bipartisan priorities like criminal justice reform, and helping people who are battling prescription drug abuse. We just might surprise the cynics again.

But tonight, I want to go easy on the traditional list of proposals for the year ahead. Don't worry, I've got plenty, from helping students learn to write computer code to personalizing medical treatments for patients. And I'll keep pushing for progress on the work that still needs doing. Fixing a broken immigration system. Protecting our kids from gun violence. Equal pay for equal work, paid leave, raising the minimum wage. All these things still matter to hardworking families; they are still the right thing to do; and I will not let up until they get done.

But for my final address to this chamber, I don't want to talk just about the next year. I want to focus on the next five years, ten years, and beyond.

I want to focus on our future.

We live in a time of extraordinary change—change that's reshaping the way we live, the way we work, our planet and our place in the world. It's change that promises amazing medical breakthroughs, but also economic disruptions that strain working families. It promises education for girls in the most remote villages, but also connects terrorists plotting an ocean away. It's change that can broaden opportunity, or widen inequality. And whether we like it or not, the pace of this change will only accelerate.

America has been through big changes before—wars and depression, the influx of immigrants, workers fighting for a fair deal, and movements to expand civil rights. Each time, there have been those who told us to fear the future; who claimed we could slam the brakes on change, promising to restore past glory if we just got some group or idea that was threatening America under control. And each time, we overcame those fears. We did not, in the words of Lincoln, adhere to the “dogmas of the quiet past.” Instead we thought anew, and acted anew. We made change work for us, always extending America's promise outward, to the next frontier, to more and more people. And because we did—because we saw opportunity where others saw only peril—we emerged stronger and better than before.

What was true then can be true now. Our unique strengths as a nation—our optimism and work ethic, our spirit of discovery and innovation, our diversity and commitment to the rule of law—these things give us everything we need to ensure prosperity and security for generations to come.

In fact, it's that spirit that made the progress of these past seven years possible. It's how we recovered from the worst economic crisis in generations. It's how we reformed our health care system, and reinvented our energy sector; how we delivered more care and benefits to our troops and veterans, and how we secured the freedom in every state to marry the person we love.

But such progress is not inevitable. It is the result of choices we make together. And we face such choices right now. Will we respond to the changes of our time with fear, turning inward as a nation, and turning against each other as a people? Or will we face the future with confidence in who we are, what we stand for, and the incredible things we can do together?

So let's talk about the future, and four big questions that we as a country have to answer—regardless of who the next President is, or who controls the next Congress.

First, how do we give everyone a fair shot at opportunity and security in this new economy?

Second, how do we make technology work for us, and not against us—especially when it comes to solving urgent challenges like climate change?

Third, how do we keep America safe and lead the world without becoming its policeman?

And finally, how can we make our politics reflect what's best in us, and not what's worst?

Let me start with the economy, and a basic fact: the United States of America, right now, has the strongest, most durable economy in the world. We're in the middle of the longest streak of private-sector job creation in history. More than 14 million new jobs; the strongest two years of job growth since the '90s; an unemployment rate cut in half. Our auto industry just had its best year ever. Manufacturing has created nearly 900,000 new jobs in the past six years. And we've done all this while cutting our deficits by almost three-quarters.

Anyone claiming that America's economy is in decline is peddling fiction. What is true—and the reason that a lot of Americans feel anxious—is that the economy has been changing in profound ways, changes that started long before the Great Recession hit and haven't let up. Today, technology doesn't just replace jobs on the assembly line, but any job where work can be automated. Companies in a global economy can locate anywhere, and face tougher competition. As a result, workers have less leverage for a raise. Companies have less loyalty to their communities. And more and more wealth and income is concentrated at the very top.

All these trends have squeezed workers, even when they have jobs; even when the economy is growing. It's made it harder for a hardworking family to pull itself out of poverty, harder for young people to start on their careers, and tougher for workers to retire when they want to. And although none of these trends are unique to America, they do offend our uniquely American belief that everybody who works hard should get a fair shot.

For the past seven years, our goal has been a growing economy that works better for everybody. We've made progress. But we need to make more. And despite all the political arguments we've had these past few years, there are some areas where Americans broadly agree.

We agree that real opportunity requires every American to get the education and training they need to land a good-paying job. The bipartisan reform of No Child Left Behind was an important start, and together, we've increased early childhood education, lifted high school graduation rates to new highs, and boosted graduates in fields like engineering. In the coming years, we should build on that progress, by providing Pre-K for all, offering every student the hands-on computer science and math classes that make them job-ready on day one, and we should re-

cruit and support more great teachers for our kids.

And we have to make college affordable for every American. Because no hardworking student should be stuck in the red. We've already reduced student loan payments to ten percent of a borrower's income. Now, we've actually got to cut the cost of college. Providing two years of community college at no cost for every responsible student is one of the best ways to do that, and I'm going to keep fighting to get that started this year.

Of course, a great education isn't all we need in this new economy. We also need benefits and protections that provide a basic measure of security. After all, it's not much of a stretch to say that some of the only people in America who are going to work the same job, in the same place, with a health and retirement package, for 30 years, are sitting in this chamber. For everyone else, especially folks in their forties and fifties, saving for retirement or bouncing back from job loss has gotten a lot tougher. Americans understand that at some point in their careers, they may have to retool and retrain. But they shouldn't lose what they've already worked so hard to build.

That's why Social Security and Medicare are more important than ever; we shouldn't weaken them, we should strengthen them. And for Americans short of retirement, basic benefits should be just as mobile as everything else is today. That's what the Affordable Care Act is all about. It's about filling the gaps in employer-based care so that when we lose a job, or go back to school, or start that new business, we'll still have coverage. Nearly eighteen million have gained coverage so far. Health care inflation has slowed. And our businesses have created jobs every single month since it became law.

Now, I'm guessing we won't agree on health care anytime soon. But there should be other ways both parties can improve economic security. Say a hardworking American loses his job—we shouldn't just make sure he can get unemployment insurance; we should make sure that program encourages him to retrain for a business that's ready to hire him. If that new job doesn't pay as much, there should be a system of wage insurance in place so that he can still pay his bills. And even if he's going from job to job, he should still be able to save for retirement and take his savings with him. That's the way we make the new economy work better for everyone.

I also know Speaker Ryan has talked about his interest in tackling poverty. America is about giving everybody willing to work a hand up, and I'd welcome a serious discussion about strategies we can all support, like expanding tax cuts for low-income workers without kids.

But there are other areas where it's been more difficult to find agreement

over the last seven years—namely what role the government should play in making sure the system's not rigged in favor of the wealthiest and biggest corporations. And here, the American people have a choice to make.

I believe a thriving private sector is the lifeblood of our economy. I think there are outdated regulations that need to be changed, and there's red tape that needs to be cut. But after years of record corporate profits, working families won't get more opportunity or bigger paychecks by letting big banks or big oil or hedge funds make their own rules at the expense of everyone else; or by allowing attacks on collective bargaining to go unanswered. Food Stamp recipients didn't cause the financial crisis; recklessness on Wall Street did. Immigrants aren't the reason wages haven't gone up enough; those decisions are made in the boardrooms that too often put quarterly earnings over long-term returns. It's sure not the average family watching tonight that avoids paying taxes through offshore accounts. In this new economy, workers and startups and small businesses need more of a voice, not less. The rules should work for them. And this year I plan to lift up the many businesses who've figured out that doing right by their workers ends up being good for their shareholders, their customers, and their communities, so that we can spread those best practices across America.

In fact, many of our best corporate citizens are also our most creative. This brings me to the second big question we have to answer as a country: how do we reignite that spirit of innovation to meet our biggest challenges?

Sixty years ago, when the Russians beat us into space, we didn't deny Sputnik was up there. We didn't argue about the science, or shrink our research and development budget. We built a space program almost overnight, and twelve years later, we were walking on the moon.

That spirit of discovery is in our DNA. We're Thomas Edison and the Wright Brothers and George Washington Carver. We're Grace Hopper and Katherine Johnson and Sally Ride. We're every immigrant and entrepreneur from Boston to Austin to Silicon Valley racing to shape a better world. And over the past seven years, we've nurtured that spirit.

We've protected an open internet, and taken bold new steps to get more students and low-income Americans online. We've launched next-generation manufacturing hubs, and online tools that give an entrepreneur everything he or she needs to start a business in a single day.

But we can do so much more. Last year, Vice President Biden said that with a new moonshot, America can cure cancer. Last month, he worked with this Congress to give scientists at the National Institutes of Health the strongest resources they've had in over a decade. Tonight, I'm announcing a

new national effort to get it done. And because he's gone to the mat for all of us, on so many issues over the past forty years, I'm putting Joe in charge of Mission Control. For the loved ones we've all lost, for the family we can still save, let's make America the country that cures cancer once and for all.

Medical research is critical. We need the same level of commitment when it comes to developing clean energy sources.

Look, if anybody still wants to dispute the science around climate change, have at it. You'll be pretty lonely, because you'll be debating our military, most of America's business leaders, the majority of the American people, almost the entire scientific community, and 200 nations around the world who agree it's a problem and intend to solve it.

But even if the planet wasn't at stake; even if 2014 wasn't the warmest year on record—until 2015 turned out even hotter—why would we want to pass up the chance for American businesses to produce and sell the energy of the future?

Seven years ago, we made the single biggest investment in clean energy in our history. Here are the results. In fields from Iowa to Texas, wind power is now cheaper than dirtier, conventional power. On rooftops from Arizona to New York, solar is saving Americans tens of millions of dollars a year on their energy bills, and employs more Americans than coal—in jobs that pay better than average. We're taking steps to give homeowners the freedom to generate and store their own energy—something environmentalists and Tea Partiers have teamed up to support. Meanwhile, we've cut our imports of foreign oil by nearly sixty percent, and cut carbon pollution more than any other country on Earth.

Gas under two bucks a gallon ain't bad, either.

Now we've got to accelerate the transition away from dirty energy. Rather than subsidize the past, we should invest in the future—especially in communities that rely on fossil fuels. That's why I'm going to push to change the way we manage our oil and coal resources, so that they better reflect the costs they impose on taxpayers and our planet. That way, we put money back into those communities and put tens of thousands of Americans to work building a 21st century transportation system.

None of this will happen overnight, and yes, there are plenty of entrenched interests who want to protect the status quo. But the jobs we'll create, the money we'll save, and the planet we'll preserve—that's the kind of future our kids and grandkids deserve.

Climate change is just one of many issues where our security is linked to the rest of the world. And that's why the third big question we have to answer is how to keep America safe and strong without either isolating our-

selves or trying to nation-build everywhere there's a problem.

I told you earlier all the talk of America's economic decline is political hot air. Well, so is all the rhetoric you hear about our enemies getting stronger and America getting weaker. The United States of America is the most powerful nation on Earth. Period. It's not even close. We spend more on our military than the next eight nations combined. Our troops are the finest fighting force in the history of the world. No nation dares to attack us or our allies because they know that's the path to ruin. Surveys show our standing around the world is higher than when I was elected to this office, and when it comes to every important international issue, people of the world do not look to Beijing or Moscow to lead—they call us.

As someone who begins every day with an intelligence briefing, I know this is a dangerous time. But that's not because of diminished American strength or some looming superpower. In today's world, we're threatened less by evil empires and more by failing states. The Middle East is going through a transformation that will play out for a generation, rooted in conflicts that date back millennia. Economic headwinds blow from a Chinese economy in transition. Even as their economy contracts, Russia is pouring resources to prop up Ukraine and Syria—states they see slipping away from their orbit. And the international system we built after World War II is now struggling to keep pace with this new reality.

It's up to us to help remake that system. And that means we have to set priorities.

Priority number one is protecting the American people and going after terrorist networks. Both al Qaeda and now ISIL pose a direct threat to our people, because in today's world, even a handful of terrorists who place no value on human life, including their own, can do a lot of damage. They use the Internet to poison the minds of individuals inside our country; they undermine our allies.

But as we focus on destroying ISIL, over-the-top claims that this is World War III just play into their hands. Masses of fighters on the back of pickup trucks and twisted souls plotting in apartments or garages pose an enormous danger to civilians and must be stopped. But they do not threaten our national existence. That's the story ISIL wants to tell; that's the kind of propaganda they use to recruit. We don't need to build them up to show that we're serious, nor do we need to push away vital allies in this fight by echoing the lie that ISIL is representative of one of the world's largest religions. We just need to call them what they are—killers and fanatics who have to be rooted out, hunted down, and destroyed.

That's exactly what we are doing. For more than a year, America has led

a coalition of more than 60 countries to cut off ISIL's financing, disrupt their plots, stop the flow of terrorist fighters, and stamp out their vicious ideology. With nearly 10,000 air strikes, we are taking out their leadership, their oil, their training camps, and their weapons. We are training, arming, and supporting forces who are steadily reclaiming territory in Iraq and Syria.

If this Congress is serious about winning this war, and wants to send a message to our troops and the world, you should finally authorize the use of military force against ISIL. Take a vote. But the American people should know that with or without Congressional action, ISIL will learn the same lessons as terrorists before them. If you doubt America's commitment—or mine—to see that justice is done, ask Osama bin Laden. Ask the leader of al Qaeda in Yemen, who was taken out last year, or the perpetrator of the Benghazi attacks, who sits in a prison cell. When you come after Americans, we go after you. It may take time, but we have long memories, and our reach has no limit.

Our foreign policy must be focused on the threat from ISIL and al Qaeda, but it can't stop there. For even without ISIL, instability will continue for decades in many parts of the world—in the Middle East, in Afghanistan and Pakistan, in parts of Central America, Africa and Asia. Some of these places may become safe havens for new terrorist networks; others will fall victim to ethnic conflict, or famine, feeding the next wave of refugees. The world will look to us to help solve these problems, and our answer needs to be more than tough talk or calls to carpet bomb civilians. That may work as a TV sound bite, but it doesn't pass muster on the world stage.

We also can't try to take over and rebuild every country that falls into crisis. That's not leadership; that's a recipe for quagmire, spilling American blood and treasure that ultimately weakens us. It's the lesson of Vietnam, of Iraq—and we should have learned it by now.

Fortunately, there's a smarter approach, a patient and disciplined strategy that uses every element of our national power. It says America will always act, alone if necessary, to protect our people and our allies; but on issues of global concern, we will mobilize the world to work with us, and make sure other countries pull their own weight.

That's our approach to conflicts like Syria, where we're partnering with local forces and leading international efforts to help that broken society pursue a lasting peace.

That's why we built a global coalition, with sanctions and principled diplomacy, to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran. As we speak, Iran has rolled back its nuclear program, shipped out its uranium stockpile, and the world has avoided another war.

That's how we stopped the spread of Ebola in West Africa. Our military, our

doctors, and our development workers set up the platform that allowed other countries to join us in stamping out that epidemic.

That's how we forged a Trans-Pacific Partnership to open markets, protect workers and the environment, and advance American leadership in Asia. It cuts 18,000 taxes on products Made in America, and supports more good jobs. With TPP, China doesn't set the rules in that region, we do. You want to show our strength in this century? Approve this agreement. Give us the tools to enforce it.

Fifty years of isolating Cuba had failed to promote democracy, setting us back in Latin America. That's why we restored diplomatic relations, opened the door to travel and commerce, and positioned ourselves to improve the lives of the Cuban people. You want to consolidate our leadership and credibility in the hemisphere? Recognize that the Cold War is over. Lift the embargo.

American leadership in the 21st century is not a choice between ignoring the rest of the world—except when we kill terrorists; or occupying and rebuilding whatever society is unraveling. Leadership means a wise application of military power, and rallying the world behind causes that are right. It means seeing our foreign assistance as part of our national security, not charity. When we lead nearly 200 nations to the most ambitious agreement in history to fight climate change—that helps vulnerable countries, but it also protects our children. When we help Ukraine defend its democracy, or Colombia resolve a decades-long war, that strengthens the international order we depend upon. When we help African countries feed their people and care for the sick, that prevents the next pandemic from reaching our shores. Right now, we are on track to end the scourge of HIV/AIDS, and we have the capacity to accomplish the same thing with malaria—something I'll be pushing this Congress to fund this year.

That's strength. That's leadership. And that kind of leadership depends on the power of our example. That is why I will keep working to shut down the prison at Guantanamo: it's expensive, it's unnecessary, and it only serves as a recruitment brochure for our enemies.

That's why we need to reject any politics that targets people because of race or religion. This isn't a matter of political correctness. It's a matter of understanding what makes us strong. The world respects us not just for our arsenal; it respects us for our diversity and our openness and the way we respect every faith. His Holiness, Pope Francis, told this body from the very spot I stand tonight that “to imitate the hatred and violence of tyrants and murderers is the best way to take their place.” When politicians insult Muslims, when a mosque is vandalized, or a kid bullied, that doesn't make us safer. That's not telling it like it is. It's just wrong. It diminishes us in the eyes of

the world. It makes it harder to achieve our goals. And it betrays who we are as a country.

“We the People.” Our Constitution begins with those three simple words, words we've come to recognize mean all the people, not just some; words that insist we rise and fall together. That brings me to the fourth, and maybe the most important thing I want to say tonight.

The future we want—opportunity and security for our families; a rising standard of living and a sustainable, peaceful planet for our kids—all that is within our reach. But it will only happen if we work together. It will only happen if we can have rational, constructive debates.

It will only happen if we fix our politics.

A better politics doesn't mean we have to agree on everything. This is a big country, with different regions and attitudes and interests. That's one of our strengths, too. Our Founders distributed power between states and branches of government, and expected us to argue, just as they did, over the size and shape of government, over commerce and foreign relations, over the meaning of liberty and the imperatives of security.

But democracy does require basic bonds of trust between its citizens. It doesn't work if we think the people who disagree with us are all motivated by malice, or that our political opponents are unpatriotic. Democracy grinds to a halt without a willingness to compromise; or when even basic facts are contested, and we listen only to those who agree with us. Our public life withers when only the most extreme voices get attention. Most of all, democracy breaks down when the average person feels their voice doesn't matter; that the system is rigged in favor of the rich or the powerful or some narrow interest.

Too many Americans feel that way right now. It's one of the few regrets of my presidency—that the rancor and suspicion between the parties has gotten worse instead of better. There's no doubt a president with the gifts of Lincoln or Roosevelt might have better bridged the divide, and I guarantee I'll keep trying to be better so long as I hold this office.

But, my fellow Americans, this cannot be my task—or any President's—alone. There are a whole lot of folks in this chamber who would like to see more cooperation, a more elevated debate in Washington, but feel trapped by the demands of getting elected. I know; you've told me. And if we want a better politics, it's not enough to just change a Congressman or a Senator or even a President; we have to change the system to reflect our better selves.

We have to end the practice of drawing our congressional districts so that politicians can pick their voters, and not the other way around. We have to reduce the influence of money in our politics, so that a handful of families

and hidden interests can't bankroll our elections—and if our existing approach to campaign finance can't pass muster in the courts, we need to work together to find a real solution. We've got to make voting easier, not harder, and modernize it for the way we live now. And over the course of this year, I intend to travel the country to push for reforms that do.

But I can't do these things on my own. Changes in our political process—in not just who gets elected but how they get elected—that will only happen when the American people demand it. It will depend on you. That's what's meant by a government of, by, and for the people.

What I'm asking for is hard. It's easier to be cynical; to accept that change isn't possible, and politics is hopeless, and to believe that our voices and actions don't matter. But if we give up now, then we forsake a better future. Those with money and power will gain greater control over the decisions that could send a young soldier to war, or allow another economic disaster, or roll back the equal rights and voting rights that generations of Americans have fought, even died, to secure. As frustration grows, there will be voices urging us to fall back into tribes, to scapegoat fellow citizens who don't look like us, or pray like us, or vote like we do, or share the same back-ground.

We can't afford to go down that path. It won't deliver the economy we want, or the security we want, but most of all, it contradicts everything that makes us the envy of the world.

So, my fellow Americans, whatever you may believe, whether you prefer one party or no party, our collective future depends on your willingness to uphold your obligations as a citizen. To vote. To speak out. To stand up for others, especially the weak, especially the vulnerable, knowing that each of us is only here because somebody, somewhere, stood up for us. To stay active in our public life so it reflects the goodness and decency and optimism that I see in the American people every single day.

It won't be easy. Our brand of democracy is hard. But I can promise that a year from now, when I no longer hold this office, I'll be right there with you as a citizen—inspired by those voices of fairness and vision, of grit and good humor and kindness that have helped America travel so far. Voices that help us see ourselves not first and foremost as black or white or Asian or Latino, not as gay or straight, immigrant or native born; not as Democrats or Republicans, but as Americans first, bound by a common creed. Voices Dr. King believed would have the final word—voices of unarmed truth and unconditional love.

They're out there, those voices. They don't get a lot of attention, nor do they seek it, but they are busy doing the work this country needs doing.

I see them everywhere I travel in this incredible country of ours. I see you. I

know you're there. You're the reason why I have such incredible confidence in our future. Because I see your quiet, sturdy citizenship all the time.

I see it in the worker on the assembly line who clocked extra shifts to keep his company open, and the boss who pays him higher wages to keep him on board.

I see it in the Dreamer who stays up late to finish her science project, and the teacher who comes in early because he knows she might someday cure a disease.

I see it in the American who served his time, and dreams of starting over—and the business owner who gives him that second chance. The protester determined to prove that justice matters, and the young cop walking the beat, treating everybody with respect, doing the brave, quiet work of keeping us safe.

I see it in the soldier who gives almost everything to save his brothers, the nurse who tends to him 'til he can run a marathon, and the community that lines up to cheer him on.

It's the son who finds the courage to come out as who he is, and the father whose love for that son overrides everything he's been taught.

I see it in the elderly woman who will wait in line to cast her vote as long as she has to; the new citizen who casts his for the first time; the volunteers at the polls who believe every vote should count, because each of them in different ways know how much that precious right is worth.

That's the America I know. That's the country we love. Clear-eyed. Big-hearted. Optimistic that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word. That's what makes me so hopeful about our future. Because of you. I believe in you. That's why I stand here confident that the State of our Union is strong.

Thank you, God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

BARACK OBAMA.

THE WHITE HOUSE, January 12, 2016.

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 10:52 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, without amendment:

S. 142. An act to require special packaging for liquid nicotine containers, and for other purposes.

S. 1115. An act to close out expired grants.

S. 1629. An act to revise certain authorities of the District of Columbia courts, the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency for the District of Columbia, and the Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia, and for other purposes.

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

H.R. 598. An act to provide taxpayers with an annual report disclosing the cost and performance of Government programs and areas of duplication among them, and for other purposes.

H.R. 653. An act to amend section 552 of title 5, United States Code (commonly known as the Freedom of Information Act), to provide for greater public access to information, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1069. An act to amend title 44, United States Code, to require information on contributors to Presidential library fundraising organizations, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1777. An act to amend the Act of August 25, 1958, commonly known as the "Former Presidents Act of 1958", with respect to the monetary allowance payable to a former President, and for other purposes.

H.R. 3231. An act to amend title 5, United States Code, to protect unpaid interns in the Federal Government from workplace harassment and discrimination, and for other purposes.

MEASURES REFERRED

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

H.R. 653. An act to amend section 552 of title 5, United States Code (commonly known as the Freedom of Information Act), to provide for greater public access to information, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

H.R. 1777. An act to amend the Act of August 25, 1958, commonly known as the "Former Presidents Act of 1958", with respect to the monetary allowance payable to a former President, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

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

EC-4003. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Spinetoram; Pesticide Tolerances" (FRL No. 9933-39-OCSPP) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 30, 2015; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-4004. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Propiconazole; Pesticide Tolerances" (FRL No. 9940-01-OCSPP) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 30, 2015; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-4005. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Airworthiness Directives; ATR-GIE Avions de Transport Regional Airplanes" ((RIN2120-AA64) (Docket No. FAA-2015-0682)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 30, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4006. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Airworthiness Directives; Agusta S.p.A. Helicopters" ((RIN2120-AA64) (Docket No. FAA-2015-3783))

EC-4029. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal

Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Registration and Marking Requirements for Small Unmanned Aircraft" (RIN2120-AK82) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 30, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4030. A communication from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Exchange of Flatfish in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area" (RIN0648-XE274) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 30, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4031. A communication from the Federal Register Liaison Officer, Office of Protective Services, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "NASA Protective Services Enforcement" (RIN2700-AE24) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 30, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4032. A communication from the Regulatory Ombudsman, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Electronic Logging Devices and Hours of Service Supporting Documents" (RIN2126-AB20) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 30, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4033. A communication from the Deputy Division Chief, Wireline Competition Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Improvements to Benchmarks and Related Requirements Governing Hearing Aid-Compatible Mobile Handsets and Amendment of the Commission's Rules Governing Hearing Aid-Compatible Mobile Handsets" ((WT Docket No. 15-285 and WT Docket No. 07-250) (FCC 15-155)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 17, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4034. A communication from the Secretary of the Commission, Bureau of Consumer Protection, Federal Trade Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Telemarketing Sales Rule" (RIN3084-AB19) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 17, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4035. A communication from the Director of Defense Procurement and Acquisition Policy, Department of Defense, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement: Network Penetration Reporting and Contracting for Cloud Services" ((RIN0750-AI61) (DFARS Case 2013-D018)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 30, 2015; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-4036. A communication from the Director of Defense Procurement and Acquisition Policy, Department of Defense, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement: Taxes—Foreign Contracts in Afghanistan" ((RIN0750-AI26) (DFARS Case 2014-D003)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 30, 2015; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-4037. A communication from the Director of Defense Procurement and Acquisition Policy, Department of Defense, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement: Trade Agreements Thresholds" ((RIN0750-AI79) (DFARS Case 2016-D003)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 30, 2015; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-4038. A communication from the Secretary of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the export to the People's Republic of China of items not detrimental to the U.S. space launch industry; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-4039. A communication from the Assistant Secretary for Export Administration, Bureau of Industry and Security, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Russian Sanctions: Addition of Certain Persons to the Entity List" (RIN0694-AG64) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 30, 2015; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-4040. A communication from the Assistant Director for Regulatory Affairs, Office of Foreign Assets Control, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Cyber-Related Sanctions Regulations" (31 CFR Part 578) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 30, 2015; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-4041. A communication from the President of the United States, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the designation as an emergency requirement all funding so designated by the Congress in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016, pursuant to section 251(b)(2)(A) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, as amended, for the following accounts: "International Monetary Programs—United States Quota, International Monetary Fund—Direct Loan Program Account" and "Loans to the International Monetary Fund—Direct Loan Program Account"; to the Committee on the Budget.

EC-4042. A communication from the President of the United States, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the designation of funding for Overseas Contingency Operations/Global War on Terrorism; to the Committee on the Budget.

EC-4043. A communication from the Chairman, National Transportation Safety Board, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the Board's competitive sourcing efforts for fiscal year 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4044. A communication from the Acting Associate Bureau Chief, Wireline Competition Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Rules for Interstate Inmate Calling Services" ((RIN3060-AK08) (FCC 15-136)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 28, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4045. A communication from the Senior Assistant Chief Counsel for Hazmat Safety Law, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Hazardous Materials: Requirements for the Safe Transportation of Bulk Explosives (RRR)" (RIN2137-AE86) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 30, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4046. A communication from the Trial Attorney, Federal Railroad Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Passenger Train Exterior Side Door Safety" (RIN2130-AC34) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 30, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4047. A communication from the Chairman of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled "Assessment of Demand Response and Advanced Metering"; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-4048. A communication from the Federal Register Certifying Officer, Bureau of the Fiscal Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Regulations Governing United States Savings Bonds" ((RIN1530-AA11) (31 CFR Parts 315, 353, and 360)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 30, 2015; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-4049. A communication from the Federal Register Certifying Officer, Bureau of the Fiscal Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Debt Collection Authorities Under the Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996" ((RIN1530-AA12) (31 CFR Part 285)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 30, 2015; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-4050. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Payout Requirements for Type III Supporting Organization That Are Not Functionally Integrated" ((RIN1545-BL44) (TD 9746)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 4, 2016; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-4051. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "2015 Cumulative List of Changes in Plan Qualification Requirements" (Notice 2015-84) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 4, 2016; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-4052. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Claiming the Health Coverage Tax Credit for 2014 and 2015" (Notice 2016-02) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 4, 2016; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-4053. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Minimum Value of Eligible Employer-Sponsored Plans and Other Rules Regarding the Health Insurance Premium Tax Credit" ((RIN1545-BL43) (TD 9745)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 4, 2016; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-4054. A communication from the Assistant Secretary for Legislation, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled "2013 Scientific and Clinical Status of Organ Transplantation"; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-4055. A communication from the Assistant Secretary for Legislation, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled "National Health Service Corps Report to the Congress for the Year 2014"; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-4056. A communication from the Assistant Secretary for Legislation, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled "Report to Congress on Coordination of Federal HIV Programs for Fiscal Years 2009-2013"; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-4057. A communication from the Assistant Secretary for Legislation, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled "Fiscal Year 2011 Report to Congress on the Assets for Independence Program"; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-4058. A communication from the Assistant Secretary for Legislation, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled "Annual Report to Congress on the Prevention and Reduction of Underage Drinking"; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-4059. A communication from the Vice President (Acting) for Congressional and Public Affairs, Millennium Challenge Corporation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Corporation's Agency Financial Report for fiscal year 2015; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4060. A communication from the Senior Procurement Executive, Office of Acquisition Policy, General Services Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Federal Acquisition Regulation; Definition of 'Multiple-Award Contract'" (RIN9000-AM96) (FAC 2005-86)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 30, 2015; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4061. A communication from the Senior Procurement Executive, Office of Acquisition Policy, General Services Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Federal Acquisition Regulation; Trade Agreement Thresholds" (RIN9000-AN16) (FAC 2005-86)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 30, 2015; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4062. A communication from the Senior Procurement Executive, Office of Acquisition Policy, General Services Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Federal Acquisition Regulation; Small Entity Compliance Guide" (FAC 2005-86) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 30, 2015; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4063. A communication from the Senior Procurement Executive, Office of Acquisition Policy, General Services Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Federal Acquisition Regulation; Introduction" (FAC 2005-86) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 30, 2015; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4064. A communication from the Federal Liaison Officer, Patent and Trademark Office, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "International Trademark Classifica-

tion Changes" (RIN0651-AD06) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 30, 2015; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC-4065. A communication from the Director, Office of Congressional Affairs, Federal Election Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the Commission's competitive sourcing efforts during fiscal year 2015; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

PETITIONS AND MEMORIALS

The following petitions and memorials were laid before the Senate and were referred or ordered to lie on the table as indicated:

POM-126. A joint resolution adopted by the Legislature of the State of Illinois applying to the United States Congress, pursuant to Article V of the Constitution of the United States, for the calling of a convention for proposing amendments; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 42

Whereas, The first President of the United States, George Washington, stated in his Farewell Address: "The basis of our political systems is the right of the people to make and to alter their Constitutions of Government."; and

Whereas, It was the stated intention of the framers of the Constitution of the United States of America that the Congress of the United States of America should be "dependent on the people alone" (James Madison, *Federalist* 52); and

Whereas, That dependency has evolved from a dependency on the people alone to a dependency on those who spend excessively in elections, through campaigns or third-party groups; and

Whereas, The United States Supreme Court ruling in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, 558 U.S. 310 (2010), removed restrictions on amounts of independent political spending; and

Whereas, Article V of the United States Constitution requires the United States Congress to call a convention for proposing amendments upon application of two-thirds of the legislatures of the several states for the purpose of proposing amendments to the United States Constitution; and

Whereas, The State of Illinois sees the need for a convention to propose amendments in order to address concerns such as those raised by the decision of the United States Supreme Court in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* and related cases and events, including those occurring long before or afterward, or for a substantially similar purpose, and desires that the convention should be so limited; and

Whereas, The State of Illinois desires that the delegates to the convention shall be comprised equally from individuals currently elected to State and local office, or be selected by election in each Congressional district for the purpose of serving as delegates, though all individuals elected or appointed to federal office, now or in the past, be prohibited from serving as delegates to the Convention, and intends to retain the ability to restrict or expand the power of its delegates within the limits expressed above; and

Whereas, The State of Illinois intends that this be a continuing application, considered together with applications calling for a convention currently pending in the 188th Massachusetts legislature as S.1727 and H.3190, the 2013-2014 Vermont legislature as J.R.S. 27, and the 2013-2014 California legislature as AJR 1, and all other passed, pending, and future applications, the aforementioned con-

cerns of Illinois notwithstanding until such time as two-thirds of the several states have applied for a Convention and that Convention is convened by Congress; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, by the Senate of the Ninety-Eighth General Assembly of the State of Illinois, the House Of Representatives concurring herein, that we, the legislature of the State of Illinois, hereby make application to the Congress, under the provisions of Article V of the Constitution of the United States, for the calling of a convention for proposing amendments; and be it further

Resolved, That this application shall be deemed an application for a convention to address each and any of the subjects listed in this resolution; for purposes of determining whether two-thirds of the states have applied for a convention addressing any subject, this application is to be aggregated with the applications of any other state legislatures limited to one or more of the subjects listed in this resolution; and be it further

Resolved, That this resolution constitutes a continuing application and remains in effect until rescission by any sitting session of the legislature of this State; this application does not constitute a recognition that any particular activity or activities currently undertaken by the federal government is or are authorized by the Constitution; and be it further

Resolved, That suitable copies of this resolution be delivered to the President and Secretary of the United States Senate, the Speaker and Clerk of the House of Representatives of the United States Congress, and the Archivist of the United States; to the members of the United States Senate and House of Representatives from this State; and to the presiding officers of each of the legislative chambers in the several states, requesting their cooperation.

POM-127. A resolution adopted by the House of Representatives of the State of Michigan urging the United States Senate to concur with the United States House of Representatives and repeal the country-of-origin labeling regulations; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 184

Whereas, The United States and Canada have the largest trading relationship in the world, with bilateral trade valued at \$759 billion in 2014, an association that benefits the economies of both countries. Michigan's merchandise exports to Canada in 2014 were valued at \$25.4 billion, and 259,000 Michigan jobs depend on trade and investment with Canada; and

Whereas, The U.S. has implemented mandatory country-of-origin labeling (COOL) rules requiring meats sold at retail stores to be labeled with information on the source of the meat. The World Trade Organization (WTO) has repeatedly ruled that COOL discriminates against imported livestock and is not compliant with international trade obligations. Due to the WTO rulings, the U.S. may be subject to \$3.6 billion in retaliatory tariffs sought by Canada and Mexico; and

Whereas, COOL regulations also jeopardize the viability of the U.S. packing and feeding industries. The additional \$500 million in annual compliance costs could lead to significant job losses and plant closures with potentially devastating impacts to local and state economies. All this for an issue the United States Department of Agriculture has clearly indicated is not about food safety; and

Whereas, The U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 2393 to repeal the mandatory labeling for certain meats in June 2015 with 300 votes, showing a strong recognition

across party lines, as well as regionally, that COOL must be repealed. However, the U.S. Senate appears less inclined to repeal the COOL requirement, risking the American economy to billions of dollars in retaliatory tariffs; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives, That we urge the United States Senate to concur with the United States House of Representatives and repeal the country-of-origin labeling regulations; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States Senate and the members of the Michigan congressional delegation.

POM-128. A petition by a citizen from the State of Texas urging the United States Congress to propose an amendment to the United States Constitution which would clarify that a declaration of martial law, or a suspension of the writ of habeas corpus, does not immunize the President of the United States from any process of involuntary removal from the office of President that is contained within the Constitution; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

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

S. 2021. A bill to prohibit Federal agencies and Federal contractors from requesting that an applicant for employment disclose criminal history record information before the applicant has received a conditional offer, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 114-200).

By Mr. BARRASSO, from the Committee on Indian Affairs, without amendment:

S. 1579. A bill to enhance and integrate Native American tourism, empower Native American communities, increase coordination and collaboration between Federal tourism assets, and expand heritage and cultural tourism opportunities in the United States (Rept. No. 114-201).

S. 1761. A bill to take certain Federal land located in Lassen County, California, into trust for the benefit of the Susanville Indian Rancheria, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 114-202).

By Mr. BARRASSO, from the Committee on Indian Affairs, with an amendment:

S. 1822. A bill to take certain Federal land located in Tuolumne County, California, into trust for the benefit of the Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 114-203).

By Mr. BARRASSO, from the Committee on Indian Affairs, without amendment:

H.R. 387. A bill to provide for certain land to be taken into trust for the benefit of Morongo Band of Mission Indians, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 114-204).

H.R. 487. A bill to allow the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma to lease or transfer certain lands (Rept. No. 114-205).

EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following executive reports of nominations were submitted:

By Mr. ALEXANDER for the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

*Robert McKinnon Califf, of South Carolina, to be Commissioner of Food and Drugs, Department of Health and Human Services.

By Mr. ISAKSON for the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Michael Joseph Missal, of Maryland, to be Inspector General, Department of Veterans Affairs.

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

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

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

By Mr. BROWN:

S. 2438. A bill to amend titles XI and XIX of the Social Security Act to establish a comprehensive and nationwide system to evaluate the quality of care provided to beneficiaries of Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program and to provide incentives for voluntary quality improvement; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. BURR (for himself, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. ENZI, and Mr. HELLER):

S. 2439. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to prohibit the Commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service from rehiring any employee of the Internal Revenue Service who was involuntarily separated from service for misconduct; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. DAINES (for himself and Mr. TESTER):

S. 2440. A bill to amend the Real ID Act of 2005 to repeal provisions requiring uniform State driver's licenses and State identification cards, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. RUBIO:

S. 2441. A bill to provide that certain Cuban entrants are ineligible to receive refugee assistance, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN (for herself and Mrs. BOXER):

S. 2442. A bill to authorize the use of passenger facility charges at an airport previously associated with the airport at which the charges are collected; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Ms. BALDWIN:

S. 2443. A bill to support the establishment of a Standards Coordinating Body in Regenerative Medicine and Advanced Therapies; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

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

By Mr. ENZI (for himself and Mr. WHITEHOUSE):

S. Res. 344. A resolution expressing the Sense of the Senate regarding the use of electronic devices on the floor of the Senate; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

By Mr. HOEVEN (for himself and Ms. HEITKAMP):

S. Res. 345. A resolution congratulating the North Dakota State University football team for winning the 2015 National College

Football Association Division I Football Championship Subdivision title; considered and agreed to.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 314

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES) was added as a cosponsor of S. 314, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for coverage under the Medicare program of pharmacist services.

S. 358

At the request of Mrs. SHAHEEN, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. REED) was added as a cosponsor of S. 358, a bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to ensure that women members of the Armed Forces and their families have access to the contraception they need in order to promote the health and readiness of all members of the Armed Forces, and for other purposes.

S. 524

At the request of Mr. WHITEHOUSE, the name of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 524, a bill to authorize the Attorney General to award grants to address the national epidemics of prescription opioid abuse and heroin use.

S. 553

At the request of Mr. CORKER, the name of the Senator from Wisconsin (Ms. BALDWIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 553, a bill to marshal resources to undertake a concerted, transformative effort that seeks to bring an end to modern slavery, and for other purposes.

S. 681

At the request of Mrs. GILLIBRAND, the name of the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT) was added as a cosponsor of S. 681, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify presumptions relating to the exposure of certain veterans who served in the vicinity of the Republic of Vietnam, and for other purposes.

S. 697

At the request of Mr. UDALL, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 697, a bill to amend the Toxic Substances Control Act to reauthorize and modernize that Act, and for other purposes.

S. 793

At the request of Ms. WARREN, the name of the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 793, a bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to provide for the refinancing of certain Federal student loans, and for other purposes.

S. 1061

At the request of Ms. HIRONO, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1061, a bill to improve the Federal Pell Grant program, and for other purposes.

S. 1106

At the request of Mr. WARNER, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1106, a bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to allow the Secretary of Education to award Early College Federal Pell Grants.

S. 1214

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1214, a bill to prevent human health threats posed by the consumption of equines raised in the United States.

S. 1382

At the request of Mrs. GILLIBRAND, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1382, a bill to prohibit discrimination in adoption or foster care placements based on the sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status of any prospective adoptive or foster parent, or the sexual orientation or gender identity of the child involved.

S. 1726

At the request of Mr. MERKLEY, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Ms. MIKULSKI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1726, a bill to create protections for depository institutions that provide financial services to marijuana-related businesses, and for other purposes.

S. 1771

At the request of Mr. DAINES, the name of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1771, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to exempt Indian tribal governments and other tribal entities from the employer health coverage mandate.

S. 1774

At the request of Mr. BLUMENTHAL, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1774, a bill to amend title 11 of the United States Code to treat Puerto Rico as a State for purposes of chapter 9 of such title relating to the adjustment of debts of municipalities.

S. 1911

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the names of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS) and the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN) were added as cosponsors of S. 1911, a bill to implement policies to end preventable maternal, newborn, and child deaths globally.

S. 1945

At the request of Mr. CASSIDY, the names of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. KIRK) and the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) were added as cosponsors of S. 1945, a bill to make available needed psychiatric, psychological, and supportive services for individuals with mental illness and families in mental health crisis, and for other purposes.

S. 1951

At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the name of the Senator from Michigan

(Mr. PETERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1951, a bill to amend the Help America Vote Act of 2002 to require the availability of early voting or no-excuse absentee voting.

S. 2144

At the request of Mr. GARDNER, the names of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. KIRK) and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON) were added as cosponsors of S. 2144, a bill to improve the enforcement of sanctions against the Government of North Korea, and for other purposes.

At the request of Ms. AYOTTE, her name was added as a cosponsor of S. 2144, *supra*.

S. 2196

At the request of Mr. CASEY, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2196, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for the non-application of Medicare competitive acquisition rates to complex rehabilitative wheelchairs and accessories.

S. 2312

At the request of Mr. THUNE, the names of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. GARDNER) and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS) were added as cosponsors of S. 2312, a bill to amend titles XVIII and XIX of the Social Security Act to make improvements to payments for durable medical equipment under the Medicare and Medicaid programs.

S. 2370

At the request of Mr. ROBERTS, the name of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2370, a bill to prohibit the Internal Revenue Service from modifying or amending the standards and regulations governing the substantiation of charitable contributions.

S. 2373

At the request of Ms. CANTWELL, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2373, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for Medicare coverage of certain lymphedema compression treatment items as items of durable medical equipment.

S. 2398

At the request of Mr. SANDERS, the names of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) and the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY) were added as cosponsors of S. 2398, a bill to provide benefits and services to workers who have lost their jobs or have experienced a reduction in wages or hours due to the transition to clean energy, to amend the National Labor Relations Act to establish an efficient system to enable employees to form, join, or assist labor organizations, and for other purposes.

S. 2429

At the request of Ms. AYOTTE, the name of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH) was added as a cosponsor of S.

2429, a bill to require a report on the military dimensions of Iran's nuclear program and to prohibit the provision of sanctions relief to Iran until Iran has verifiably ended all military dimensions of its nuclear program, and for other purposes.

S. 2437

At the request of Ms. MIKULSKI, the names of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND), and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE) were added as cosponsors of S. 2437, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for the burial of the cremated remains of persons who served as Women's Air Forces Service Pilots in Arlington National Cemetery, and for other purposes.

S.J. RES. 21

At the request of Mr. VITTER, the name of the Senator from Nebraska (Mrs. FISCHER) was added as a cosponsor of S.J. Res. 21, a joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States authorizing the Congress to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States.

S.J. RES. 25

At the request of Mr. FLAKE, the name of the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT) was added as a cosponsor of S.J. Res. 25, a joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the final rule of the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency relating to "National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Ozone".

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. DAINES (for himself and Mr. TESTER):

S. 2440. A bill to amend the Real ID Act of 2005 to repeal provisions requiring uniform State driver's licenses and State identification cards, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, in 2005, the Federal Government enacted the REAL ID Act, imposing Federal standards established by the Department of Homeland Security to the production and issuance of States' driver's licenses and identification cards.

This law was an underfunded, top down, Federal mandate, infringing on personal privacy and State sovereignty. Furthermore, a REAL ID compliant State ID will be required for all "official federal purposes," including boarding commercial aircraft.

Twenty States have implemented laws prohibiting the implementation of REAL ID. Montana led opposition to this Federal mandate. In 2007, Montana enacted a law, after both chambers of the State legislature unanimously passing legislation, refusing to comply.

That is why I am re-introducing the Repeal ID Act—to allow Montana and

other States to implement their laws. Consistent with the Montana State legislature, this legislation will repeal the REAL ID Act of 2005.

Montanans are fully aware of the power that big data holds and the consequences when that data is abused. Montana has shown how States are best equipped to make licenses secure, without sacrificing the privacy and rights of their citizens. The Repeal ID Act will allow us to strike a balance that protects our national security, while also safeguarding Montanans' civil liberties and personal privacy.

I want to thank Senator TESTER for being original cosponsors of this bill and I ask my other Senate colleagues to join us in support of this legislation. I want to also thank Representative ZINKE for leading introduction of companion legislation in the House of Representatives.

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. 2440

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Repeal ID Act of 2016".

SEC. 2. REPEAL OF REQUIREMENTS FOR UNIFORM STATE DRIVER'S LICENSES AND STATE IDENTIFICATION CARDS.

(a) REPEAL.—Title II of the Real ID Act of 2005 (division B of Public Law 109-13) is repealed.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

(1) CRIMINAL CODE.—Section 1028(a)(8) of title 18, United States Code, is amended by striking "false or actual authentication features" and inserting "false identification features".

(2) INTELLIGENCE REFORM AND TERRORISM PREVENTION ACT OF 2004.—Section 7212 of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-458) is amended to read as it did on the day before the date of the enactment of the Real ID Act of 2005.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 344—EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE REGARDING THE USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES ON THE FLOOR OF THE SENATE

Mr. ENZI (for himself and Mr. WHITEHOUSE) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Rules and Administration:

S. RES. 344

Resolved, That it is the Sense of the Senate that—

(1) certain uses of electronic devices by Senators on the floor of the Senate are necessary and proper in the conduct of official Senate business, would not distract, interrupt, or inconvenience the business of Members of the Senate, and should therefore be permissible, including—

(A) delivering floor remarks from text displayed on personal digital assistant devices and tablet computers;

(B) reviewing and editing documents on personal digital assistant devices and tablet computers while seated or standing at a desk, except when the Senator who wishes to use the device holds the floor or seeks to be recognized; and

(C) sending email and other data communication using personal digital assistant devices and tablet computers while seated or standing at a desk, except when the Senator who wishes to use the device holds the floor or seeks to be recognized;

(2) necessary and proper uses of electronic devices on the floor of the Senate do not include—

(A) transmitting sound for any purpose other than through earphones or in such a manner as would not disturb proceedings on the floor of the Senate for the purpose of assisting a person with a disability;

(B) using telephones or other devices for voice communication; or

(C) using desktop computers, laptop computers, or other large devices;

(3) the Committee on Rules and Administration should consider an amendment to the Rules for the Regulation of the Senate Wing consistent with the principles stated above; and

(4) any amendment to the Rules for the Regulation of the Senate Wing should take into account possible future changes in technology.

SENATE RESOLUTION 345—CONGRATULATING THE NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY FOOTBALL TEAM FOR WINNING THE 2015 NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION DIVISION I FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP SUBDIVISION TITLE

Mr. HOEVEN (for himself and Ms. HEITKAMP) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 345

Whereas the North Dakota State University (referred to in this preamble as "NDSU") Bison won the 2015 National Collegiate Athletic Association (referred to in this preamble as the "NCAA") Division I Football Championship Subdivision title game in Frisco, Texas, on January 9, 2016, in a decisive victory over the Jacksonville State Gamecocks by a score of 37 to 10;

Whereas NDSU has now won 13 NCAA Football Championships;

Whereas NDSU has now won 5 consecutive NCAA Division I Football Championships, an extraordinary and record-setting achievement in modern collegiate football history;

Whereas the NDSU Bison have displayed tremendous resilience and skill over the past 5 seasons, with 71 wins to only 5 losses, including a streak of 33 consecutive wins;

Whereas an estimated 17,000 Bison fans attended the Championship game, reflecting the tremendous spirit and dedication of Bison Nation that has helped propel the success of the team; and

Whereas the 2015 NCAA Division I Football Championship Subdivision title was a victory not only for the NDSU football team, but also for the entire State of North Dakota: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) congratulates the North Dakota State University Bison football team as the 2015 champions of the National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I Football Championship Subdivision;

(2) commends the North Dakota State University players, coaches, and staff for—

(A) their hard work and dedication on a historic season; and

(B) fostering a continuing tradition of athletic and academic excellence; and

(3) recognizes the students, alumni, and loyal fans that supported the Bison while the Bison sought to capture a fifth consecutive Division I Football Championship Subdivision trophy for North Dakota State University.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 2944. Mrs. SHAHEEN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 2232, to require a full audit of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System and the Federal reserve banks by the Comptroller General of the United States, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 2944. Mrs. SHAHEEN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 2232, to require a full audit of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System and the Federal reserve banks by the Comptroller General of the United States, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end, add the following:

SEC. —. REPEAL OF DUPLICATIVE MANDATORY INSPECTION PROGRAM.

(a) FOOD, CONSERVATION, AND ENERGY ACT OF 2008.—Effective June 18, 2008, section 11016 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-246; 122 Stat. 2130) is repealed.

(b) AGRICULTURAL ACT OF 2014.—Effective February 7, 2014, section 12106 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (Public Law 113-79; 128 Stat. 981) is repealed.

(c) APPLICATION.—The Federal Meat Inspection Act (21 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) and the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 (7 U.S.C. 1621 et seq.) shall be applied and administered as if the provisions of law struck by this section had not been enacted.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on January 12, 2016, at 10 a.m., in room SD-430 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

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

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on January 12, 2016, at 10 a.m.

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

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Veterans' Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the

Senate on January 12, 2016, at 2:30 p.m., in room S-216 of the Capitol.

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

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Select Committee on Intelligence be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on January 12, 2016, at 2:30 p.m.

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that at 5 p.m. on Tuesday, January 19, the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination: Calendar No. 305; that there then be 30 minutes of debate on the nomination; that following the use or yielding back of time, the Senate vote on the nomination without intervening action or debate; that following disposition of the nomination, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to the nomination; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate then resume legislative session.

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

CONGRATULATING THE NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY FOOTBALL TEAM FOR WINNING THE 2015 NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION DIVISION I FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP SUBDIVISION TITLE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 345, submitted earlier today.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 345) congratulating the North Dakota State University football

team for winning the 2015 National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I Football Championship Subdivision title.

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 345) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

ORDER FOR RECESS AND ORDERS FOR FRIDAY, JANUARY 15, 2016, AND TUESDAY, JANUARY 19, 2016

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate recess until 8:25 p.m. tonight and upon reconvening proceed as a body to the Hall of the House of Representatives for the joint session of Congress provided under the provisions of H. Con. Res. 102; that upon dissolution of the joint session, the Senate adjourn until 11 a.m., Friday, January 15, for a pro forma session only, with no business conducted; further, that when the Senate adjourns on Friday, January 15, it next convene on Tuesday, January 19, at 2 p.m.; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, and the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; further, that following leader remarks, the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each until 5 p.m.; finally, that at 5 p.m., the Senate then proceed to executive session as under the previous order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate stands in recess until 8:25 p.m. tonight.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 4:55 p.m., recessed until 8:25 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. ROUNDS).

JOINT SESSION OF THE TWO HOUSES—ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now proceed as a body to the Hall of the House of Representatives to hear the address by the President of the United States.

Thereupon, the Senate, preceded by the Deputy Sergeant at Arms, James Morhard; the Secretary of the Senate, Julie E. Adams; and the Vice President of the United States, JOSEPH R. BIDEN, Jr., proceeded to the Hall of the House of Representatives to hear the address by the President of the United States, Barack H. Obama.

(The address delivered by the President of the United States to the joint session of the two Houses of Congress is printed in the proceedings of the House of Representatives in today's RECORD.)

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL FRIDAY, JANUARY 15, 2016, AT 11 A.M.

At the conclusion of the joint session of the two Houses, and in accordance with the order previously entered, at 10:17 p.m., the Senate adjourned until Friday, January 15, 2016, at 11 a.m.

NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate:

THE JUDICIARY

DONALD KARL SCHOTT, OF WISCONSIN, TO BE UNITED STATES CIRCUIT JUDGE FOR THE SEVENTH CIRCUIT, VICE TERENCE T. EVANS, DECEASED.

MYRA C. SELBY, OF INDIANA, TO BE UNITED STATES CIRCUIT JUDGE FOR THE SEVENTH CIRCUIT, VICE JOHN DANIEL TINDER, RETIRED.

WINFIELD D. ONG, OF INDIANA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF INDIANA, VICE SARAH EVANS BARKER, RETIRED.