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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 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.

Eternal God, our hope and our salvation, we trust You to surround us with Your Divine favor. Your way is perfect. Give us the wisdom to follow Your guidance. Become for us a shield of salvation as we seek to do Your will. Lord, keep us from self-made cares as we continue to look to You, the Author and Finisher of our faith.

Today, support our lawmakers with Your grace. Give them faith to look beyond today's challenges and trials, knowing that nothing can separate them from Your love. Help them to demonstrate their gratitude to You with selfless service to those who need Your love and care.

We pray in Your Holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

TRANSPORTATION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS APPROPRIATIONS BILLS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, today we will continue working on two appropriations measures that responsibly fund American priorities. The first will invest in our transportation infrastructure and fund economic development efforts. The second will support our veterans, servicemembers, and their families.

These are good, bipartisan bills that prioritize funding for important programs. They are the result of the continuing leadership of Senators COLLINS and KIRK. I would encourage my colleagues to work together to continue moving these appropriations bills forward.

FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Now, on another matter, Mr. President, last week, the top Democrat on the Judiciary Committee said that some would like to do ''some sort of a pretend hearing'' on the President's Supreme Court nomination. He went on to dismiss the idea by noting that the Senate ''is not a pretend office.'' Apparently, he was overruled.

Later today, Democrats will have what he called a ''pretend hearing.'' Senate Democrats initially invited a witness who, at the beginning of the Bush administration, wrote this: ''The Senate should not act on any Supreme Court vacancies that might occur until after the next presidential election.'' He also wrote that this would be a ''responsible exercise of the Senate's constitutional power.'' Apparently, that witness is no longer available—interesting.

The would-be witness is Abner Mikva, a former Democratic Congressman, Federal judge, and White House Counsel. He wrote these words in the second year of President George W. Bush's first term. It was not, like the situation today, in the eighth year of a term-limited President.

Democrats certainly have a complicated history when it comes to their own words and the Supreme Court. They have the Schumer standard: Don't consider a President's nominee 1½ years before the end of his final term. They have the Biden rule: Don't consider a President's nominee before he has even finished his first term. Now they have the Mikva mandate: Don't consider a President's nominee from, basically, the moment he takes office.

It seems the more we hear from Democrats about the Supreme Court, the more we are reminded, by comparison, of how reasonable and commonsense the Republican position is today.

OBAMACARE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Now, on one final matter, Mr. President, that our colleagues will discuss further a little later today, a video recently surfaced that should concern all of us. It was three of President Obama's former speechwriters laughing it up. They were reminiscing about the time they apparently helped mislead the American people with a line that would one day become PolitiFact's ''Lie of the Year'': ''If you like your health care plan, you can keep it.''

They laughed and laughed. It was, evidently, pretty funny to them. It is no laughing matter, however, for the millions—millions—who have lost their plans. It is no laughing matter for the millions who continue to suffer under this partisan law, this partisan attack on the middle class.

Health care costs are now the No. 1 financial concern facing American families, according to a recent survey—No. 1—more than concerns about low wages, more even than concerns about losing a job.

Another survey found a clear majority of Americans disapproving of this partisan law. Yet another survey found that, of Americans who said Obamacare had impacted them, more reported it hurting rather than helping them.

If recent headlines are anything to go by, it is no wonder. Americans now face premium hikes of up to 30 percent

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

in Oregon and 37 percent in Virginia. They face premium spikes as high as 43 percent in Iowa and 45 percent in New Hampshire. In Tennessee, the State's largest health insurer is planning additional rate hikes that are even higher than the 36.3 percent implemented just this past January.

Remember, this is the same law whose champions promised it would make health care more affordable for American families. But nearly half of all Americans reported increases in their insurance premiums, and more than a third reported increases in copays and deductibles in the past 2 years.

Consider this dad from Jackson, KY, who learned that his insurer would no longer offer his current plan as a result of ObamaCare. He said that the most inexpensive replacement plan would be an 80-percent increase over his current monthly premium. ''This ill-conceived health care reform,'' as he put it, ''is going to be the end of good-quality care for the whole nation unless it is repealed and replaced.'' That is from Jackson, KY.

Part of the reason insurers are seeking such dramatic premium rate increases is to help cover the losses they have experienced as a result of the unworkable policies of ObamaCare. Some are pulling out of the exchanges altogether. Several States and hundreds of counties now only have a single insurer to pick from in the ObamaCare exchanges—just one, no choices.

That is true in parts of Kentucky, too, and it is terrible for consumers. What if these sole insurers pull out of the exchanges? An administration official couldn't rule out that possibility, and it doesn't appear they have a serious plan to deal with it either. The administration hardly ever seems to have an ObamaCare answer that doesn't boil down to this: more money from taxpayers.

Look, this is not a law that is working. This is not a law that is fair. This is a partisan law that is a direct attack—a direct attack—on the middle class.

The Democratic leader recently said that Americans just need to ''get over it''—just get over it—''and accept the fact that ObamaCare is here to stay.'' ObamaCare, he says, is ''doing so much to change America forever.'' Maybe Democrats think the middle class should just get over double-digit premium increases. Maybe Democrats think it is funny that millions of Americans lost their plans because of ObamaCare.

Republicans think we should work toward better care instead. That is why we recently passed a bill to repeal ObamaCare and start over with real care. ObamaCare may be changing America, but this partisan law's attacks on the middle class do not have to go on forever, as the Democratic leader would like. We can give our country a new and better beginning.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

OBAMACARE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, my friend, the Republican leader, continues to complain about ObamaCare. This has been the mantra of the Republicans since it passed. But the true facts are these: ObamaCare has reduced the number of uninsured to the lowest rate since we have been keeping records in America. The uninsured are going down, not up. People are healthier now as a result of being able to go to the doctor or the hospital when they are hurt or sick.

Now, we talk about ObamaCare in a vacuum. What was going on before Obamacare? Insurance companies ravaged the American people. The people who were fortunate enough to have health care had to be aware that at any given time they could have their insurance canceled. If you were disabled, there was no insurance. But that isn't all. If you had a prior malady of some kind—if you had cancer, if you had diabetes—you couldn't get insurance—but not anymore. Under ObamaCare you cannot be denied insurance for any condition.

They used to charge women more than men—for no reason, except that some statistical analysis had taken place in some dark room by a guy with green eyeshades who determined that maybe, statistically, women cost a little more than men. They can't do that anymore.

I am always so stunned by this mantra: ''We have to replace it.'' With what? It has been 7 years. With what? The Republicans have come up with nothing.

So, in short, is ObamaCare perfect? Of course not. Could we improve it? Yes, we could. But it would be nice to have a little cooperation from the Republicans. They are unwilling to do anything other than complain.

FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, again the senior Senator from Kentucky complains about the fact that the most senior member of the Senate, the ranking member of the Judiciary Committee, Senator PAT LEAHY, is going to have a meeting today, and he has invited all the Judiciary Committee members to come—Democrats and Republicans. He has invited all Senators to come because he is going to have some witnesses testify about the importance of having a Supreme Court that is full of Justices—all nine. So that means full.

Republicans won't come to that hearing, meeting. Call it whatever you want. They won't be there. No, they are blocking that, obstructing that like they have everything else.

The American judiciary is in trouble, and that is why the ranking member of the Judiciary Committee is having this meeting today. To do its work, the U.S. Supreme Court needs nine Justices—not eight, not seven, but nine. But because of Senate Republicans' refusal to consider a senior judge on the DC Circuit—the second most influential court in the land—Merrick Garland, the Court is in trouble. The Court is short-staffed. The Court doesn't have enough people to do its work. People—we are talking about one person who has so much control over what goes on in the Supreme Court. But that person is not there.

In recent weeks, the Supreme Court has deadlocked on many important cases and questions before it. For example, the day before yesterday, the Justices punted on two more cases, remanding both to lower courts. These actions were a clear indication the Court was tied 4 to 4. Due to the wisdom of the people on that Court, they decided it would be better, since they could not write the decision, to send it back to the lower courts and see if they could help work out the problems.

Not having nine Justices is a serious problem. As was written yesterday in a New York Times editorial: ''Every day that passes without a ninth Justice undermines the Supreme Court's ability to function, and leaves millions of Americans waiting for justice or clarity as major legal questions are unresolved.''

Litigants take their cases to the Supreme Court in search of justice. It often takes years to get to that Court. They seek resolution. They seek clarity, but because of Republicans' unprecedented obstruction, Americans have gained neither. They are not getting clarity, they are not getting resolution, and they are not getting justice. The problem is only going to worsen, and that is the sad part of it. Already, the stalemate has created long-term issues for our Nation's highest Court.

This term, eight Justices on the Court have agreed to hear only 12 cases its next term, which begins in October through January 2017. If the Court continues to accept or, I should say, not accept cases at this glacial pace, the next term will have Justices hearing fewer cases than has been heard by that Court in more than seven decades, 70 years. It stands to reason that Chief Justice Roberts and his colleagues are calling cases according to their ability to hear and process them. A gridlocked Court can't accomplish the same work as a fully staffed Court. It is not the Supreme Court's fault. The blame belongs to Senate Republicans for their blocking Merrick Garland's nomination. For 7½ years, Senate Republicans have blocked anything President Obama has proposed. Who is behind this? Rightwing organizations led by the Koch brothers. They want to keep it just the way it is. They want to keep this Court so it can't do its job.

For 7½ years, Senate Republicans have blocked anything President Obama has proposed, including now a new Supreme Court Justice. Now, by preventing the Court from having nine Justices, Republicans are bringing gridlock in the legislative branch to the judicial branch. Previously, for the whole time Obama has been President, they were blocking what has gone on in the legislative branch. They have now broadened that to deadlock the Supreme Court. This is not acceptable. Justice delayed, we have heard, is justice denied, and that is certainly true. By bringing the Court to a standstill, Republicans are denying the justice all Americans deserve.

There is still time for my Republican colleagues to do the right thing—fill the Supreme Court vacancy—but to do that they must begin to process Garland's nomination. His questionnaire is here. It is filled out. It is done. I wonder how many Republicans have even looked at it. Has there been any? Shouldn't there be a hearing? The reason Republicans don't want a hearing is they know that a hearing, public in nature, would show the American people and the world what a good man Merrick Garland is, what a good lawyer he was, and what a good judge he has been, but they have to start processing this. Republicans seem to be refusing anything dealing with him. I think they should attend the meeting today on the Garland nomination organized by Judiciary Committee Democrats, calling on the finest people we can find to tell us what is going on in the judiciary.

My friend the Republican leader brings up Abner Mikva. Abner Mikva hasn't served in Congress in 40 years. He was a lawyer for President Clinton. We have been through quite a bit since then, but he has nothing else to refer to so he talks about Abner Mikva, who was going to come, who is not going to come. Do you think part of it can be he is more than 90 years old? Republicans should attend today's hearing.

The Judiciary chair, Senator GRASSLEY, should proceed with committee hearings. The American people deserve a full and transparent accounting of Merrick Garland's record and qualifications. After a hearing, of course we should move his nomination for a vote on the Senate floor. Every day that passes without confirmation, without a ninth Justice to serve on the Supreme Court, is another lost day for the Federal judiciary and American justice. Republicans claim their obstruction of President Obama's Supreme Court nominee is to give the people a voice, but their actions are doing just the opposite. Republicans are denying the American people the justice they deserve.

For example, take the cases they referred back to the lower courts. They have already done it and litigants have waited years to get before the Supreme Court. Now, in effect, they have to start over. Republicans are denying the American people the justice they deserve—the justice we thought was guaranteed by the Constitution. So instead of silencing the Supreme Court and gridlocking our entire judicial system, Republicans should give the Court the ninth Justice it desperately needs.

Focus has been on the Supreme Court, and it should be, but Republicans are doing the same thing with trial court judges. The Federal judiciary has many districts that have declared judicial emergencies. They don't have enough judges to do their work. Republicans are in a state of—the only thing they know to do very well is to block things. We, the American people, know we need to do something about the judiciary. Republicans should do their job and give Merrick Garland a hearing and a vote.

Mr. President, my friend from South Dakota is here. I would ask the Chair, prior to the Senator being recognized, to tell us what the schedule is for today.

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 for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak therein, with the majority controlling the first half and the Democrats controlling the second half.

The Senator from South Dakota.

ZIKA VIRUS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to discuss Congress's efforts to combat the Zika virus. Combating Zika is a public health priority, and it is important that this not be turned into a political issue. The administration and Congress need to work together to combat the virus by funding necessary programs, such as mosquito eradication efforts, before the threat escalates further. Congress has already acted to provide incentives for manufacturers to develop new medicines to prevent or to treat Zika. We have also approved the use of nearly $600 million to initiate a Zika response effort, including research into vaccines and treatments and improving mosquito control, because the best way to deal with any illness is to stop people from getting sick in the first place. We need to make controlling mosquitos a priority.

I introduced a measure to remove burdensome permitting restrictions on mosquito control efforts so we can immediately free up additional resources to keep the mosquito population in check. A vaccine to prevent the Zika virus isn't likely to be available until next year, at the earliest, which means our primary weapon in combating Zika right now is controlling mosquitoes so people don't get infected. For that reason, we need to prioritize mosquito control programs and provide immediate regulatory relief.

Aggressive mosquito abatement is the most timely step we can take to keep women and children safe. I am pleased my approach was included in the Cornyn amendment the Senate considered yesterday. I only wish it had prevailed. I am hopeful we can still work with both sides of the aisle to get timely regulatory relief for all impacted industries in the final Zika response package. I believe it is important that if we are going to beat this thing, we do it by eradicating mosquitoes and making it possible for those who are responsible and tasked with that responsibility to be able to do that.

OBAMACARE

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, back when the President and Senate Democrats were lobbying for passage of ObamaCare, they made a number of promises. The one thing they promised over and over again was that the President's health care plan would lower costs.

''Bringing down costs of health insurance and making it more affordable is job one for this health care reform.'' That is a quote that was made by the then-Democratic majority whip on the floor in December of 2009. Families will save on their premiums, President Obama pledged that same month. The Affordable Care Act, Democrats made clear, was the solution to the health insurance challenges facing American families. Well, 6 years down the road it is clear the Affordable Care Act was no solution at all.

The President promised that health care reform would reduce premiums by $2,500 for the average family. Instead, the average family premium for employer-sponsored health insurance rose by $4,170 between 2009 and 2015. Forty-five percent of Americans report that their health insurance premium has increased over the past 2 years, and 35 percent report that their copays and deductibles have increased over the same period. The President promised that Americans who liked their insurance plan could keep it. Instead, the President's health care law pushed more than 4.7 million Americans off their health care plans.

Then there is the centerpiece of the President's health care law, the exchanges. The exchanges were supposed to offer accessible, affordable health care to those who had struggled to get insurance, but a lot of Americans are finding out the health care offered on the exchanges is neither affordable nor accessible. Last year countless consumers around the country faced massive rate hikes on their exchange plans. One constituent wrote to tell me that her plan would cost $1,600 a month for

her, her husband, and their four children—$1,600 a month. That is more than $19,000 a year. A new car would be cheaper, and all signs point to consumers being set to face yet huge rate hikes again this year.

Investor's Business Daily recently reported that Oregon's largest insurer in the individual market is seeking an average rate increase of 29.6 percent for its exchange and nonexchange plans for 2017. Meanwhile, over the weekend the Chattanooga Times Free Press reported that Blue Cross exchange customers in Tennessee will face a ''major rate increase'' that may exceed the 36.3-percent rate increase exchange customers faced this January. The Associated Press recently reported that insurers are seeking rate hikes ranging from 9.4 percent to 37.1 percent on the exchanges in Virginia—a 37.1-percent increase.

Think about that. Let's say you have a family health insurance plan that costs $10,000 a year. A 37.1-percent increase would add more than $3,700 to the cost of your plan—$3,700—for just 1 year. That is a significant amount of money, and you could easily end up facing a similar rate hike the following year.

I could go on and on about ObamaCare. I could read from a steady stream of news stories reporting on ObamaCare's many failures, from huge cost increases to bankrupt co-ops, to decreased access to doctors and hospitals. I could talk about the ways ObamaCare has hiked prescription drug costs or the challenges facing businesses, thanks to the Affordable Care Act's taxes and mandates. I could read stories from my constituents—constituents who have had to wrestle with the inefficient ObamaCare bureaucracy, constituents who lost their health plans as a result of ObamaCare, constituents who can't afford their ObamaCare insurance, but since I don't want to use up all my colleagues' time on the floor as well as my own, I will just say this: Three weeks ago, on April 27, Gallup published the results of a poll on the financial challenges facing American families. The headline of the article was this: ''Healthcare Costs Top U.S. Families' Financial Concerns.'' Let me repeat that. ''Healthcare Costs Top U.S. Families' Financial Concerns.''

If 6 years on from the passage of the Affordable Care Act health care costs top the list of American families' financial concerns, then the Affordable Care Act has failed, and it is time to repeal it. The Republican-led Senate has already passed legislation to repeal ObamaCare, but we need a President willing to work with us or significant support from Democrats in Congress if we want a repeal to become law. I hope we will see that kind of support in the near future.

The Affordable Care Act has been a disaster from the beginning, and it is time to lift the burdens the law has placed on Americans and replace this law with health care reform that will actually drive down costs for American families and consumers and increase access to care. That is what we should—and I hope we will—be focused on.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to speak, as Senator THUNE has just spoken, about the disastrous health care results for patients of ObamaCare. You have to go no further than this Sunday's New York Times, the Sunday Review front page. It looks like a red cross tilted on its side with the headline ''Sorry, We Don't Take ObamaCare.''

The minority leader, HARRY REID, comes to the floor and talks about how wonderful it is. The President says: ''Forcefully defend and be proud.'' Of what? Of ''Sorry, we don't take ObamaCare''?

This is the New York Times, a newspaper whose editorial board has supported this health care law. They talk about the pains of the health care act frustrating patients.

It says:

> Amy Moses and her circle of self-employed small-business owners were supporters of President Obama and the Affordable Care Act. They bought policies on the newly created New York State exchange.

We have two Democratic Senators from New York. Where are they to respond to what has happened to the people of their home State as a result of this law?

They bought insurance policies on the New York State exchange. What happened? Well, when they called doctors and hospitals in Manhattan to schedule an appointment, they were dismayed to be turned away—not once, it says, but again and again. It says ''We don't take ObamaCare'' is the umbrella term for the hundreds of plans offered through the President's signature health legislation.

This is the New York Times, about New York. It is a big city, a place where there should be plenty of doctors, plenty of opportunity.

Ms. Moses said:

> Anyone who is on these plans knows it's a two-tiered system.

Is that what the President promised the American people—a two-tiered system? She is a successful entrepreneur in a two-tiered system. We are talking about a number of women in New York who are entrepreneurs and are very successful.

> Anytime one of us needs a doctor, we send out an alert.

Is that what we are supposed to have? Anytime anybody needs a doctor, send out an alert? If you have a sore throat, send out an alert. That is what they need to do.

The alert they send out among this whole group in New York says: ''Does anyone have anyone on an exchange plan that does mammography or colonoscopy [who takes our insurance]?''

She said, ''It's really a problem.''

I could go on. This is what the President of the United States and the Democrats in this body, who shoved this bill down the throats of the American people, have found that they have created—a plan one in four Americans says has hurt them personally.

That is just one story in the news in one major newspaper, but it says a lot about the health care law in general.

We just heard from Senator THUNE. We know this health care law is a lot more expensive than the President ever promised. People all around the country remember the President saying that it will drive down health care premiums by $2,500 per family if it becomes law. Remember that? People all across the country remember it. It just hasn't happened. Costs have gone up, copays have gone up, and deductibles have gone up. People have lost their plans, lost their ability to see their doctor, can't go to the hospital they want, and can't get the care they need.

Insurance companies are cutting back on which doctors people can see, and they are cutting back on what drugs people can take. This health care law has made health care worse across the United States of America. We know that some insurance companies are dropping States entirely in terms of a place to do business, so millions of Americans are going to lose their insurance plan again next year.

Do you remember what the President said? ''If you like your plan, you can keep your plan.'' Well, not next year, not last year, not the year before that. Even the Kaiser Family Foundation, which studies these issues, says that there are more than 650 counties in which families will have only one choice for insurance next year.

I pulled up an article from the New York Times. That is not the only place there has been a similar article. This is Monday's paper, May 16, Wall Street Journal: ''Health insurers quit rural exchanges.'' They are abandoning rural areas all across the country—in my home State of Wyoming, but it is also happening everywhere. It is entire States—Alaska, Alabama, Wyoming. There is only one choice where people can buy ObamaCare insurance next year.

If you only have one choice, often you are put in a situation where you can take it or leave it. Not under Barack Obama. Oh, no. You must buy it. You have no choice, other than to pay an expensive penalty. That is what health care looks like now under HARRY REID and the Democrats and Barack Obama and the Senators on the Democratic side of the aisle who voted for this monstrosity. Take it or leave it. But you can't leave it because you must buy it.

What happens when there is no competition? What happens when the health care law adds thousands of pages of expensive mandates and costs continue to go up? Premiums have gone through the roof. These are the

requested premium hikes for ObamaCare plans for next year: We have seen 33 percent requested in Virginia; Oregon, 32 percent; Iowa, 43 percent; New Hampshire, 45 percent for some families. People are finding out that their insurance premiums are now higher than their mortgage payment.

What do the Democrats say about all of this? Someone brought this up to Hillary Clinton at a campaign event in Virginia last week. A woman who owns a small business said: ''I have seen our health insurance for my own family go up $500 a month in just the last two years. We went from 400-something to 900-something [a month].''

What did Hillary Clinton have to say about this? What was her response? She said: ''What could possibly have raised your costs . . . that's what I don't understand.''

Is she serious? It is ObamaCare that raised her costs. Where has Hillary Clinton been the last 6 years that she doesn't understand it? This was in Virginia. This small business owner—the woman who went to the townhall meeting and asked Hillary Clinton a question—may see her rates go up another 33 percent next year.

It is not just Hillary Clinton who is clueless. HARRY REID, the Democratic leader in the Senate, came to the floor last month and told the world that ObamaCare is ''working.'' Does HARRY REID not understand that millions of American are paying more for their health insurance and their health care than they did before ObamaCare? Many people are paying for insurance, but they can't get care, as we see from the New York Times story. Does Senator REID not understand that people are paying more for coverage and getting less care in return?

Does every Senator on the Democratic side of the aisle who voted for ObamaCare not understand how this outrageous law is hurting America and Americans and the people of this great country?

There was a new poll that came out last month that found that only 44 percent of Americans approve of the health care law but 54 percent disapprove of the law. I remember Senator SCHUMER of New York saying: After we pass it, it will get more popular. Still, 54 percent disapprove. That is the highest disapproval number in the last 2 years. In this poll, almost one in three Americans said that the health care law has had a negative effect on their family—their personal family; not that they know somebody but in their own family. Hillary Clinton doesn't seem to understand that. She said that she wants to expand ObamaCare. She wants more regulations, more restrictions, more of the terrible ideas that have driven up costs for American families.

There was another piece of news last week that shows one more way the health care law is failing. It turns out that the Obama administration has been making illegal payments—payments found by a judge to be illegal—to big insurance companies to help prop up this health care law. That is what the Federal court ruled last Thursday.

In 2014 the administration asked Congress to appropriate money to pay insurance companies above and beyond the subsidies they already get that the government pays for insurance premiums. It is called a cost-sharing subsidy. Congress—power of the purse—refused to appropriate the money.

Do you know what the administration did? The administration panicked. It knew that without more Washington spending, people would pay even more out of pocket for their health care costs, and that would make ObamaCare even more unpopular than it is today. In the panic, because they knew that if that happened, people would realize how expensive the law really is and the disaster it is turning into, and people would see that all the President's promises about reducing costs were nothing but fairy tales, the panicked Obama administration went ahead and handed over the money anyway without the authority of Congress. The total was about $7 billion over the last 2 years. That is how much additional taxpayer money the administration has given away so far to hide the fact that the health care law is an expensive failure.

The American people have had enough of this costly and collapsing health care law. They have had enough of losing their insurance, losing their doctors, losing access to the prescription drugs they need, and paying 20 or 30 percent more every year to get less coverage.

The Democrats can come to the floor and pretend that ObamaCare is working. The Democrats, like Hillary Clinton, don't understand what is going on. The American people know exactly what is going on. They want us to repeal ObamaCare and replace it with health care that actually works, that has fewer restrictions, more freedom—freedom for people to get the coverage that works for them and their families, not what President Obama says they have to have because he believes he knows what they need better than they do.

We need fewer mandates that drive up the cost for everyone and more options for patients to see the doctors they want and to get the medicine they need. That is what the American people want, and it is time for Democrats to show that they are listening to the people of America and that they understand, because up to this point, they have not been listening and they do not understand.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Wyoming for his words. Obviously he is an expert on health care. He is somebody who spent his entire life treating patients and working to improve the health care of others in Wyoming and beyond. His expertise on this issue is particularly important as we debate the real-life ramifications of ObamaCare, the Affordable Care Act—the so-called Affordable Care Act.

I come to the floor today to talk about the broken promise of ObamaCare and the negative impacts this poorly planned law has had on my State of Colorado. In essence, what ObamaCare did was create a pay-to-play scheme—mandates and dictates of a law where you will pay higher premiums to abide by the law.

As ObamaCare continues on a downward trajectory, Americans are the ones who are bearing the brunt of its failures, particularly those who are living in rural America, in rural Colorado.

Month after month, headline after headline, Americans are no longer surprised when they hear of another ObamaCare disaster as they continue to foot the ever-increasing bill. There are fewer choices, less competition, and higher costs.

''If you like your health care plan, you can keep it.'' Do you remember those famous words? The President assured Americans time and time again not to worry. ''If you like your health care plan, you can keep it.'' He said it countless times. It was echoed by almost every Member in this body who supported ObamaCare.

Coloradans and millions of Americans around the country learned that this promise was far from the truth. In late 2013, roughly 335,000 small-group and individual policies in Colorado were canceled due to the requirements of ObamaCare, 335,000 Coloradans who witnessed through a letter in their mailbox—including a letter I received in my mailbox canceling my insurance because of ObamaCare. Those 335,000 people realized that ''if you like your plan, you can keep your plan'' was simply not true.

The cancelations in 2013 were just the very beginning. In 2014, a couple months later, the Colorado Division of Insurance canceled another 249,000 plans because these plans didn't meet the requirements of ObamaCare. When we talk about these plans being canceled because they didn't meet the requirements of ObamaCare, some people on the left, those who supported ObamaCare, would argue they must have been bad plans, bad insurance, or bad policies. But that presumes that the government knows what is best for everyone involved, that the government has a better idea of what their insurance ought to be, and that the government should take care of and think for people who chose these plans themselves individually. But 249,000 people, on top of the 335,000 people in January of 2014, had their insurance canceled.

Again, in 2015 the story continued with an additional 190,000 plans on the individual and small group markets being canceled. In total, according to the Congressional Research Service,

over 750,000 health insurance plans in Colorado were canceled between 2013 and 2015. Three-quarters of a million people who were promised that ''if you like your health insurance plan, you can keep your plan'' had their plans canceled under the broken promise of ObamaCare. That is still not the end of it for Coloradans because Coloradans are still receiving cancellation notices. Within the last 2 months, two of the Nation's largest insurers, UnitedHealthcare and Humana, announced their intent to exit the individual marketplace. UnitedHealth Group's CEO cited that the marketplaces were a risky investment and that UnitedHealth could not serve these exchanges on an ''effective and sustained basis.'' This decision will impact roughly 20,000 more Coloradans, and beneficiaries of these plans can expect cancellation notices in July.

The disappointment and frustration over a canceled plan that your family once enjoyed is made worse by the rising costs of the remaining plans, and that is what many Americans are faced with today. After losing 750,000 of them in Colorado—losing the health insurance plans they were promised they could keep—they looked at the second promise made under ObamaCare—that this will lower the cost of health care. Now they are met with the second broken promise—the broken promise of cost. They were told they would see reduced costs with ObamaCare. Yet the Colorado Division of Insurance found that individual insurance premiums for 2016 on the Western Slope of Colorado rose by an average of 25.8 percent. The Western Slope of Colorado had a nearly 26-percent rate increase. When people think of Colorado, that is often the part of Colorado they think of most. Denver is on the Front Range. The mountains have the ski communities. The rural communities have farming and agriculture. The mining communities and the oil and gas industries are on the Western Slope. These rural areas watched their health insurance premiums increase by 26 percent—premiums that were promised would be going down.

A woman who lives on the Western Slope was recently interviewed by the Denver Post. She said she saw her premium cost alone rise from $300 per month to $1,828 per month, or nearly $22,000 a year in increased costs. She says:

> It's actually like another mortgage payment. I have friends who are uninsured right now because they can't afford it. Insurance is hard up here.

The Western Slope of Colorado had two promises broken—the promise that if you liked your health care, you could keep it and that this would lower the cost of your health care. They had an increase of nearly 26 percent. If you live on the Western Slope of Colorado, you saw your increase go from a premium of $300 a month to over $1,800 per month—a $22,000 a year increase. This is incredible.

In 2014, a study found that nearly 150,000 Coloradans saw their insurance become 77 percent more expensive. Where is the promise of ObamaCare? Where are the people who supported the Affordable Care Act today defending this law, defending the promise, or explaining how these promises weren't broken? They are not here because they can't explain it. They know the promise was broken. They know that 750,000 people had their promises broken. In Colorado alone, there are people facing 26-percent and 77-percent increases. As we approach the new rates for 2017, it appears there will be no limit to the additional costs that Coloradans will have to bear as a result of this poorly conceived partisan law.

Marilyn Tavenner, president and CEO of America's Health Insurance Plans, or AHIP, served as a key Obama administration health official as Administrator of CMS. She has testified multiple times before committees of the House and Senate and has made warnings that the Affordable Care Act premium increases are coming. She predicted that the increases for open enrollment in 2017 will be higher than ever before. This is coming from a former administration official who helped run ObamaCare and was in the room during the discussions and the crafting of policies of ObamaCare.

In Colorado, insurers submitted their initial premium bids last Friday, May 13. We will soon know the rates that have been approved by the Colorado Department of Insurance in late September or early October, but it looks like Coloradans are in for yet another rude awakening. The people in Colorado have already had their health insurance plans canceled, and more are losing their policies in July of this year and trying to figure out how to make ends meet. If they are in a situation like the one I spoke of before—the example I used before—this person is going to have to figure out over the next year how they are going to basically create a $22,000 a year payment they didn't face before.

I was speaking to an executive with an insurance company who said they believe the rates they will be submitting for increases this year to their department of insurance commissioner will be between 60 and 70 percent. That is a 60- and 70-percent insurance rate increase under ObamaCare for the 2017 cycle. Premiums are expected to rise and many parts of the country are going to experience double-digit rate hikes. Plans are getting canceled, plans are getting more expensive, yet the ObamaCare mandates continue.

I believe what we need in this country is greater competition and greater choice. That is what President Obama promised in the marketplace, but data shows that because of unbearable bureaucratic hurdles, competition has actually decreased.

On Sunday, the Wall Street Journal published an article titled ''Insurance Options Dwindle in Some Rural Regions.'' I live in a very rural part of Colorado, on the Eastern Plains, as opposed to the Western Slope, which we spoke of before. I live in a town of about 3,000 people. The nearest big town is 60 miles away, and that town has 9,000 people. The article in the Wall Street Journal explains how rural areas have experienced the greatest decline in competition and how many rural counties will only have one insurance plan to choose from. I think most people understand that rural areas aren't exactly the wealthiest areas in the Nation. There are pockets of wealth, absolutely, as there are in most places, but by and large our rural communities represent some of the poorest and least economically driven counties in the country.

A Kaiser Family Foundation study found that over 650 counties across this country will have only 1 insurer on the exchanges to choose from during the open enrollment in 2017. This is a number which is up by 225 counties from 2016. Let me say that again. There are 650 counties across this country that will only have 1 choice when it comes to open enrollment. They will only have one plan to choose from under ObamaCare. This is the plan for competition that the Affordable Care Act was supposed to address. But instead of adding more insurers to the marketplace, it actually resulted in fewer insurers in the marketplace. We will see 225 additional counties down to 1 choice in 2017. These 650 counties are 70 percent rural, and these rural areas are fearful that the dwindling competition will create a monopoly and costs will continue to rise.

The President also insisted that the competition would increase through consumer-run co-ops. Over 80,000 Coloradans felt the impact of this broken promise when Colorado HealthOP was declared to be insolvent by the Colorado insurance commissioner and expeditiously liquidated.

To date, 12 of the 23 co-ops created by ObamaCare have been shut down. That is an additional 80,000 people in Colorado who had their insurance policies canceled because ObamaCare created a system that allowed insurance co-ops and companies to bank on a bailout. They were able to bank on a bailout and use that to create some aura of economic feasibility on their balance sheets. When the government couldn't provide any bailouts—because the government shouldn't be in the business of bailouts—the ObamaCare promises were shown for what they truly were—poor policy. Collectively the failed co-ops were loaned over $1 billion in taxpayer money to help get them off the ground. Now, with these failures, the taxpayers will never get their money paid back and tens of thousands of people lost their insurance.

Today, this Congress has shown a path forward. With each passing disaster of ObamaCare, it continues to become clearer how much of a failure this law is. Americans continue to demand

real health care reform that will increase competition, reduce costs, and expand access to lifesaving care that improves the quality of their lives and, most importantly, will provide predictability and sustainability in the marketplace.

This crisis demands real leadership, and I continue to remain committed to working with my colleagues on free-market solutions that will bring about real change that will actually uphold the promises that were made.

In Colorado, I heard from countless individuals who have been displaced from their plans, and it is time for Congress to stand up as well.

The Denver Post article that I referred to about the broken health care system in Colorado's Western Slope begins with a statement from Terri Newland of Glenwood Springs, CO. This is the headline: ''Colorado mountain residents struggle to pay for health insurance.'' The story starts like this: ''The new era of affordable health care bypassed Terri Newland.''

Millions of Americans have seen the Affordable Care Act's era of affordable health care bypass them, and this body's responsibility for that law can only be made up by repealing the law and putting in its place a bill that actually increases the quality of care and decreases the cost of care.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

UNITED STATES-CUBA RELATIONS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, since December of 2014, when the United States and Cuba ended 54 years of diplomatic isolation that had accomplished nothing good for the people of Cuba or the United States, there has been an explosion of engagement between our two countries. The number of U.S. citizens traveling to Cuba has skyrocketed. Talks between both governments resulted in agreements to resume direct airline, ocean ferry, and mail service. There is expanded cooperation in a wide range of bilateral and regional issues. These are encouraging steps, but there is a long road ahead.

For more than half a century, whatever problems there were in Cuba the Cuban Government could blame on the United States because of our embargo. Some Members of the House and Senate have expressed disappointment, and criticized President Obama's opening to Cuba because the restoration of diplomatic relations has not quickly brought about dramatic changes in Cuba's repressive political system and did not reverse 54 years of history in 54 days.

Well, these Members of Congress are either naive or simply prefer to ignore the positive changes that are occurring and choose to ignore or dismiss the views of the overwhelming majority of Cubans and Americans who support the restoration of relations. They continue to defend a discredited policy of isolation that through all those decades, and Republican and Democratic administrations, failed to achieve any of its objectives.

As President Obama said, if you try something for 50 years and it doesn't work, it is time to try something else. In the past 15 months, although the naysayers will not publicly admit it, the Cuban people have a sense of hope about the future that has not existed since the time of the 1959 revolution. I know. I have seen and heard it on my trips there.

It is also important to recognize that the majority of Cubans alive today were born after the revolution. And just as Cuba's population has changed, so the world has changed.

Overwhelmingly, Cuba's younger generation has experienced enough of a paternalistic, Communist dictatorship and economic stagnation to know that is not what they want. It is no surprise that their reaction to President Obama's extraordinary speech in Havana was warmly and enthusiastically received by them, while several top Cuban officials, sensing the inspiring impact of the President's words, felt compelled to criticize our President. I was there for that visit. I saw the reaction of the Cuban people.

The raising of the American flag in Havana last August symbolized the beginning of a new era in U.S.-Cuban relations, but change was happening in Cuba well before then, and it is going to continue at its own pace. Ultimately, the Cuban people—not the United States—will determine that pace and what a post-Castro Cuba will look like.

My wife Marcelle and I stood there at our Embassy as the flag went up, and we heard the cheers of the Cuban people standing just outside the gates of the Embassy.

We can contribute to the process of change in positive ways. One way is through student exchanges. Last month, Vermont students from Burlington, Essex, Shelburne, and Bristol traveled to Cuba to participate in a week of Little League baseball games and cultural exchange. Marcelle and I went to Burlington to see them off. I cannot begin to describe thrill in their faces, the excitement they felt. We gave them an American flag to take with them. The Vermonters didn't speak much Spanish, and the Cubans spoke almost no English, but it didn't really matter. They had translators, and the game of baseball is a language across cultures.

Here is a picture of the Vermonters with the Cuban ball players holding the American flag that we gave them, the Cuban flag, and a Vermont flag. This was taken in Cuba. I love to take photographs. I wish I had been there to take that one. We know a picture is worth a thousand words. They show how just a few days of competing on a baseball diamond can help bridge a half-century divide between two countries and cultures. Anybody who has children—or grandchildren—who play baseball or Little League ball recognizes these smiles. We know what it means. They don't speak the same language, but they speak one language, which is the game of baseball.

The Vermonters voiced high praise for the Cuban players who won all the games, except the all-star game at the end when they shared players and were evenly matched.

But winning isn't everything. As the Vermont players recounted after returning home, it was not only a fun week of baseball, but one of the most rewarding parts of the trip was the time spent after the game getting to know the Cuban players, getting to know their families, and learning about life in Cuba.

This is actually the second baseball exchange involving Vermont and Cuban Little Leaguers, the first being in 2008 when a group from Vermont and New Hampshire played a series of games on the outskirts of Havana. One of those players said the team went to Cuba just to have fun: ''We are not here to win. If they hear about us, maybe other teams will want to do this or maybe even get a Cuban team to the United States to play.''

Lisa Brighenti in my office took this photograph. I think it says it all. You can't see their faces, but we know one is Cuban and one is American. These are kids playing a Little League game. And think of what this picture says to all of us.

Children don't care about the politics. They don't even care about the differences in language. They just care about the things that unite them.

I remember speaking with President Obama shortly after he became President and saying we had to change our policy toward Cuba. I told him there would be a memo saying he should hold tight, the Castros will be gone any day. I pointed out that same memo was sent to President Eisenhower and President Kennedy and President Johnson and President Nixon, and he said: I get your point.

Nothing changed during more than half a century when we tried to isolate Cuba. Now I think change will come.

Our governments remain far apart on key issues. A few Members of Congress continue to stubbornly obstruct efforts to end the embargo, but as every poll has shown in this country the American people—like these young Vermont athletes—are showing us a way forward by breaking down barriers on their own.

I am so proud of these young Vermonters. They know. They know what the future looks like. As for the rest of us, let's step toward the future with them.

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.

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

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

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, what is the pending business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is in morning business, with time reserved for the Democrats.

Ms. COLLINS. Thank you, Mr. President.

I suggest the absence of a quorum

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2016

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 2577, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2577) making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Collins amendment No. 3896, in the nature of a substitute.

McConnell (for Lee) amendment No. 3897 (to amendment No. 3896), to prohibit the use of funds to carry out a rule and notice of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

McConnell (for Nelson/Rubio) amendment No. 3898 (to amendment No. 3896), making supplemental appropriations for fiscal year 2016 to respond to Zika virus.

McConnell (for Cornyn) modified amendment No. 3899 (to amendment No. 3896), making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016.

McConnell (for Blunt) modified amendment No. 3900 (to amendment No. 3896), Zika response and preparedness.

Collins (for Blunt) amendment No. 3946 (to amendment No. 3900), to require the periodic submission of spending plan updates to the Committee on Appropriations.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I thought it would be useful for our colleagues if I gave a brief update on where we are. First of all, I think it is important to know that more than 70 Senators had input into the Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development and Related Agencies funding bill. I am sure if you added the number of Senators who weighed in on the VA-Military Construction bill, the number is even higher.

We worked very hard in the subcommittee process and the full committee process to incorporate suggestions from many of our colleagues to produce a bipartisan bill. The ranking member, my friend and colleague Senator JACK REED of Rhode Island, has been a tremendous leader in this effort. We have worked in a very transparent and collaborative manner to bring us where we are today.

Since we started the debate on this bill, we have had 17 amendments that have been adopted by unanimous consent on the two divisions of the bill. That has required a great deal of work, but I think it shows the good faith of both of the managers of the bill and the sponsors of these amendments that we were able to work together, compromise, negotiate, and get them adopted in three separate packages.

We are continuing that process. More and more amendments have been filed, and we are continuing to see how we can best accommodate the concerns that have been raised by our colleagues while keeping the essential principles of this bill and the desire to make sure we keep on track with the appropriations process.

I believe it is a great credit to the Senate, to the leaders, and to Senator MITCH MCCONNELL, who has made as a goal that we would report all of the appropriations bills, bring them to the floor, one by one, for full and open debate, the way it should be, and that we get our work done so we avoid the situation of either having a series of continuing resolutions—which lock in last year's priorities and lead to wasteful spending, which is not a good solution and ends up costing us more because agencies can't plan, they can't do their contracting activity—or having the other unfortunate outcome of bundling all 12 of the appropriations bills into one huge omnibus bill that is thousands of pages long and is very difficult for Members to know exactly what is in the bill.

That is not a good way to legislate. It is not in keeping with our responsibilities. I am proud the Appropriations Committee in this Chamber is doing its job and that the Republican leader set as the goal that we are starting the appropriations process earlier than ever before. The Energy and Water appropriations bill was passed earlier than any appropriations bill in literally decades. I would note that would not be possible without the cooperation we have had from our Democratic colleagues on the committee. We have worked as teams. That is the way the process should work. I could not have a better partner in that regard than Senator JACK REED.

We also had a very vigorous debate yesterday on the funding that is necessary to combat the very serious threat posed by the Zika virus. We know this virus causes very severe birth defects, in some cases, and has been linked to Guillain-Barre syndrome, which can lead to paralysis and even death. So this is a serious public health threat.

A couple of weeks ago, Senator JOHNNY ISAKSON and I went to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, GA. We were briefed on the threat posed by Zika, which is carried by a mosquito that is known as the cockroach in the mosquito world because it is so difficult to get rid of. It can reproduce in water in a container that is size of a bottle cap. We know Zika has already become an epidemic in Puerto Rico and that there are confirmed cases in nearly every State in the Union. That is because, even if you live in a far Northern State where the type of mosquito that causes Zika is not present, such as the State represented by the Presiding Officer, Zika is still a threat. People travel. We know it can be transmitted through sexual contact. That is why we are seeing Zika showing up in virtually every State. We need to get ahead of this epidemic. That is why we had three different approaches offered yesterday on the Senate floor. Cloture was successfully invoked on a bipartisan proposal offered by Senators BLUNT and MURRAY that provides more than $1 billion to counter effectively the threat of Zika.

The last thing we want is not to have acted against this serious public health threat and find that pregnant women, who are especially at risk, are going to be infected and, in some cases, have children who will have a lifetime of serious disabilities as a result of the impact of Zika. We are hearing more and more about the dangers of the Zika virus every day.

I have great confidence in the CDC, which is the major interface with our local and State public health agencies, to do an excellent job on prevention and education of providers and the public. They are also working on diagnostic tests so we can have a more rapid response to Zika. The National Institutes of Health is working on a vaccine which we hope will be available in another year, but in the meantime this truly is a public health emergency.

I believe the Senate deserves great credit for putting the Zika supplemental on our bill and providing adequate funding to do the job, to do the job that is necessary to counter this very serious threat.

We will have to proceed to a vote on the underlying Blunt-Murray amendment now that we have invoked cloture by 68 votes. I would note also that there is a 1 p.m. deadline today on filing first-degree amendments to the substitute bill. I also anticipate that this afternoon we will have a debate on Senator LEE's amendment, which has to do with a rule the Department of

Housing and Urban Development has issued to implement provisions of the landmark 1968 Fair Housing Act.

In addition, Senator REED and Senator COCHRAN and I have offered an alternative amendment. At some point, we will have votes related both to the Collins-Reed-Cochran amendment and the Lee amendment. That is going to be a very important debate this afternoon on a very important policy that I believe helps to further the goals of the 1968 civil rights-era Fair Housing Act. That will be an important debate on this bill.

In the meantime, we are continuing to work with our colleagues on other amendments, as the Presiding Officer is well aware. I believe we are continuing to make progress. I thank my colleagues for coming to the floor, for working with us. That is the update I wanted to give my colleagues at this point.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

ARKANSANS OF THE WEEK

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, I would like to honor all Arkansas law enforcement officers as this week's Arkansans of the Week. This week marks the 54th National Police Week. On Sunday, we marked National Peace Officers Memorial Day, a day set aside by President Kennedy in 1962 to honor those law enforcement officers who lost their lives in the line of duty.

Arkansas has over 7,000 law enforcement officers who protect our State every day. These men and women willingly put themselves in harm's way to ensure the safety of our residents, and maintain order in our State. National Police Week is also a time to remember and honor the nearly 300 Arkansans who have lost their lives in the line of duty as law enforcement officers. Their service and sacrifice is not forgotten, and Arkansas is safer because of their service.

There are many different types of law enforcement officers, but each plays an important and distinct role in our safety. There are officers, such as Chris Bunch of the Paragould Police Department, who protect Arkansas' students as a school resource officer, officers such as Jeff Prescott and Sergeant Greg Herron, who are retiring from the Rison Police Department after 30 and 20 years of service, respectively, and Corporal Kristi Bennett of the Texarkana Police Department, who serves as the public information and education officer. Kristi recently received the Silent Wilbur Award, which is given to an officer who shows leadership and works to motivate and move their community forward.

These are just a few of the long list of Arkansas law enforcement officers who serve our State, but there are many more where those names come from.

I know I join all Arkansans in extending our sincere thanks and appreciation to all Arkansas law enforcement officers, not only this week but every week.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

OBAMACARE

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, we are all too familiar with the famous promises President Obama made to sell the American people on his ObamaCare proposal, and yes, I said, ''sell.''

We now know from White House revelations made by former Members who work for the President that the White House has been actively engaged in selling their program, selling their proposals to the American people through some admittedly sophisticated ways in using social media to achieve a goal. Just recently, White House National Security Advisor Ben Rhodes did an interview and discussed openly how the White House manipulated the media and the American people to sell the administration's Iranian nuclear agreement.

With all the authority given to an American President, President Obama made this statement to sell ObamaCare to the American people—and I quote: ''No matter how we reform health care,'' the President said, ''We will keep this promise to the American people: If you like your doctor, you will be able to keep your doctor, period. If you like your health care plan, you'll be able to keep your health care plan, period.''

Why did the President add ''period'' to that statement? The statements are clear. If you like your doctor, you keep your doctor. If you like your health care plan, you keep your health care plan. When you add ''period,'' it basically says: Take my word for it. Count on it. It is a done deal. I am telling you, the American people, I am making you a promise—period. You can take this one to the bank.

I am not often a reader of the New York Times, but a recent headline in the paper caught my attention: ''Sorry, We Don't Take Obamacare.'' The article discusses the growing number of doctors and hospitals who are no longer accepting patients who are covered by ObamaCare insurance plans. So much for ''If you like your doctor, you will be able to keep your doctor, period.'' So much for that promise.

It is not just medical professionals who are saying no to ObamaCare. The largest health insurer, UnitedHealth Group, recently announced it will stop selling individual ObamaCare plans in Indiana next year because such plans simply are not profitable. It is pretty hard to run a business if you are not making a profit. If you are losing money, you can't pay the employees. You can't produce your product. UnitedHealthcare has said: We have lost so much money under this ObamaCare mandate that we are going to stop selling individual plans.

According to the Indianapolis Business Journal:

In April, UnitedHealth said it would drop out of all but a ''handful'' of state exchanges where it sells individual Obamacare plans. It had said the exchange market was smaller and riskier than it had expected.

I think I heard a lot of the Republican Members on the floor basically saying what has been written and endorsed and imposed on the American people is something that simply doesn't make economic sense. There are going to be insurance companies that simply are not going to be able to not only survive on this basis but will not make any profit whatsoever. Obviously, with the case of UnitedHealthcare, they are dropping this because they simply cannot expose themselves to this kind of risk. It is said that they will lose $650 million on the plans this year alone, and UnitedHealthcare sold coverage in 34 States on the ObamaCare exchanges.

The UnitedHealthcare situation is not unique. According to the Indiana Business Journal, ''Roughly half of the health insurers selling plans on the Obamacare exchange in Indiana lost money on the business last year.''

So much for the President's promise: ''If you like your health care plan, you'll be able to keep your health care plan, period.'' So much for the President's promise.

Decreased access to providers is just one of many problems with ObamaCare. Another major problem is the rising cost of coverage for those who are on this plan. Oh, yes, there were other promises made by the President here also. You may recall the President promised that the annual health care costs would be cut by $2,500 per family if ObamaCare were enacted. As recently as 2012, we were told by the President that the health insurance premiums paid by small businesses and individuals will go down because of ObamaCare—another promise to the American people: Don't worry, folks. . . . Your costs are going to go down, not up.

Despite that promise that ObamaCare will cut costs and make coverage more affordable for families and small businesses, many Americans are experiencing higher premiums or paying outrageous deductibles when they purchase coverage through the ObamaCare exchanges.

I have been on this floor documenting literally hundreds, if not thousands, of inputs to my office through phone calls, emails, and so forth, saying: Wait a minute. I just got a notice from my insurance company that my deductible is skyrocketing from $1,000 to $5,000 or to $7,500 or $9,000. I can't afford this kind of stuff. I thought we were promised this wouldn't happen. It is not just the deductibles, it is the copays.

All of a sudden, I walk in and a doctor's office says: Wait a second. You have to put down the cash copay here. My copays have just gone through the roof.

Premium increases have dramatically increased. The average premium

for benchmark silver plans in the Federal exchange, the ObamaCare exchange, is rising by 7.5 percent this year.

In Indiana, premiums for policies on the ObamaCare marketplace have gone up by an average of 14.4 percent per year since ObamaCare was implemented, a total increase. Get this. We have had a total increase in premiums under ObamaCare in Indiana totaling 71.5 percent.

Tell the American people: You have my word, period. This isn't going to happen.

It happens, and what do we hear? What is this rhetoric we hear coming out of the White House? This is one of the most wonderful things that has ever happened.

In the campaign—I mean, those running for office from the President's party are simply saying: You have to elect us to preserve this wonderful ObamaCare health plan.

Is it any wonder the American people are turning out in record numbers to vote against this kind of thing?

These are just a few of the many broken promises and the many problems with the ObamaCare law. There are many other things I could get into, such as the failure of many State-run exchanges. Some States only have one exchange or no exchanges left. The rollout of the plan—which cost American taxpayers hundreds of millions of hard-earned tax dollars because this rollout was so botched nobody could get into the computers or even on the phone—the thing was rushed to meet a deadline, and they weren't prepared. It was hundreds of millions of dollars just to get it on board so people could begin to ask questions as to what they were mandated they had to do. So from increasing premiums and increased health care costs to failures to keep your doctor, to reduced access to doctors and hospitals, the bottom line is ObamaCare is not working for the American people.

Rather than making health care more affordable and successful, ObamaCare has actually driven up health care costs and a decreased choice of doctors for too many Americans and too many American businesses. It is long past time for repeal of the President's disastrous health care law. We need to replace it with more effective and clearly patient-centered solutions.

Despite numerous attempts by Republicans to repeal this fatally flawed legislation, all efforts have been rejected by the President and the White House, but we are approaching the time when the American people can express their response to these broken promises this administration has made in relation to ObamaCare.

Mr. President, with that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The President pro tempore.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I rise to speak once again about the rising cost of health care in the United States.

It has been a few months since I came to the floor to comment on the state of our health care system. Sadly, over that time period, we have seen little, if anything, in the way of good news. Indeed, while the United States has some of the best health care law in the world, recent headlines point to serious problems with how that system is working.

A little over 6 years ago, the Democrats on both sides of the Capitol and on both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue forced the so-called Affordable Care Act on the American people without any Republican votes or any serious attempt to get bipartisan consensus. The result was an attempt at overhaul of roughly one-sixth of the American economy crafted with the input and support of only one political party.

As I have said before, given its size and scope, the passage and signing of ObamaCare was probably the largest exercise of pure partnership in our Nation's history. Quite frankly, our country hasn't been the same since.

At the time the law was passed, Republicans made a number of predictions about the negative impact this law would have for people buying health insurance and for our economy overall. Six years later, many of those predictions have already come to pass, with many more on the way.

Still, looking back on it, I think we may have undersold our case at the time. I don't think any of us could have predicted just how detrimental the law would be, not only for the United States but on our Nation's public discourse and our government institutions. As a result of ObamaCare, the divide between Republicans and Democrats has gotten deeper, voters have become more cynical and distrusting of our government and our leaders, and the government itself has expanded its powers well beyond the authority granted in the statute.

At the time the law was passed, many of us issued warnings of what was to come, though much of that seemed to have been drowned out by the sounds of celebration emanating from the Capitol and the White House.

To quote some of my friends on the other side, passage of this law was a ''big bleeping deal'' because once the law was passed, the American people would finally get a chance to see what was in it. In the midst of all that self-adulation, many promises were made about what the law would do for individuals and families throughout the United States of America.

Chief among those many promises was a claim that as a result of in law, the cost of health care for the average American family would go down. That is what the American people were told in 2010. In 2016, the law has been implemented and in effect for 3 years. Despite those many promises, average health insurance premiums have gone up every single year. As insurers begin to make decisions about rates and availability for the 2017 plan year, we are looking at significantly higher premiums, double-digit increases in some places, for the fourth straight year.

Reports about these premium increases seem to be coming in on a daily basis. For example, in Virginia we know that among the five largest carriers in the State, premiums could go up anywhere from 9 percent to 37 percent, with a likely average of around 18 percent.

In Iowa, tens of thousands of people who buy their insurance from one major carrier will likely see increases in the neighborhood of 40 percent. In Oregon, the State's largest insurer in the individual market has requested a premium increase of nearly 30 percent. That number, 30 percent, is similar to the rate hikes requested by some of the largest insurers in Maryland as well.

I could go on and on. I am not just cherry-picking States, this is a trend. Unfortunately, it is having a real-world impact. People are concerned, and they have every right to be. According to a Gallup poll a few weeks back, health care costs are the No. 1 financial concern for families in the United States. People are more concerned about health care costs than they are about low wages, housing, education, or even debt. As premiums go up, I can imagine that the number of families concerned about health care costs will continue to go up as well.

In addition to higher premiums for 2017, we are also hearing many insurers will be opting to drop out of the exchange markets. For example, one of the country's largest insurers has, so far, decided to pull out of more than two dozen State exchanges due to mounting losses. This is the same company that currently offers plans in 34 different States but has said it will continue to do so only in a small number of States going forward.

In Utah, we recently saw the closing of an ObamaCare co-op that covered roughly 45,000 people, all of whom had to find health insurance at the beginning of this year. Indeed, 12 of the 23 co-ops around the country have already closed, further reducing the number of health insurance options available to people throughout the country.

The Obama administration is trying to downplay these reports and convince people that a smaller number of insurers in various markets will not be a problem. But the impact should be obvious: When an insurer—let alone many insurers—drops out of a market, the patients and consumers in that market are left with fewer choices. And in any market, for any product, when consumers have reduced options, it generally leads to both lower quality and higher prices. That is definitely true in the health insurance market.

The question many are asking is, Why is this happening? Why are so many insurers raising premiums or choosing not to participate in the ObamaCare exchanges? The answer is relatively simple: ObamaCare is not working and can't work the way it was designed.

I think it would be helpful at this point to briefly review its timeline. From the time the law was first drafted, the Affordable Care Act included a number of insurance coverage mandates designed to dictate what insurance companies had to offer and what coverage patients would have to buy. Of course, imposing those kinds of requirements was bound to increase the cost of insurance across the board.

However, if you will recall, during the congressional debate over the law, the President and his supporters repeatedly claimed that because the law was going to require everyone to have health insurance, more young and healthy patients would be coerced into the insurance risk pools. According to their arguments, this shift in the market would more than compensate for the costs associated with the new insurance coverage mandates. In short, they claimed they could expand coverage requirements and keep premiums from going up.

Now, fast forward to 2013, which is when the exchanges went online. At that time, insurers entered the exchanges and set premium rates, presumably assuming the law would work as promised. As it turns out, that assumption was ill informed in many cases, and insurance companies across the board found they had priced their premiums too low. The expansion of younger, healthier, less risky market participants never came and, as a result, the industry suffered huge losses.

According to a report released last month by the Mercatus Center, in 2014 alone, insurers nationwide suffered more than $2 billion in losses for plans sold on the exchanges. This happened despite subsidies they received from the government to mitigate the risk of covering a mostly unknown population.

As we fast forward once again to the present day, we see that this situation has not corrected itself over the first 3 plan years under ObamaCare. In fact, it has only gotten worse. Premiums are going up, enrollment is lagging far behind the initial rosy estimates, and millions of the younger, healthier population of insured people the system needs to properly function are either opting to pay the fines for going without insurance, going undetected because they do not file tax returns, or staying on their parents insurance for as long as legally possible.

A recent Blue Cross Blue Shield report compared three separate groups among the carrier's membership. These groups were, No. 1, individual members newly enrolled in the ObamaCare exchanges; No. 2, members who had individual plans prior to the passage of ObamaCare; and No. 3, members currently enrolled in Blue Cross employer plans. According to the study, the people newly enrolled in insurance under ObamaCare are significantly less healthy and require significantly more services than the other two groups. The cost of care among that group is, not surprisingly, significantly more expensive.

That is remarkable. If we assume what is happening in this study is in any way reflective of what is happening nationwide, not only did the Affordable Care Act fail to create more favorable risk pools for insurers and patients sharing the costs, but the risk pools are, overall, more risky now than they were before.

While a number of complicated factors have likely contributed to this outcome, the major reason we are seeing this result is relatively simple: ObamaCare did little, if anything, to address health care costs. As a result, young and healthy people who are less in need of health insurance are making the calculation that it would be less costly for them to go uninsured and pay a fine than purchase insurance through an exchange. Indeed, in countless polls and surveys of still uninsured Americans, we have seen the biggest reason people refuse to buy health insurance is that it costs too much.

Under this status quo, insurers can stay afloat only in one of two ways: They can raise premiums, which makes their coverage even more costly, driving more young and healthy people out of the market, further depleting the risk pools, or they can exit unprofitable markets. Currently, we are seeing insurers do both, ensuring that the exchanges—and with them the entire system created by the Affordable Care Act—are becoming more unstable all the time.

Let's be clear: There is no solution to this problem that keeps the current system in place. There is no way to reset or rearrange the incentives under the current system. There is no minor tinkering that can fix these problems. It is not simply going to correct itself over time. Quite frankly, the system is damaged beyond repair. The only thing we can do to give options to patients and bring down costs is create a different system.

Some of us have put forward plans to do just that. I have a plan that I put forward with Senator BURR and Chairman UPTON over in the House. It is called the Patient CARE Act, which I have mentioned a number of times here on the floor. However, ours isn't the only solution out there. There are a number of ideas. We just need to get serious about addressing these issues. But that will not happen—that will not happen—so long as people refuse to acknowledge there is even a problem.

The supporters and authors of the Affordable Care Act have gotten pretty good over the years at mining the available data for favorable citations and moving the goalposts for what qualifies as ''success'' for this law in order to fool the American people. Fortunately, the people are not buying it.

Since the day the law passed, 90 percent of national polls show that more people oppose ObamaCare than support it. I don't see that changing as long as premiums keep going up and people are left with fewer and fewer options.

However, as always, I am an optimist. I believe we can make some progress here. I currently chair the Senate committee with jurisdiction over many of the most consequential elements of ObamaCare. Over the next few months, I plan to do something that the authors of ObamaCare never did—listen. I am going to take the time to engage with stakeholders from across the spectrum to get a clear sense of what needs to be done to bring down health care costs for American families and get skyrocketing premiums, deductibles, and out-of-pocket limits under control.

I plan to hear from experts, industry leaders, and advocacy groups to get their ideas in order to arrive at a workable solution. Then I am going to solicit the help of anyone in Congress—from either side of the aisle—who is willing to put in the necessary work to right this ship and craft meaningful legislation to address these problems.

As I said, the cost of health care is the No. 1 financial concern for American families. It is an issue that deserves the attention of everyone in this Chamber. Finding a solution will require not only that we acknowledge the failings of the system created by the Affordable Care Act but that we also work together to address these failings in a productive, less political way—in a bipartisan way, if you will.

Now, that is my focus when it comes to health care, Mr. President. I hope all of my colleagues will be willing to work with me on this effort.

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

AMENDMENT NO. 3897

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I rise to speak on Lee amendment No. 3897 that deals with the Federal Fair Housing Act, and I want to describe why many of my colleagues and I are opposed to the amendment. The amendment would eliminate the current affirmative furthering fair housing enforcement regulations promulgated by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. I want to go into that.

I will start with a personal story. Before I was in partisan elected politics, I was a civil rights lawyer in Richmond for 17 years. About two-thirds of my legal practice was fair housing cases. I will just tell you the story about my first client and two lessons I learned from my first client that bear upon this amendment.

I had barely hung my diploma on the wall in my office, where I was the junior person among 12 lawyers, when a client was referred to our firm. They

did what is often the case; they sent it to the newest person. Somebody needed some help—pro bono assistance. This young woman's name was Loraine.

Loraine was almost exactly my age. I think I was 25 at the time, and she was the same age. I had just moved to a new city and had just gone out to find my apartment in that new city and started my first real job after school. She was kind of in the same place—just out of college, just starting a new job, just looking for an apartment.

Loraine had been at work one day and had read in the newspaper an ad for an apartment in a neighborhood she liked. So she called the landlord and said: Hey, I am really interested in your apartment. Is it still available? Yes, it is available. Could I come over on my lunch hour to take a look? Sure, come on over.

Well, about an hour later she went over to the apartment, and when she met the owner, the owner looked at her and said: Oh, I'm sorry, this place has just been rented.

This was in the fall of 1984.

Loraine drove back to her office and had this sinking suspicion that when the person saw she was African American, maybe that was why suddenly the available apartment turned into one that wasn't available. When she got back to the office, she asked a Caucasian colleague to make a call to the same owner and ask about the apartment. Within 20 minutes the colleague had made the call and asked: Hey, I'm calling about this apartment. Is it still available? The owner, who had just turned Loraine away, said: Sure, it's still available. When do you want to come over and see it?

That was the first lawsuit I drafted. I know I am speaking to a Presiding Officer who is an attorney and who has done the same thing. For the first client who was truly mine, the first pleading I drafted was a Federal fair housing action. With the testimony of the coworker, it was a slam-dunk case. We settled it shortly after we filed it. So in that sense, I don't have a big momentous trial story or anything to tell. Nevertheless, it made a huge impression on me as a brand-new attorney for two reasons. First, in hearing my client tell me the story, I understood more deeply than I ever had how important your home is, how important housing is. I think most of us feel that what is important in life is relationships—not things, not physical objects. But where you live is more like a part of your person than it is a physical thing.

As she described this experience, obviously, that was what made it so painful. But the thing that really stuck with me about this was this: She and I were so similar in many ways—about the same age, excited to be coming out to find a house, having a new job. But my experience—I found an apartment with no problem for my wife and me—was a positive one. But Loraine's experience of being turned away—and then having the sinking suspicion that she was turned away because of her skin color and then finding out that was the case—was a very negative and painful one. What really struck me, as I talked to her, was that the pain was not just the pain of something in the past tense. The pain was also the anticipation: What about the next time I look for a house? What about the next time? Am I going to be faced with this same differential treatment because of the color of my skin?

That first case I had suddenly made me the expert in Virginia on fair housing law—doing one case that was settled within a matter of weeks. So for the next 17 years, this was the heart of my legal practice—representing people who had been turned away from housing because of their race, disabilities—apartments, houses, mortgages, homeowner's insurance policies. I learned an awful lot when I did it.

One of the things I learned was what a superb piece of legislation the Federal Fair Housing Act of 1968 is. It was the last of the major pieces of civil rights legislation done in the 1960s. There was the 1964 act of public accommodations, employment discriminations, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. In 1968, the Federal Fair Housing Act was really the last of those big pieces of Federal legislation. I am proud to say that even over the course of my legal career, from 1984 until I stopped practicing in early 2002, in Virginia and elsewhere there was significant improvement. The Federal Fair Housing Act really did open the doors so that people could live where they wanted to live and as their resources would allow them to live there. Yet, if we just looked at the statistics about residential segregation, in all 50 States, we would see that we still have more work to do. There are still barriers that people face, and some of them are just absolute, sharp, and clear barriers, and some of them are more subtle.

HUD was directed by GAO in 2010 to do a study because they had been encouraged as part of the Federal Fair Housing Act of 1968 to encourage affirmatively to advance the fair housing mission through agencies that are funded by HUD. The case that I described with Loraine was a private landlord, and that is not necessarily relevant to this topic except to underline how important the law is and how critical housing is. But there are circumstances in which HUD is giving funding to organizations.

I was a mayor, and my city had a housing authority. HUD funding went into the housing authority in my city, just like it goes into housing authorities all around the United States. I was a Governor, and Governors got CDBG funds that came from HUD. So whether it is to a city, county, State, or to a CDBG program that then gets allocated out—even to worthy and strong housing nonprofits—HUD was under a directive when it was funding organizations to make sure they were affirmatively advancing the commands of the Fair Housing Act of 1968. HUD was doing this sort of in fits and starts and in a little bit of an extemporaneous way. In 2010, the GAO said: You have an obligation to affirmatively further fair housing, but you are not exactly doing it the right way. Can you really look at guidance that you can give to your grantees?

Now, this was really important—that Federal grantees get this guidance and affirmatively further fair housing because it wasn't just the private landlords of the world that had done bad things in the housing industry. In fact, there had been a lot of policies of State and local governments, and even the Federal Government, that had cut against fair housing. There were zoning laws that cut against fair housing. There were Federal appraisal standards to get FHA loans that cut against fair housing, and there were other Federal policies that actually cut directly against the goal of allowing people to live where they wanted to live.

So that is the reason why these grantees that are receiving Federal money, are in a unique position to do something about it, and often are inheriting a history where in the past they did the wrong things, need to be encouraged and given clear guidance about how to affirmatively further fair housing.

So to follow the GAO directive, HUD, under this administration—and I give Secretary Castro huge credit for getting this to the goal line—did the work to come up with clear guidance so that organizations that receive HUD funding know what it means to affirmatively encourage fair housing and so that it is not just a vague platitude or something you pay lip service to but you don't actually do it.

The rule announced by HUD is pretty straightforward. It doesn't mandate changes to local zoning laws. It doesn't require people to move. It doesn't end local control of community planning and development. It allows communities to determine what the best strategies are to comply with the Fair Housing Act. It provides local communities with data and tools that are needed to make fair housing decisions, including allowing local communities to add any relevant local or regional data so that people can understand the effects of their actions.

It does include protected classes in the statute in the larger community planning process. It prevents the use of Federal resources to discriminate against protected classes of individuals. It simplifies compliance with the Fair Housing Act, and this is really important because a lot of small communities don't have a phalanx of lawyers to pour through all the laws and regs. So simplified compliance guidelines are helpful. It does not require grantees to collect new data and data they are not already collecting, and it encourages engagement with the local

community, including the real estate industry, residents, developers, and other organizations.

As somebody who was sitting on the other end of this as a mayor, and as somebody who was appointing members to a public housing agency in Richmond, I think this kind of guidance is actually very, very helpful. So I was heartened when the GAO directed HUD to do this work. HUD did a significant period of study and put out guidance under Secretary Castro's leadership. I think it is actually something that is helpful—not harmful—to those who are receiving HUD funds and should be using HUD funds to advance important goals, including the fair housing goals.

I know the Senator who is proposing the amendment—Lee amendment No. 3897. I know it is well-intentioned, and the intention might be to not put too many burdens and obligations on the shoulders of local planning officials or cities or counties. But as somebody who has been a mayor and been in that spot, guidance is helpful. I actually think this guidance gives clarity in an area where, before the guidance, there was some confusion. I think the guidance strikes the right balance.

I don't know exactly when this is going to be called for a vote. I gather soon. But I just wanted to take the floor and hearken back to the days before I ever knew I would be in politics and I was representing people who desperately needed to just be treated equally to everybody else when it came to their housing. This HUD regulation really furthers that goal in a positive way, and I think we should not eliminate it by accepting Lee amendment No. 3897. So, for that reason, I encourage my colleagues to oppose the amendment.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I just want to thank the Senator from the Commonwealth of Virginia for an excellent statement. As he has indicated, he comes to this issue from the perspective of an attorney who is an expert in the Fair Housing Act, which, as he notes, is a landmark civil rights law. But he also brings a very important perspective of having been a mayor who was the recipient of Federal funds and who looked to HUD for guidance on how to make sure that, when community development block grant monies, for example, were given to local communities, the communities used them in ways that carried out the goals of the 1968 Fair Housing Act. It is very valuable that he has both the technical understanding of an attorney who has practiced in this very field for many years and also as a municipal official who had to live with the Federal rules.

The fact is, as he indicated, the Fair Housing Act regulation that came out last year is intended to give clarity to local officials who are the recipients of Federal funds.

I am very much opposed to the amendment offered by Senator LEE that would prohibit any funding for carrying out HUD's affirmatively furthering fair housing rules.

It is important to recognize that this rule didn't just come out of the blue. It is based on a specific requirement included in the Fair Housing Act of 1968, which mandates that HUD ensure that the recipients of Federal funds not only prevent outright blatant discrimination but also act to affirmatively further the fair housing goals of the act.

In fact, Congress has repeatedly reinforced this concept in the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, the Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act, and the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998. All of those laws require HUD program recipients to affirmatively further fair housing. It is probably a phrase that most of us are not that aware of, and it does not come trippingly off of one's tongue. But it is an integral part of the 1968 civil rights law, the Fair Housing Act.

It is also important to remember that when we are discussing fair housing, we are not only talking about discrimination based on race but also discrimination based on disabilities, national origin, and even against families with children.

It is important to note that more than 50 percent of all reported complaints of housing discrimination are initiated by individuals with disabilities. That is one reason the Paralyzed Veterans of America organization has come out so strongly against the amendment that will be offered by Senator LEE.

In a letter issued by the Paralyzed Veterans of America, the organization notes:

HUD's AFFH rule helps curb discrimination against people with disabilities, including veterans and the elderly. Each year, over 50% of all reported complaints of housing discrimination are initiated by people with disabilities.

The organization goes on to say:

This alarming trend will continue and affects Americans returning from conflicts abroad with a disability and the growing percentage of elderly Americans with a disability. HUD's AFFH rule will help governments identify strategies and solutions to expand accessible and supportive housing choices for our veterans and elders with disabilities.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the letter from the Paralyzed Veterans of America be printed in the RECORD.

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

PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA,
Washington, DC.

VOTE ''NO'' ON LEE ANTI-CIVIL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

Senator Mike Lee plans to introduce an amendment to the FY17 T-HUD/MilCon-VA appropriations bill which would prohibit HUD from implementing or enforcing its ''Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing'' (AFFH) rule (FR–5173–P–01), keeping long-awaited guidance and data intended to help state and local govemments connect housing and community development dollars to neighborhood opportunity. Any limitation or reversal of HUD's AFFH rule will stop our nation from ensuring that federal investments connect every neighborhood to good schools, well-paying jobs, public transportation options, and safe places for children to play and grow.

Senator Lee's amendment would halt implementation of the Fair Housing Act and throw our nation back into the pre-civil rights era. The Fair Housing Act of 1968 was intended to prohibit discrimination and dismantle historic segregation, which continues to limit the housing choices and opportunities of people of color, people with disabilities, families with children, and religious groups. To achieve this goal, the Fair Housing Act requires that recipients of federal housing and community development funding ''affirmatively further fair housing'' (AFFH).

HUD's AFFH Rule closes recommendations made by the GAO. In 2010 the GAO issued a report recommending that HUD reform its process of implementing the AFFH provision of the Fair Housing Act and the guidance that it provides to grantees. HUD's rule implements the GAO's recommendations by providing state and local governments and PHAs with data about the demographics and housing needs of their communities as well as a framework that they can use to identify and address issues that contribute to isolation and economic inequality.

HUD's proposed rule emphasizes local control in the development and implementation of solutions to remove obstacles to opportunity. Once an analysis of the barriers to fair housing is complete, governments and PHAs have the power to decide for themselves which issues they and local stakeholders identify are important to prioritize and address. HUD leaves these choices to the discretion of local governments and PHAs.

HUD's AFFH rule helps curb discrimination against people with disabilities, including veterans and the elderly. Each year, over 50% of all reported complaints of housing discrimination are initiated by people with disabilities. This alarming trend will continue and affects Americans returning from conflicts abroad with a disability and the growing percentage of elderly Americans with a disability. HUD's AFFH rule will help governments identify strategies and solutions to expand accessible and supportive housing choices for our veterans and elders with disabilities.

Ms. COLLINS. So I think it is important, as we debate this issue today, that we recognize what is at stake. The Paralyzed Veterans of America organization was founded by a band of servicemembers who came home from World War II with spinal cord injuries. I think we should listen to their experience.

There are many other groups that have come out in opposition to Senator LEE's amendment. They include the Urban League. Those are big cities that receive a lot of Federal funds, but they are opposed to Senator LEE's amendment. The NAACP is opposed to the amendment. Disability groups have come out in opposition to the amendment.

There is another extremely important point that the Senator from Virginia made; that is, this rule, which has been criticized by some, is in direct

response to GAO criticizing HUD for not doing a good job in carrying out this part of the 1968 Fair Housing Act. That is so important.

How many of us in this Chamber have repeatedly looked to GAO for advice on how we can improve how Federal programs work? Look to GAO. Look to its 2010 report, which is very critical of HUD. Surely, it is significant that when HUD issued the new regulations last year, the GAO said ''Fine'' and closed out its recommendations as being completed. That is significant.

This wasn't some wild scheme that was dreamed up by bureaucrats at HUD, as some have claimed. This was in response to a report from the Government Accountability Office. We talk about how we want more efficiency, better accountability. That is why we have the GAO. This rule that was directly adopted in response to the GAO's report surely is significant.

I see the Senator from Texas has arrived and wants to speak. I will be speaking more on this issue later today. Let me make one final point.

There are those who have claimed that somehow HUD is going to get involved in dictating the zoning rules and ordinances of local communities. I don't believe that is the case, but we are going to offer an amendment and have filed an amendment to make sure that is not the case.

The amendment that Senator REED, Senator COCHRAN, and I am offering specifically prohibits HUD from dictating in any way to any community what its zoning ordinances should be. If that is a possibility, we will foreclose it with our amendment.

I will be speaking further about this important issue later this afternoon, but I know there are many of my colleagues who are eager to speak, and I will yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DAINES). The majority whip.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I want to congratulate our friend, the Senator from Maine, for doing a tremendous job of managing this bill. It is never easy, given the fact that an individual Senator can slow down the process or insist on their rights, which I am not disparaging at all. There comes a time in every piece of legislation where it is important for us to make sure that we invoke our rights as Senators on behalf of the people we represent. I know it takes some patience and diligence, and I admire the diligence, patience, and professionalism of our colleague from Maine on what is always a challenging piece of work, which is trying to get an appropriations bill passed.

NATIONAL POLICE WEEK AND POLICE ACT

I wish to speak on a different topic. This is National Police Week. Earlier this week I had the chance to visit with a police officer by the name of Gregory Stevens of the Garland Police Department. For people who are not aware, Garland is a city northeast of Dallas, TX. Around this time last year, it was a site of an attempted terrorist attack. There was a display of some artwork of the prophet Muhammad that provoked a terrorist attack. Fortunately, Officer Stevens was the man in the right place at the right time when it happened.

Many of us remember that fateful day last May when two armed gunmen from Phoenix, AZ—clad in body armor with automatic weapons—pulled up to the conference center and opened fire. According to media reports, the attackers were inspired by ISIS, the Islamic State. This is a real problem because these folks, like the shooters in San Bernardino, hadn't actually traveled to Syria, although the San Bernardino couple had been in Saudi Arabia and had traveled overseas—if I am not mistaken. But these people were radicalized in place by the ideology of the Islamic State.

This is a big problem for the United States because, as the FBI director has commented, in every FBI field office in America, there are FBI investigations open on potential radicalization of people in place here in the United States. It doesn't take people traveling from the Middle East over here. It doesn't take people traveling from here, over there, and coming back. This is the third leg of the stool or the third prong of the threat, of people being radicalized in place.

Getting back to my story, Officer Stevens responded decisively. He was able to stop the two terrorists from hurting or killing hundreds of people inside the conference center and, thankfully, he left unscathed.

I asked him: What sort of weapon did you have to protect yourself against these two terrorists in body armor with automatic weapons?

He said: I had a .45-caliber Glock with a 14-shot clip. He said he had to do a tactical reload, but he never fired an additional shot after he reloaded his weapon. For those of us familiar with such things, that is the mark of a real professional—somebody who is very well trained and responds as well as you could hope for.

I know the people of the city of Garland and the folks in Texas are grateful to Officer Stevens for his quick response and his bravery. As I said, he saved potentially hundreds of lives and prevented injuries. I think it is appropriate during National Police Week for us to honor people like Officer Stevens by telling their stories.

On Monday, President Obama presented Officer Stevens the Medal of Valor, the highest honor given to a police officer. It is a fitting tribute to the heroic actions he exhibited that day.

During National Police Week, we should note that there are more than 900,000 law enforcement officers serving our country. After 9/11, we have come to talk about them as being first responders, but I am talking specifically about the law enforcement officers, not the broader category here during National Police Week. They are folks who get up every morning, kiss their families good-bye, go to work, put on a uniform, and put themselves in harm's way to protect our communities and our families.

Tragically, we know that not all of them make it home at the end of the day. Last year, the United States lost 124 law enforcement officials; 12 of those officers were from the State of Texas. All of them had their individual stories, but some left behind spouses and children. I have no doubt that all of them left behind loved ones and people who care deeply about them and a community that, in their absence, misses them terribly.

I am particularly proud of the men and women in my State who serve in law enforcement—not just in Texas but across the country, including here at the Nation's Capitol. Our Capitol Police do a terrific job of keeping all of us safe and not just Members of Congress but, obviously, the hundreds of thousands of tourists who visit the Capitol on an annual basis.

All of the professional law enforcement officials have dedicated their lives to public safety, and we should honor them for it. There is no doubt that our Nation is a better place because of their hard work and dedication, and we all owe them a debt of gratitude.

In the Senate, we need to do everything we can do to help professional law enforcement officials learn how to do their jobs as effectively and as safely possible. One simple way we could do that is by making sure they have access to the very best and latest training techniques—active shooter training, for example.

I recall the situation at Fort Hood when MAJ Nidal Hasan killed 13 people and wounded many more. Two police officers in active shooter mode crashed the site, exposing themselves to danger and ultimately paralyzing Nidal Hasan. More importantly, they took him out of action and saved a lot of lives.

This training they had and they exhibited with such great effect on that day is what we need to give more of our law enforcement officials access to. That is why I am glad to join my colleague, the senior Senator from Vermont, in sponsoring a piece of legislation called the Police Act—a bill that passed out of the Judiciary Committee last week.

This is pretty straightforward and it is bipartisan, so it doesn't make a lot of news, but I do think it serves a useful purpose. It will allow the use of existing grant money for police training to be used for this active shooter training. I know some of that training occurs at Texas State University in San Marcos. I have been to that site and walked through some of the buildings they use for the training. It is a heart-thumping exercise to realize what law enforcement deals with when confronting an active shooter. It is really important training.

We have seen terrorist attacks and sudden acts of violence in communities

across the country and, thankfully, we have people like Officer Stevens who helped avoid tragedy in Garland. But we should do everything we can to help equip our law enforcement officials with the training and tools they need in order to do their jobs as effectively as possible.

The Police Act would help in this effort, and it would help protect those who put their lives on the line on our behalf every day and support their efforts to guard the communities they serve. I look forward to passing this legislation soon. I can think of no better way to honor those who serve our country so well during National Police Week than to pass the Police Act, which will in some small way provide them access to the training they need in order to do their jobs better and help keep our communities safer.

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

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

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I have been coming to the Senate floor and talking about a very important issue for our country that we should be spending much more time focusing on, and that is the importance of growing our economy. With the exception of national defense, I believe there is no more important moral imperative for this body and the Federal Government to focus on than this issue, but unfortunately, as we have seen, the administration doesn't focus on it. They don't want to talk about the importance of growing the economy because the record they have of economic growth for Americans, particularly middle-class Americans, has been dismal.

I have been trying to get my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to focus on this chart over the last several weeks because this chart says a lot. If you look at the different records of different administrations, both Democratic and Republican, the Obama years have been a lost decade of economic growth. This red line shows 3 percent GDP growth. That is decent growth but not great. We can see that Reagan, Clinton, and Kennedy all had better numbers. This is the worst recovery over a 7-year period. That is a fact. They don't want to talk about it. We should talk about it a lot more.

I clearly think it is one of the most important things we should be doing in this body, and one way we can reignite the American dream and our economic growth, especially for the next generation—like for our pages—is to reduce burdensome and unnecessary regulations. Everybody agrees with that, including the Presiding Officer and all of my colleagues here. We need to reduce burdensome and unnecessary Federal regulations and build infrastructure for America. That is exactly what my amendment No. 3912 to the Transportation appropriations bill—which is so ably managed by my colleagues from Maine and Rhode Island—would do, and that is what I will talk about for a minute.

My amendment would give States and communities throughout this Nation the ability to expedite permitting for the maintenance, reconstruction, or construction of structurally deficient bridges. It is pretty simple. The amendment is very narrowly tailored. It says: If you are going to do maintenance, construction, or reconstruction on a bridge that is structurally deficient and the Federal Government won't be burdened, we will expedite the permitting by waiving many of the permitting requirements. That is it. It is very simple. As a matter of fact, this amendment only has two paragraphs.

It is a win-win for the country. Investing in our infrastructure will help boost our economy and economic growth, and importantly, it will keep American families safe. It is a commonsense approach that I am hoping my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will support.

Recently, President Obama was asked about the economy and our crumbling infrastructure. He talked about the need for infrastructure investment, which I completely agree with; however, he laid the blame for a lack of investment in infrastructure on Republicans, who he said were unwilling to spend on our infrastructure. Well, I think with the highway bill, the WRDA bill, and this appropriations bill, we are doing it. Again, it is very bipartisan. I don't think what the President said is true. We are certainly willing to invest in infrastructure, which is so important to our economy, but we need to do it wisely, and we need to make sure our taxpayer money does not go to unintended uses. In fact, I believe, as do many of my colleagues, that there is perhaps nothing more central to growing our economy and competing globally than sound infrastructure for America, but throwing money at projects that aren't ready for development because of the burdensome permitting and regulatory requirements that we often see from the Federal Government is not a sound use of taxpayer dollars.

A recent column in the Wall Street Journal points out that of the $800 billion of taxpayer money that was passed several years ago as part of the President's stimulus package, only $30 billion was spent on transportation infrastructure. That is remarkable. Out of the $800 billion, only $30 billion was spent on infrastructure. Why? One of the big reasons is because these infrastructure projects were not shovel-ready because of the onerous permitting requirements and environmental reviews.

Consider this: The average time for an environmental review for a major transportation project in the United States has increased to a staggering 8 years. In 2011, it took 8 years to get a transportation project approved in terms of Federal permitting, and that is up from 3½ years in the year 2000. We have more than doubled the time in less than 7 years because of the Federal permitting requirements.

The average environmental impact statement was about 22 pages when NEPA, which requires EIS's—and that is important. When that bill initially passed, the average EIS was 22 pages. Today's highway projects often have EIS's that are well above 1,000 pages. On average, it takes over 5 years to permit a bridge in the United States. Nobody wants this.

As a matter of fact, former President Bill Clinton highlighted the need for reform in this area in a well-known Newsweek article. In 2011 he was on the front cover of Newsweek. His article talked about how to get Americans back to work. One of his top recommendations was to make sure that when we have infrastructure projects, the permitting requirements don't take forever. He said that we need to ''keep the full review process when there are real environmental concerns, but when there aren't, the federal government should be able to give a waiver to the states to speed up start times on construction projects.'' That was former President Bill Clinton's recommendation. Well, that is exactly what my amendment does. Again, if you are going to repair or build a bridge and keep it in the same capacity—a two-lane bridge stays a two-lane bridge, not a four-lane bridge—and in the same place and the same size, then the permitting process should be expedited.

Let me spend a few minutes on why this is so important for our economy and the safety of our citizens. I think most people in this body know our bridges are in poor condition. About 1 in 10 of America's roughly 607,000 bridges is termed and classified as ''structurally deficient.'' Let me repeat that in a different way. In the United States, there are more than 61,000 bridges in need of repair. The average age of our bridges is 42 years old. Americans cross these structurally deficient bridges 215 million times a day.

Here is a chart that shows where they are located. If you look here, this classifies different bridges. The red category shows the most bridges—over 25 percent—that are structurally deficient. The lighter red represents 20 to 25 percent, and the lightest shade of red represents 15 to 20 percent. As we can see, every State has structurally deficient bridges that Americans are crossing 215 million times a day.

Let me be clear. It is not just about the economy, where truckers and commerce are crossing these bridges every day; it is about the safety of our children when they ride on schoolbuses and parents when they come home from work. Every State in the Union is impacted by this.

Let me give a few quick examples of some structurally deficient bridges across the country.

This is the Magnolia Bridge in Seattle, WA. It was built in 1929. This bridge carries over 18,000 cars per day and has been declared structurally deficient.

The Greenfield Bridge in Pittsburgh, PA—Pennsylvania has the most structurally deficient bridges in the country, and this chart shows one of them. It was built in 1921. It carries almost 8,000 cars per day. In 2003 a 10-inch chunk of concrete went through a car windshield, injuring the driver. This structurally deficient bridge has been crumbling for decades.

I have one more example, which the Presiding Officer will find of significant interest. This is the Russell Street Bridge in Missoula, MN. Transportation for America rates the deck of the Russell Street Bridge a 4 out of 10 in terms of structural soundness. It was built in 1957 and carries over 22,000 cars a day.

I think we would all agree that we need to fix these 61,000 structurally deficient bridges. There is no doubt about it. I don't think there is any Member of this body or anyone in the Federal Government who would disagree about that, but what happens when we try to do that? In fact, the efforts, especially in the local communities, are strangled by bureaucratic redtape.

The Wall Street Journal recently had an article titled ''The Highway to Bureaucratic Hell,'' and it talked about this very issue of what happens when communities try to fix their structurally deficient bridges. They gave a number of examples, but I wanted to read one that impacts Americans in the New Jersey-New York area of the country. The Wall Street Journal article stated: Another illustration of what happens is the Bayonne Bridge that connects New Jersey to Staten Island and at 150 feet tall blocks large cargo ships. The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey plans to raise the bridge from 150 feet to 215 feet. They wanted to do that to allow cargo ships to go under it. They planned to keep the bridge the same size; they just wanted to raise it so they wouldn't have to spend over $3 billion to build a tunnel.

The article goes on to say that their reward for thinking rationally was that it took 6 months to have the lead agency identified for an environmental review—an environmental review that dragged on for more than 5 years and spanned 20,000 pages. That is not good for New Jersey, that is not good for New York, and that is not good for America.

Again, what my amendment would do would fix this issue. It is very narrowly tailored, and it would simply make sure that when we are trying to fix the 61,000 structurally deficient bridges in the United States, we can do it in an expedited manner, not in the way in which this Wall Street Journal article described—5 years and 20,000 pages.

This amendment is a win-win-win. It will help spur economic growth, help us with the safety of our citizens, and help our workers get back to work so we can do the maintenance and reconstruction on these bridges. Everybody here talks about regulatory reform and how we need it. Even the President, in his State of the Union speech, talked about the need to cut redtape in order to grow this economy. But we rarely act on it. We talk about it, but we don't act on it.

I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle—my colleagues particularly from older States, where this amendment will help them more than the rest of the country—to vote on this amendment which will keep our families and kids safe, help grow our economy, and put workers back to work. It is a commonsense thing to do for our country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, it has now been 62 days since Judge Garland's nomination—62 days. As we all know, our Founding Fathers entrusted all of us in the Senate with the role of providing advice and consent to the President of the United States in relation to his appointments to the Supreme Court. We have the option—in fact, I believe the responsibility—to meet with the nominee in person. We are responsible for holding hearings through the Senate Judiciary Committee. Based on his responses to questions, we then have the opportunity to vote yes or no on the nomination. But we don't have the responsibility of doing nothing. We have to proceed to consider the nomination.

Unfortunately, Senators in the majority are refusing to do that. They have said they will not hold hearings—no hearings, zero—on a nominee for the U.S. Supreme Court. And too many have refused to even meet with the nominee, and I believe it is a matter of respect to meet with the nominee, Judge Merrick Garland. This is our job in the Senate. This is their job—the job established for them—for us—by America's Founding Fathers. Unfortunately, the majority is refusing to do it.

I have talked with a lot of hardworking people in Michigan and, frankly, people around the country about what would happen if they decided to not do one of the most basic parts of their job; if they said: For the next year, I think I am just not going to do this major part of my job description. Usually, when I ask people about that, they laugh and say: Well, that is simple; I would be fired. That is the response of the majority of Americans.

If we go back in history and look at how long it usually takes for the Senate to process a President's Supreme Court nomination, we see how unprecedented these delays really are. If this Republican-controlled Senate did its job as previous Senates have, then there would have been a hearing of the Judiciary Committee by April 27, which was 3 weeks ago—3 weeks ago—but that hasn't happened. The Judiciary Committee would have held a vote on May 12, but that vote never came, and there is no sign it is coming anytime soon, if at all, this year. Based on historical precedent, the Supreme Court nominee would then come to the floor for a vote on confirmation, up or down, yes or no, by Memorial Day. That is not going to happen either.

I urge my Republican colleagues to schedule a hearing so that the American people can hear directly from Judge Merrick Garland in a transparent and open way. Ask the tough questions. Talk about his almost 20 years on the circuit court bench and his role as chief judge. We should also talk about the fact that he was confirmed for that position overwhelmingly, on a bipartisan basis, by the U.S. Senate.

Because there is not a willingness to hold hearings, to debate, to discuss, to have a vote, I think that is why polls show that the majority of Americans support holding the hearings and a vote for Judge Garland and don't understand what is going on.

Meanwhile, the eight Justices of the Supreme Court have been unable to reach a final decision on two important cases, and I am sure there will be more. Those cases are Zubik v. Burwell and Spokeo v. Robbins. As a result, the law remains unsettled and is likely to remain unsettled for a year or more as to whether women who work for certain nonprofits will continue to have seamless access to contraceptive health care coverage. Given the gravity of the decision the Supreme Court must make, we can't afford to let it continue with less than the nine Justices who make up the Supreme Court.

This is supposed to be a separate branch of government that will place a check on the administration and on Congress, the third branch of government.

It is time that we get about the business of doing our job and for our Republican colleagues to say they are going to do their job and provide advice and consent on the nomination. Again, if there is not support for this nomination after rigorous debate, after hearings, after questions, after hearing from Judge Garland, then so be it. Then the President of the United States will have to come back with another nomination. But right now nothing is happening to reflect the fact that the third branch of government will be left ineffective, unable to fully function for probably a year, and it could be longer. That makes no sense.

It is time to do your job. It is time to do your job so that the U.S. Supreme Court can do its job on behalf of the American people.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss important legislation

before the U.S. Senate this week—the combined Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Military Construction and Veterans Affairs appropriations bill.

As chairman of the Surface Transportation Subcommittee and an active member of the Committee on Environment and Public Works, I am pleased that this appropriations bill includes a number of critical transportation and infrastructure initiatives that I have advocated for during my time in the Senate. A safe, efficient, and reliable transportation system is crucial to the economic growth of our country.

Last year Congress passed a much needed 5-year highway bill known as the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act, or the FAST Act. I was proud to work with my colleagues on this bipartisan legislation and usher in the first multiyear Transportation bill in over a decade.

The Transportation appropriations bill before the Senate fully funds the highway bill. Because of the FAST Act, Americans will benefit from increased investment in our Nation's transportation system. Rural and urban communities across Nebraska and our country will have new opportunities to secure funding for essential freight infrastructure projects. Meanwhile, a new national strategic freight program within the FAST Act will help our States and local communities prioritize freight traffic and increase safety. Through this program, States will be provided with the discretion to direct new funds to rural and urban freight corridors with higher commercial traffic.

As States work to develop their freight plans and designate corridors, stakeholders across all modes will have the opportunity to participate and provide valued feedback. First and last mile connectors for freight at airports, trucking facilities, and rail yards will also be eligible for increased investment under this national freight program.

Railroad infrastructure is also a pivotal component of our national transportation network. According to the Nebraska Department of Roads, my State hosts more than 3,000 at-grade rail crossings that will be eligible for Federal dollars. Additional funding is provided for railroad safety and research programs, including positive train control installation and resources to address highway-rail grade crossing safety.

I am also pleased that T-HUD advances key pipeline safety efforts, which I worked with my Commerce Committee colleagues, including the Presiding Officer, to include in the bipartisan SAFE PIPES Act. America's pipeline infrastructure transports vital energy resources to homes, businesses, schools, and commercial centers across our country. According to the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, or PHMSA, more than 2.5 million miles of pipelines traverse the United States. Pipelines are often renowned as the safest way to transport crude oil and natural gas. Nevertheless, Congress must continue to increase safety on America's vast pipeline network. Our Nation's hazardous materials emergency responders and our firefighters are supported by T-HUD report language that encourages PHMSA to update important training curriculum programs.

The Surface Transportation Subcommittee has also been working on legislation to strengthen our Nation's maritime programs. For example, the Maritime Security Program is responsible for ensuring a fleet of U.S. merchant marine vessels stands ready and available to assist our Nation's military in times of war or national emergency, and I appreciate that T-HUD bolsters this very valuable program.

Furthermore, DOT and the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy will be compelled to provide more information to Congress on efforts to combat on-campus sexual assault. Addressing on-campus sexual assault is something I have been seeking to address as part of my bill, known as the Maritime Administration Enhancement Act of 2017. Through meaningful prevention and response efforts, we can provide a more secure experience for the Academy's men and women, many of whom will go on to serve our country.

America's aviation and aerospace system will benefit from increased resources without raising ticket fees on our Nation's passengers. The bill's report tasks the Federal Aviation Administration with evaluating and updating commercial airline onboard emergency medical kits, particularly for families traveling with young infants. This is something I fought for in the Senate FAA bill.

Full funding is provided for the Contract Tower Program, which allows smaller airports to contract with the private sector for air traffic control services. Airports across the country, such as the Central Nebraska Regional Airport in Grand Island, NE, will benefit greatly from this program.

T-HUD allocates critical funding for our Nation's multimodal transportation network, and I am pleased the bill advances many of my own key initiatives.

I would also like to address some of the important provisions included in the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs portion of the bill. We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to our veterans and we have a responsibility to help them in their time of need. These men and women answered the call to serve our country and to defend our freedom. Some have deployed around the world, often into the heart of danger, to fight or provide humanitarian assistance. Many of these veterans return from service with both the visual and the unseen scars of battle.

These brave men and women deserve timely access to quality health care. Unfortunately, veterans living in rural States can be forced to travel great distances to receive the care they need. Through this legislation, the VA would be prevented from diminishing services at certain existing Veterans Health Administration medical facilities. It would also require the VA to take a more holistic approach to planning and executing realignment.

Throughout Nebraska, veterans are fortunate to receive quality care from dedicated VA medical providers. At the same time, the lack of modern infrastructure and outdated facilities are hindering efforts to provide the latest treatments and support. The VA must continue to explore innovative strategies to hasten updates and the completion of our new facilities.

Although this bill offers progress, we are not finished in our efforts to address problems at the VA. I will continue to do whatever I can to ensure that every veteran has access to the health care they need.

As I mentioned, the appropriations bill before us moves forward a number of significant national transportation priorities and enhances programs beneficial to America's veterans. I greatly appreciate the hard work of Senators COLLINS, KIRK, and their Appropriations subcommittee staffs on this critical bill. It will allocate much needed dollars to advance our Nation's transportation system and strengthen veterans programs.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Nebraska, Mrs. FISCHER, for her comments. She is such a leader on so many issues in the Senate. We work closely together on transportation issues, and she gave us very valuable input for the bill that is before us. So I acknowledge her help and assistance and guidance and thank her for her comments.

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

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

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized to speak as in morning business.

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

OBAMACARE

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, over the last few months, we have witnessed ObamaCare crumbling in my home State of Arizona. Several Obamacare-established co-ops collapsed, including Arizona's Meritus Mutual Health Partners, forcing nearly 63,000 Arizonans scrambling to find new coverage. Last month, UnitedHealth, the Nation's largest health insurer, announced it

will exit the Arizona marketplace and leave about 45,000 Arizonans to find new coverage in 2017. Now, as a direct result of the President's failed law, health insurer Humana just announced it, too, will exit the marketplace in 2017 in my home State. All together, over half of Arizona's counties will be left with a single insurer, and another third will be left with just two. In turn, this will cause premiums to skyrocket even higher than last year. While Democrats continue to stand by a failed law, Arizona families are bearing the burden. This is unacceptable.

More than 6 years after ObamaCare was rammed through Congress without a single Republican vote—and I was on the floor on Christmas Eve morning as it was passed on a strict party-line vote—Democrats are still trying to spin their overhaul of America's health care system. We continue to hear from advocates of ObamaCare who make their claims that continue to leave me speechless, such as that insurance markets are stable and premiums are not rising quickly. Unfortunately, as is often the case with advocates of the President's disastrous law, these statements are largely devoid of reality.

ObamaCare's upheaval and disruption to our Nation's health care system is a direct result of the efforts of the White House and Democratic leadership to write this massive bill behind closed doors, with no input from this side of the aisle. The process was anything but bipartisan, as promised on the campaign trail by the then-Presidential candidate, Barack Obama. Instead of crafting health care reform that works for the American people, the administration cut deals with drug companies to get their support, ensuring they would see increased profits and consumers would face increased costs.

Democrats' partisan effort to write and pass ObamaCare without Republican participation flies in the face of how every other major reform in American history was enacted. I have worked with Democrats on many occasions to solve some of the country's most urgent problems. Never in my experience has one party attempted to increase the government's influence in one-sixth of the American economy over the unanimous opposition of the other party.

Unfortunately, Americans are now facing the consequences of this massive overhaul of our health care system. The biggest problem in our health care system, and Americans' most pressing concern, is out-of-control cost increases, but ObamaCare does nothing to address this issue. That is why we continue to see health care costs balloon, while health insurance becomes increasingly expensive and unaffordable for citizens and their employers.

Sadly, as we have seen in recent weeks, the situation is only getting worse. Just last month, a poll by Gallup found that Americans cite health care costs as the most important financial burden facing their families. They name health care costs ahead of other financial burdens, such as low wages, debt, and being able to afford college or a mortgage.

The American people are now experiencing firsthand exactly what Republicans have been warning about ever since ObamaCare was written: The law will ultimately do far more harm than good, and they have every right to question what the future holds. The fact is, the crumbling of ObamaCare should come as no surprise to anyone.

UnitedHealth—which will exit from all but a handful of States in the individual marketplace in 2017—lost $475 million on the ObamaCare exchanges in 2015 and is projected to lose $650 million on the exchanges in 2016. Its exit from ObamaCare exchanges will send an estimated 45,000 citizens of my State, Arizona, scrambling to find new coverage with even fewer options to choose from.

Humana's announcement that it will follow in UnitedHealth's footsteps by exiting Arizona's exchanges should also come as no surprise, given the fact that it continues to incur losses as a result of ObamaCare's onerous regulations. Humana and UnitedHealth's exit means fewer options, less competition, and most certainly higher costs for consumers. This is especially true after Blue Cross Blue Shield, the only remaining provider in several Arizona counties, increased premiums last year by 27 percent merely to recover the $185 million in losses it incurred in the ObamaCare marketplace between 2014 and 2015.

The health insurer has noted that continuing to suffer losses in the marketplace is unsustainable, meaning significant premium increases are on the horizon for 2017. All of this news of insurance companies exiting the marketplace and others increasing premiums is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the consequences of this disastrous law. Since ObamaCare became law, prescription drug costs have continued to skyrocket.

Instead of encouraging innovation and competition, ObamaCare places heavy taxes on manufacturers and prescription drug importers to the tune of $27 billion over 10 years. According to Standard & Poor's, the cost of drugs on the individual insurance market jumped 50 percent in 2015. Just as some are forgoing a visit to the doctor because of higher out-of-pocket costs, we are starting to see more and more individuals with chronic conditions not getting their prescriptions filled because of the increasing cost of drugs.

The fact is, ObamaCare was a failure from the start and Americans are paying the price. The best thing government can do to expand access to health insurance is to institute reforms that will rein in costs and make health care more affordable. I have introduced legislation to replace ObamaCare with real reform that would expand quality access to health care without compromising individual liberty, competition, or innovation.

Regrettably, every Republican effort to meaningfully bring down the cost of health care has been met with rigid opposition by Democrats who are more concerned with protecting President Obama's legacy than making health care accessible and affordable. Every day that goes by, with my colleagues on the other side of the aisle continuing to dig in their heels, leads to another day that millions of Americans face higher health care costs, decreased quality of care, and fewer choices.

It is past time for the President of the United States and Democrats in Congress to answer to the thousands of citizens across my State and the Nation who have been let down time and again by this disastrous law.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to commend the leaders of the Senate Appropriations Committee for accepting transparency language that I requested be included in the fiscal year 2017 spending bill for the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The good governance provision, which I championed after years of oversight work, will ensure greater accountability in public housing authorities' use of the Federal money that they receive in this annual appropriations bill.

For the last 6 years, I have raised concern about HUD's failure to conduct proper oversight of how local housing authorities use those Federal dollars. Specifically, my concerns relate to HUD's practice of allowing local housing authorities to spend hundreds of millions of Federal dollars each year with virtually no Housing and Urban Development oversight and no transparency to the public. We all have reason to be concerned about this lack of transparency because some local housing authorities rely on the Federal Government for up to 90 percent of their funding.

That is why I thank Senator COLLINS, Senator KIRK, and other members of the Transportation-HUD Appropriations Subcommittee for recognizing that Congress must insist on HUD's paying closer attention to the use of taxpayer dollars by housing authorities.

The good governance provision that the Transportation-HUD Appropriations Subcommittee included in this year's appropriations report ensures that in the future the housing money we appropriate for low-income families will retain its Federal designation even

after it is transferred to the housing authorities.

I want to stress that this designation is no small matter. In other words, Federal money is going to be considered Federal money when it gets to the local housing authority, and no games can be played with it as are being played with it now.

U.S. taxpayers spend about $4.5 billion every year to help low-income Americans put a roof over their heads. We can be proud that we do so much for people in need. We should not let any of that money specifically for people of need be wasted or spent to feather the nests of local public housing authority bureaucrats.

I wish to take a few minutes to explain why the appropriations language that I championed and is in this legislation is so sorely needed. Some local housing authorities have devoted these limited funds, which are meant to help low-income people find affordable housing, to high salaries and even for perks for the people who run housing authorities around the country. I will just use three examples, but there are dozens of examples that can be given.

At the Atlanta Housing Authority, at least 22 employees earned between $150,000 and $303,000 per year.

The former executive director of the Raleigh Housing Authority in North Carolina received about $280,000 in salary and benefits plus 30 vacation days.

The executive director of the Tampa Housing Authority is paid over $214,000 per year, and the housing authority spends over $100,000 per year on travel and conferences.

After I called attention to these wasteful practices a few years ago, HUD limited the executive salary paid by local housing authorities. That is good news, right? Well, it didn't work out that way, even after the salaries were capped at level IV of the Executive Schedule pay scale, which today amounts to about $160,000 a year. As I say, it didn't turn out to be good news. Unfortunately, as it did turn out, this compensation cap had little impact in limiting housing authority salaries.

I will explain how this works. HUD provides over $350 million in operating fees annually to local housing authorities. Right now, these fees are considered income earned by the housing authorities for managing programs instead of considering them as what they are—grants given by the Federal Government. That is where the Federal money gets mixed up with local money and the Federal money isn't followed by HUD. That is why they get away with the waste of taxpayers' money.

Despite their source, when these fees reach housing authorities, they are no longer considered Federal funds. I say that a second time for emphasis. Once these funds lose Federal designation, housing authorities then can use the tax dollars as they see fit—and they do. Then, when they use it as they see fit, HUD is not required to conduct oversight of how the money is spent. Believe me; HUD hasn't done much oversight.

This means that many employees of housing authorities can continue to earn annual salaries well in excess of the $160,000 without technically violating the Federal salary cap. You can see the games that are being played to let these local housing people get these massive high salaries and fringe benefits and waste taxpayers' money that should be spent helping low-income people get safe housing. Sadly, these salaries exceed limits that were imposed by the Federal Government to ensure the money we appropriate goes to low-income families in the greatest need of our assistance.

After I began publicly voicing my complaints about this practice, the Office of Management and Budget in December 2013 issued a government-wide guidance that should have—should have—put a stop to it, but it didn't. But let me tell you what the guidance called for. So-called fees for service would then be designated as program income so the Federal funding would retain its Federal designation after it is transferred into housing authority business accounts. Making sure it kept its Federal designation meant it had to be subject to HUD oversight. HUD initially agreed to fully implement the OMB guidance, but they did not.

Later, the Department quietly—very quietly—requested a waiver that, if that waiver was granted, would have allowed housing authorities to sidestep the new OMB rule and then continue to avoid commonsense oversight because, with that waiver, the Federal dollars would not have Federal designation. They would be considered local money and could be spent any way people wanted to spend it.

I might never have learned of this HUD effort to get around this OMB rule but for the very good work of the HUD inspector general. After I learned from the inspector general's staff that HUD was requesting a waiver of the OMB guidance, I sent a letter to OMB expressing my concerns. But as so often happens with bureaucrats in this town, I didn't hear from OMB until I attempted to include amendment language addressing the fee designation in the Transportation-HUD appropriations bill before Thanksgiving of last year, when the issue was on the floor of the Senate. As we all know, that bill was pulled from the floor. But neither the inspector general nor I were ready to give up, and that is why we are here today.

Just recently, I received good news that reinforces my belief that congressional oversight works. HUD has finally agreed to implement its inspector general's recommendations requiring that funding provided by the taxpayers to public housing authorities will keep its Federal designation. In other words, HUD will be responsible for making sure that Federal funding is used as intended, and that is very clear. It is why we have public housing—to provide safe, affordable housing for those in need and, consequently, then, not to use that Federal money to pay exorbitant executive salaries.

My concern now is the timeframe for implementation and ensuring that HUD does not request another waiver.

HUD expects the final rule to be completed by December 2017, more than 1½ years from now. That is a very long time to finalize regulations. I hope HUD isn't delaying the process in the hope that either the inspector general or this Senator will give up. I can assure you that will not happen. We need to ensure that this reform is implemented by including language in this appropriations bill to not just keep salaries in check but also to ensure that HUD exercises oversight authority over how these funds are used and that more money is actually used for the poor.

I hope HUD uses that oversight authority to combat waste, such as in the following three examples: The Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles misused over $3.9 million in operating funds for salary, travel, bonuses, and legal settlements. The Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority in Canton, OH, misused $4 million in operating and capital funds to build a commercial development, and an additional $2 million was misused for salaries and benefits. The Hickory, NC, housing authority paid over $500,000 in operating funds to a maintenance company owned by the brother of a board member—a clear conflict of interest.

It is also vital that Congress be aware of any effort by HUD to once again avoid implementing this rule the way they tried to get around the OMB rule I just talked about. For that reason, the report language I requested requires HUD to notify both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees quarterly during fiscal year 2017 if they request any waiver from implementing these provisions.

I encourage my colleagues to support this effort to ensure that HUD implements these much needed changes and does its part to provide better oversight of our scarce Federal funding.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

POLICE ACT OF 2016

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I am delighted to be here on the floor with the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee and the ranking member, our colleague from Vermont, whom I have worked with on so many issues, to ask unanimous consent to take up a bill that I talked about a little earlier this morning called the POLICE Act. This bill uses existing funding to support local law enforcement but specifically to make sure funding is available for active-shooter training.

For example, in San Marcos, TX, at Texas State University, they have trained 80,000 local law enforcement officials in active-shooter training. The

time I remember most poignantly when this was put to good use and saved lives was at Fort Hood, TX, when MAJ Nidal Hasan stood up and killed I think about 13 people and then wounded about 30 more. There were two law enforcement officials who crashed the site, put themselves in harm's way, but thanks to the great training they had, they were able to disable Major Hasan before he was able to do any more damage. So this is very important training.

We want to make sure there are funds available—using existing funding streams but available for active-shooter training wherever it might be provided around the country.

Mr. President, as I mentioned earlier today, this week is National Police Week—a time to honor those men and women who have fallen in the line of duty.

One way we can better support our Nation's law enforcement officers is by helping them get the training they need to keep themselves and the communities they protect safe.

The POLICE Act is a bill that would do exactly that.

This bipartisan legislation would allow existing grant money available for police training to be used for active shooter training—a commonsense way to put these funds to good use in a way that does not and will not spend additional Federal money.

Right now, current law will not allow local police departments and first responders to use a substantial amount of grant funding through the Justice Department for this kind of critical training. Our bill would change that.

With all the threats they face every day on the job, we have an obligation to equip as many officers as possible with the skills and training they need to respond to an active shooter situation.

I would like to thank Senator LEAHY for working with me on this legislation. I also would like to thank Chairman GRASSLEY for his effort in getting this bill passed out of committee last week. I express my gratitude to Senator GRASSLEY and Senator LEAHY.

At this time, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 464, S. 2840.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2840) to amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to authorize COPS grantees to use grant funds for active shooter training, and for other purposes.

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

Mr. CORNYN. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading and was read the third time.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I know of no further debate on the matter.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate, the bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

The bill (S. 2840) was passed, as follows:

S. 2840

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 ''Protecting Our Lives by Initiating COPS Expansion Act of 2016'' or the ''POLICE Act of 2016''.

SEC. 2. ADDITIONAL AUTHORIZED USE OF COPS FUNDS.

Section 1701(b) of title I of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3796dd(b)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (16), by striking ''and'' at the end;

(2) by redesignating paragraph (17) as paragraph (18);

(3) by inserting after paragraph (16) the following:

''(17) to participate in nationally recognized active shooter training programs that offer senario-based, integrated response courses designed to counter active shooter threats or acts of terrorism against individuals or facilities; and''; and

(4) in paragraph (18), as redesignated, by striking ''(16)'' and inserting ''(17)''.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. CORNYN. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I had a chance to speak on this earlier. I would defer to my colleague, the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, or Senator LEAHY from Vermont, my principal cosponsor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, this week is National Police Week, and many of us have paused to thank our Nation's law enforcement officers for their important work. But it is not enough for us to simply pay tribute to these men and women. We must also provide them with the training and the resources they need to remain safe while they protect our communities.

That is why I pushed for years to enact legislation to reauthorize the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Program, which President Obama signed into law on Monday. I authored this legislation with Senator GRAHAM because every single law enforcement officer deserves to be protected by a lifesaving vest. Since its inception in 1998, this program has provided more than 1.2 million vests to more than 13,000 law enforcement agencies. The reauthorization signed into law this week ensures that hundreds of thousands more officers will be similarly protected. I have personally met with officers who were saved by vests purchased through this program. They will confirm that these vests are worth every penny.

Today the Senate passed the Protecting Our Lives by Initiating COPS Expansion Act, or the POLICE Act. This legislation will provide law enforcement officers with training to handle active shooter situations. The bill is supported by the Fraternal Order of Police, International Association of Chiefs of Police, National District Attorneys Association, Major County Sheriffs Association, and the Sergeants Benevolent Association. I was proud to join Senator CORNYN as the lead Democratic sponsor of this legislation.

I thank Senator CORNYN for this. We have worked together on many law enforcement things over the years, and I think both Senator CORNYN and I have tried to demonstrate that law enforcement should not be a partisan matter, and we have done this in a bipartisan fashion.

So many officers have heroically responded to active shooter situations. This week the President bestowed upon several officers the Medal of Valor for their response to active shooters, including three California officers who confronted a gunman during a rampage at a community college that left five people dead in 2013; a New York officer who arrested, at a crowded hospital, a gunman who already had killed another officer; and a New York sheriff's deputy who confronted and subdued a gunman who had wounded others and posed a threat to students at a nearby school.

But I think we cannot rely on heroism alone. Senator CORNYN mentioned the training that helped end an active-shooter incident in Texas. Unfortunately, active-shooter incidents have become all too common, occurring in shopping malls and schools, the workplace, anywhere people gather. No State is immune, including my own State of Vermont. All of our Nation's officers should receive training on how to handle such situations so they can respond effectively to protect the public and to protect themselves. The POLICE Act will help make such training available.

However, the burden of protecting the public from active shooters should not fall solely on the shoulders of our law enforcement officers. Congress must do more to prevent active shooter situations. That means preventing criminals and those who seek to cause harm from acquiring firearms in the first place. That is why the Senate should pass the Stop Illegal Trafficking in Firearms Act that I sponsored with Senator COLLINS, which would provide law enforcement the tools they need to investigate and deter straw purchasers and gun traffickers. Congress must not become so numb to tragedy after tragedy that we fail to fulfill our duty to legislate, even when the issue involves firearms.

As I said, Senator CORNYN and I have made it very clear that supporting our Nation's law enforcement officers in reducing gun violence is not a partisan issue. While we are making progress, much more remains to be done. I stand ready to work with anyone—Republican or Democrat—on commonsense

ways to keep our law enforcement officers and communities safe.

I applaud the Senate for passing this, I urge the House to quickly pass it, and I know the President will sign it.

I yield the floor.

TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2016—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, in 1867, when the naturalist John Muir first walked into the Cumberland Mountains, he wrote: ''The scenery is far grander than any I ever before beheld. . . . Such an ocean of wooded, waving, swelling mountain beauty and grandeur is not to be described.'' In January, Apex Clean Energy announced that it would spoil that mountain beauty by building twenty-three 45-story wind turbines in Cumberland County.

I can still recall walking into Grassy Cove in Cumberland County one spectacular day in 1978 during my campaign for Governor. I had not seen a prettier site. Over the last few decades, pleasant weather and natural beauty have attracted thousands of retirees from Tennessee and across America to the Cumberland Plateau.

The proposed Crab Orchard Wind project would be built less than 10 miles from Cumberland Mountain State Park, where for half a century Tennesseans and tourists have camped, fished, and canoed alongside herons and belted kingfishers and around Byrd Lake. It will be less than 5 miles from the scenic Ozone Falls State Natural Area, where the 110-foot waterfall is so picturesque, it was filmed as scenery in the movie ''Jungle Book.''

So here are my 10 questions for the citizens of Cumberland County and the people of Tennessee:

How big are these wind turbines?

I have a picture somewhere; maybe it will show up in the next few minutes. Each one is over two times as tall as the skyboxes at the University of Tennessee football stadium, three times as tall as Ozone Falls, and taller than the Statute of Liberty. The blades on each one are as long as a football field. Their blinking lights can be seen for 20 miles. They are not your grandma's windmills.

Question No. 2: Will they disturb the neighborhood?

Here is what a New York Times review of the documentary ''Windfall'' said about New York residents debating such turbines:

> Turbines are huge . . . with blades weighing seven tons and spinning at 150 miles an hour. They can fall over or send parts flying; struck by lightning, say, they can catch fire . . . and can generate a disorienting strobe effect in sunlight. Giant flickering shadows can tarnish a sunset's glow on a landscape.

Question No. 3: How much electricity can the project produce?

A puny amount—71 megawatts. But that is only when the wind is blowing, which in Tennessee is only 18.4 percent of the time, according to the Energy Information Administration.

Question No. 4: Does TVA need this electricity?

The answer is no. Last year TVA said there is ''no immediate need for new base load plants after Watts Bar Unit 2 comes online.'' That is a nuclear reactor. And just last week TVA put up for sale its unfinished Bellefonte nuclear plant.

Question No. 5: Do we need wind power's carbon-free electricity to help with climate change?

No, we don't. Nuclear power is a more reliable option. Nuclear produces over 60 percent of our country's carbon-free electricity, which is available 92 percent of the time. Wind produces 15 percent of our country's carbon-free electricity, but the wind often blows at night when electricity is not needed.

Question No. 6: How many wind turbines would it take to equal one nuclear reactor?

To equal the production of the new Watts Bar reactor, you would have to run three rows of these huge wind turbines along I–40 from Memphis to Knoxville. And don't forget the transmission lines. Four reactors, each occupying roughly 1 square mile, would equal the production of a row of 45-story wind turbines strung the entire length of the 2,178-mile Appalachian Trail from Georgia to Maine. Relying on wind power to produce electricity when nuclear reactors are available is the energy equivalent of going to war in sailboats when a nuclear navy is available.

Question No. 7: Can you easily store large amounts of wind power and use it later when you need it? The answer is no.

Question No. 8: So even if you build wind turbines, do you still need nuclear, coal, or gas plants for the 80 percent of the time when the wind isn't blowing in Tennessee? The answer is yes.

Question No. 9: Then why would anyone want to build wind power that TVA doesn't need?

Because billions of dollars of wasteful Federal taxpayer subsidies allow wind producers in some markets to give away wind power and still make a profit.

The 10th question: Who is going to guarantee that these giant wind turbines get taken down when they wear out in 20 years and after the subsidies go away?

Good question. The picture that was just put up—and I have another slide as well—is what Palm Springs, CA, looks like after it has been littered with these massive wind turbines. My question for the people of Tennessee is, Do you want Cumberland County and Tennessee to look like that? That is the question we need to ask ourselves.

Many communities where wind projects have been proposed have tried to stop them before they go up because once the wind turbines and new transmission lines are built, it is hard to take them down. For example, watch the documentary ''Windfall'' that I mentioned earlier.

In October, the residents of Irasburg, VT, voted 274 to 9 against a plan to install a pair of 500-foot turbines on a ridgeline visible from their neighborhood.

In New York, three counties opposed 500- to 600-foot wind turbines next to Lake Ontario. People in the town of Yates voted unanimously to oppose the project in order to ''preserve their rural landscape.'' Take a look, and you can see why.

In Kent County, MD, the same company that is trying to put turbines in Cumberland County—Apex Clean Energy—tried to put down twenty-five to thirty-five 500-foot turbines a quarter to a half mile apart across thousands of acres of farmland where the air serves as a route for migratory geese.

According to the Baltimore Sun, Stephen S. Hershey, Jr., a local State legislator, had introduced a bill that would give county officials the right to veto any large-scale wind project in their jurisdiction. Hershey said he put the bill in after learning that the turbines would be nearly 500 feet tall and spread across an area of thousands of acres. He called that a ''massive'' footprint ''in a relatively rural and bucolic area.''

William Pickrum, president of the Board of County Commissioners, wrote the Senate committee that the project ''will certainly have a negative effect'' on farming, boating, and tourism in the county and hurt property values. The legislation had the support of local conservation groups and of Washington College in Chestertown. The school's interim president, Jack S. Griswold, warned in a letter to school staff and supporters that the turbines would ''despoil this scenic landscape.''

I mentioned a little earlier how big these wind turbines are. These are not your grandma's windmills. I happen to know, even though the Presiding Officer is from North Carolina, he was born in Tennessee and knows a little bit about the football stadium in Knoxville.

This is one wind turbine, when placed in Neyland Stadium in Knoxville, which will hold 102,000 people. The turbine is over twice as tall as the skyboxes. Its blades go the whole length of the football field. Its blinking lights can be seen for 20 miles. These are not your grandma's windmills.

As a U.S. Senator, I voted to save our mountaintops from destructive mining techniques. I am just as eager to protect mountaintops from unsightly wind turbines. I have voted for Federal clean air legislation and supported TVA's plan to build carbon-free nuclear reactors, phase out its older, dirtier coal plants, and put pollution control equipment on the remaining coal plants. Already the air is cleaner and our view of the mountains is better.

I hope citizens of Cumberland County—and all Tennesseans—will say a loud ''no'' to the out-of-State wind producers that are encouraged by billions in wasteful taxpayer subsidies to destroy our mountains and make them look like that.

Some say tourists will come to see the giant turbines. They may—once. But do we really think tourists or most Tennesseans want to exchange a drive through the natural beauty of the Cumberland Mountains for a drive along 23 towers that are more than twice as tall as Neyland Stadium and whose flashing lights can be seen for 20 miles? If you do, just take another look at the photograph of what has happened in Palm Springs, CA.

If there is one thing Tennesseans agree on, it is the pride in the natural beauty of our State. There are few places more beautiful than Cumberland County. We should not allow anyone to destroy the environment of our State in the name of saving.

I thank the Presiding Officer, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

OPIATE EPIDEMIC

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, I rise, as I have for the past few weeks, to bring stories of the opiate crisis that we have throughout my State, the Presiding Officer's State of North Carolina, and all over this country.

This epidemic is something we have to face because it affects every person in America right now. There is not a person I know of and not anyone, I believe, in America who doesn't know somebody in their immediate family, extended family, or close friend who hasn't been affected by prescription drug abuse or illicit drug abuse.

I have been dealing with this since my days as Governor of the great State of West Virginia. As the Presiding Officer knows, it has ravaged my State. We have been hit harder than any other State in the country. Drug overdoses have soared by over 700 percent since 1999. Just last year alone, we lost over 600 West Virginians to opioids. These are legal prescription drugs that are made legally in the country by a legal manufacturer of pharmaceuticals. They are approved by the Food and Drug Administration, a Federal agency that is supposed to look out for our well-being. They are being prescribed by the most trusted person next to our family members, our doctors, and they are killing us.

Our State is not unique in that it has hit everybody. Fifty-one Americans are dying every day—every day. We have lost over 200,000 Americans. Two hundred thousand Americans have died since 1999. If we think about that in epidemic proportions—we are talking about Zika. We just put $1.1 billion toward Zika. We spent $500 million on Ebola. All of these horrible epidemics that can cause devastation in America, we will rise up and face. We haven't done a thing in this line. We need a serious culture change to get through the problem, and we need to change approval of opiate drugs. Basically, FDA does not need to be putting out these powerful drugs. We don't need them. Think about the United States of America. Less than 5 percent of the world's population lives in our great country. Yet we consume over 80 percent of the opiates produced in the world. How did we become the most addicted? How did we become so intolerant to pain that we have to have the most powerful drugs ever produced? We have to treat the way we look at this drug coming to the market.

Also, 10, 20 years ago, anybody who did drugs, if they committed a crime, we put them in jail. We have spent over $500 billion in the last two decades incarcerating people for nonviolent crimes. They come out as bad as they went in. We haven't cured anything. We have to change. We are looking at sentencing guideline changes on nonviolent crime—nonsexual, nonviolent crime. Most addicts commit thievery. That is a theft. It is larceny. That is where they get their sentencing from. So they get sentenced, they get a criminal record, and they can't get a job. They are out of the market.

My State of West Virginia has the lowest workforce participation. Only three things take you out of the workforce if you are an adult: If you have an incarceration record, people will not hire you; if you have a lack of skill sets; if you are addicted, you can't pass a drug test—or a combination of those three.

Something is going on. We can't fill jobs. People are telling me how bad the economy is. Then I talk to the employers who say: We can't get people to pass a drug test. We can't get people into the marketplace. So it is something we have to do.

My office continues to get flooded. I get letters from all over the country now because I invite that. I want them. Let me read your letter. Let's put a face and let's put a family on it. It is not just a hardship, it is not just poverty, it is basically every walk of life in America. They are writing stories.

I want to read another story to you right now. This is Carolyn's story. This is the grandmother writing to me:

Dear Senator Manchin,

I am enclosing a copy of the letter I sent to ''The Journal'' in Martinsburg concerning the death of our son's step-daughter. She died of a heroin overdose.

I consider myself Devon's grandmother, and at my age words are my best weapon to fight the scourge that killed her.

Please, Senator, read my letter and then use it in any way you see fit in the fight for the passage of ''Jessie's Law.''

We have talked about Jessie's Law. The Presiding Officer has been helpful, and I appreciate it very much. It basically says: If you go to the hospital and you know your child or a loved one in your family is addicted and the child is trying to overcome the addiction, then the hospital has the responsibility to stamp on their record ''addiction'' so they will be watching how they discharge them and the type of opiates they give them. You can't reaffirm an addiction by giving more pills. So this is what we are fighting against.

She said:

Our granddaughter, Devon, that tall exuberant redhead who laughed her way into our hearts, is now a statistic. Several days ago our son called us to tell us that she had died the night before from a heroin over-dose.

It wasn't her first over-dose by far, but the other times someone had always managed to get her to the hospital. That last time the friend shooting up with her couldn't help. He died at her side. She still held the needle in her hand [that killed her].

It was that quick.

Devon started her drug journey with prescription opiates.

She had been injured, she had an ailment, and she had pain.

When those pills weren't enough anymore, heroin stepped in, and the downward spiral began.

Heroin steps in every time.

It isn't just the problem kids from poor neighborhoods who get hooked, you know.

Everybody thinks it is because of the economic downturn. That is a part of it but not all of it.

Our granddaughter came from a stable, affectionate upper-middle class home. Even though her parents tried their best to save her with countless sleepless nights, multiple trips to rehab, tough love and loving persuasion, that drug won the battle.

Now, we are not even allowed to grieve. We must also contend with the many forms of our anger; impatience with Devon for not being stronger, rage at those who sold her the drugs, frustration with the authorities for not doing more to stop the trafficking or establishing more treatment centers, and self-recrimination for maybe not doing enough. We also are trying to cope with the guilt of feeling relief that her hell has finally ended. There is nothing more we can do for her now, no more treatments that we can try.

Can you imagine living with that? You tried everything, and then, finally, when the end comes like that, you have a feeling of relief—and then you feel remorse for that. Can you imagine grandparents going through this?

Finally:

She's just gone. Just . . . gone . . .

People are now coming out. Before, people didn't want to tell me. They were afraid. They had a son or a daughter in rehab, and they felt that would be a scourge on their family. They didn't want to be embarrassed. So we never knew about it. It was a silent killer.

Then we saw young people—going through the obituaries, it doesn't give the cause of death, but we can pretty much figure it out.

People are now saying: If we don't come out of the closet and talk about it, we are not going to fix it. There is a lot that needs to be done.

I am going to read another story that has a happy ending. I am going to read Chelsea's story, which I have read before.

This is a young girl from Boone County, WV. This young girl had started using drugs when she was 12 years

old—12 years old. Anything and everything that could happen to a human being—her dad was mayor of the town. He was mayor. She had gone through everything, hit bottom as far as bottom could be. The person she went through drug court and drug rehab with died, couldn't get out. She made it.

I am going to read hers now so we see a happy ending. Most of these stories are about the pain and heartache associated with opiate abuse, but Chelsea's story is a little different. In February, on the Senator floor, I read Chelsea Carter's powerful story on how she has overcome her opiate addiction, and today I am proud to say she just received her master's degree in social work from Concord University.

She said:

After being addicted to drugs since I was 12 years old [by a neighborhood friend], I decided to go back to school and teach others what I have been taught my whole life.

I received my bachelor's degree from West Virginia University in the Art of Psychology in May of 2013 and last Saturday May 7, 2016 I graduated with my Masters in Social Work from Concord University.

I am currently working on my Alcohol and Drug Counseling Licensure and also myself and seven other people are in the process of opening up a Sober Living home in Danville, West Virginia [her home area] called the Hero House.

They get no funding. They don't qualify for Medicaid, Medicare—nothing. What they are going to do is all going to be on love and kindness. Also, with the record she has now—because she has a felony record for grand larceny—it will be hard for her to get a job. We are taking a person now with a master's degree out of the workforce. It is unbelievable.

She said:

I currently work for Appalachian Health Services as an addiction therapist—

They went beyond that and hired her anyway. Most people will not.

—but my dream is to one day open my own inpatient treatment facility and help other people who are just like me.

A message I would like people to know is that recovery is possible, but you have to be willing to work at it.

It is a lot easier to go out on the streets and buy drugs instead of trying to change your life, but the one thing that recovery gives you that the drugs will never is your life back.

I am living proof that if you want something bad enough you can change.

We have to give them hope. We have to give them reasons. We have to give them the ability to get back in the mainstream. This is the best example of what can be done if we make investments, and the investments we make are investments in human capital in the United States of America and the spirit of America. This is what we are doing.

For the many stories I read that have such horrible endings, this has a happy ending, and it helps many people.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from West Virginia. He has been a tiger on this issue, and I hope we will answer his call. The epidemic is no better in Connecticut, where most of our cities are on track to see a doubling of overdose deaths this year from last year, and last year was quadruple the number it was 3 or 4 years ago. I say thank you very much to my colleague from West Virginia.

AMENDMENT NO. 3897

Mr. President, I am on the floor today to talk about an amendment to the pending bill. It is an issue that a lot of us thought was decided by this body decades ago; that is, the prohibition of discrimination in housing based on race, sex, religion, national origin, physical or mental disability, and family status. It is the Fair Housing Act.

In many ways, the Fair Housing Act was the culmination of the legislative fight for civil rights in the 1960s. It was the first effective Federal law guarding against discrimination in the sale and the rental of housing in the United States. For nearly 50 years, it has been employed to ensure that every American can choose where to live, free from discrimination and the immoral and unconstitutional consequences of residential segregation.

We have come a long way since the 1960s, but we are by no means all the way there. Today, discrimination is still a reality in housing markets across the country. In every single State, there are cases of landlords misrepresenting the availability of housing or outright refusing to sell or rent to certain protected individuals or groups of people. There are others who are given different terms and conditions on a mortgage or on a rental contract, based on their race, their gender, or their physical disability. I hear these stories even in my State of Connecticut, which is a pretty progressive State.

For instance, Crystal Carter was a homeless single mother living in Hartford, CT, with her five children, one of whom is developmentally disabled. This is what she said, in her own words:

For two years, my family had jumped between homeless shelters and staying with family and friends. I had searched for affordable housing for several hours a day, every day, and submitted dozens of applications. Then, I found out about an open waiting list for rental vouchers in a suburban area. I was excited at the chance to move to a safer area with better schools for my children. But when I called the suburban housing authority that managed the program, I was told I couldn't even have an application because I didn't already live in one of the approved nearby towns. I was also told that it was someplace I wouldn't want to live anyway and that I should be looking in Hartford or Bridgeport instead.

Johnnie Dailey is another victim of housing discrimination. Here is Johnnie's story:

In 2013, I was searching for a new home for my family, including my young niece and grandson. I found a single-family home that would have been perfect for my family. It was on a quiet street where my niece and grandson could play outside, and the rent was less than my current apartment. My real estate agent called the listing agent for the property and told her that I was very interested in renting the property and that I had a Section 8 voucher. The listing agent responded that the owner of the property, a Boston-based company, would not rent to me because they were not interested in accepting a Section 8 voucher. I was discriminated against and denied the opportunity to rent the property solely because I am someone who uses a Section 8 voucher to pay part of my rent. To this day, when I think about the discrimination I experienced, I feel upset and embarrassed.

Crystal's and Johnnie's stories are two of tens of thousands of stories from across the country that underscore the need for the Fair Housing Act. We have made progress, but we aren't done. While the Fair Housing Act rose out of the fight for civil rights for African Americans, we also need to remember today that over half of all reported complaints of housing discrimination are initiated by people with disabilities. There are veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan with debilitating injuries that have altered their lives completely. These individuals also include a growing number of elderly Americans who are living with disabilities.

As a Nation, we know we are stronger and better when we assure access and opportunity for all Americans, including the 57 million Americans who are living with disabilities today.

Unfortunately, civil rights laws are under attack today. It is not a position that is endorsed wholesale by the Republican Party, but there is a coordinated effort on the right to use every tool possible to strip civil rights protections from African Americans, Hispanics, the disabled, and the poor. We saw this in the successful campaign to get the Supreme Court to invalidate portions of the Voting Rights Act.

Now on the floor of the Senate, we are talking about an amendment that would gut the enforcement of the Fair Housing Act. This amendment, which is offered by my friend Senator LEE, would effectively stop the Department of Housing and Urban Development from being able to enforce the Fair Housing Act. The law would stay on the books, but the Department couldn't enforce some of the most important elements.

One of the elements, passed in the 1960s, is an affirmative requirement that States and cities take steps to remedy discrimination that exists in their community. The Fair Housing Act, which is a bedrock of our civil rights laws, has held for decades that it isn't enough to band discrimination based on race, disability, or gender. Local jurisdictions have to do something to make discrimination less likely for renters and home buyers. This isn't new; this has been on the books since the 1960s. But a few years ago, GAO discovered in a report that most localities weren't doing this; they were ignoring that aspect of the law. Appropriately, HUD clarified the obligations

under this section of the Fair Housing Act so that cities and towns know exactly what they need to do to assess the scope of discrimination in their area and to better understand their obligations under the act to fix the problems.

Senator LEE's amendment would strip from HUD the ability to enforce this part of the law, and that is a shame. We can close our eyes, box our ears, and pretend discrimination doesn't exist, but if that is what my Republican friends want to do, it is a grievous mistake. We aren't in a postracial world. We don't live in a society where the disabled always get a fair shake. Discrimination exists, and the Federal Government, since the beginning of this Republic, has taken seriously its moral and constitutional responsibility to ensure that everyone living under the protection of this government gets an equal chance at success—no matter their race, their gender, their ability, or their disability.

I am dismayed that 50 years after the passage of the Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act, and the Fair Housing Act, the fundamental civil rights that have been granted to every American still need to be continually shielded from attempts to dismantle them. Any limitation or reversal on HUD's ability to enforce the Fair Housing Act would for us, as a Senate, be to ignore the moral compass that has guided our Nation's commitment to civil rights over decades and decades of progress.

I am encouraged that Chairwoman COLLINS and Ranking Member REED both intend to oppose the Lee amendment. I urge all of my colleagues to do the same.

I yield the floor.

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

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

The bill 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.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I am waiting on Senator REID, who will be coming here to make a motion with regard to the Zika crisis. While we have a moment, I want to set the table.

Can you imagine being a pregnant woman in the southern part of the United States this summer in a poor county that does not have the funds for mosquito control? That pregnant woman knows that if she gets bitten by the aegypti mosquito carrying the Zika virus, there is a good chance the virus is going to infect the baby in her womb and could have consequences, all of which we have seen in these very disturbing photos of children born with deformed heads.

As a matter of fact, the doctors in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention tell us that the baby can be born with no abnormalities but the abnormalities appear later in the child's development after birth. Can you imagine being a pregnant woman in the southern part of the United States in a poor county—a poor county such as counties in the State of the Presiding Officer—that doesn't have the funds for mosquito control? What about a rich county that has run out of funds budgeted for mosquito control?

If you are going to control the Zika virus, you either have to have a vaccine, which they are working on, or you have to be able to stop the mosquito from being able to reproduce. They are working on genetic alterations, but both of those take time. In the meantime, there is only one thing to do.

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

Mr. NELSON. I want to finish my statement.

In the meantime, if you don't have a vaccine and you don't have the ability to stop the mosquito population, the particular strain that carries the virus, there is only one thing to do, and that is mosquito control. That is what local counties, cities, and States are begging us now, as was indicated by the letter that I introduced from Osceola County, which is right next to the county of Orlando, Orange County. It is a relatively well-off, affluent county, but they don't have any more mosquito control funds. As we go into this summer with the rains, that raises the concern that it doesn't have to be a pond with stagnant water; it can be a bottle cap that is filled with water where the mosquito lays her larvae and they hatch.

Yes, I will yield to the distinguished Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I appreciate the Senator from Florida yielding for a question.

I wish to ask the question, Is the Senator aware that $580 million of unspent Ebola funds has been reprogrammed by the Obama administration as a down payment on dealing with this impending crisis?

Mr. NELSON. Indeed, this Senator is aware of that. Thank goodness there was this pot of money so that the administration could start this because we haven't been doing anything in Congress to produce the emergency appropriations. Thank goodness there was a pot of money they could borrow.

Did you know that there is Ebola that is erupting in Western Africa right now? Don't we have a responsibility to replenish that Ebola fund?

Mr. President, I said I was going to talk until Leader REID arrived. He is here, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have had a long, pleasant relationship with the senior Senator from Florida. We served in the House together. We have served in the Senate together. I have great admiration for him and his loving wife Grace, and I am happy to be on the floor with him today. People in Florida are so fortunate to have this good man representing them.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 3038

Mr. President, look at this map behind me. There are two types of mosquitoes that carry this disease—this condition, this virus. We see this map here, which covers 39 States. It goes without saying that they are not subtropical States. They are not Florida. They are not Louisiana or southern Texas. They are places like Boulder, CO, and Las Vegas, NV. Are those States subtropical? No, I don't think so. We get 4 inches of rain a year. It goes up into Maine.

This is a serious issue which will affect 39 States. As the weather warms, the mosquitos will multiply and people will be bitten by these vicious little insects.

Mosquitos have been causing problems in the world for centuries, but never to anyone's knowledge has a mosquito caused the types of birth defects that are now happening with the Zika virus.

The virus was discovered in 1947 or 1948 in Uganda. In fact, ''Zika'' is the name of a forest there and means ''overgrown.'' Over the decades, something has happened and these mosquitos have become so dangerous.

This virus is a threat to people living in these areas, and it is as real as it gets. Right now, the focal point is on two places, but it is changing as we speak. The American citizens of Puerto Rico have been hammered. That poor territory of ours has had so many problems—all the money problems they are having, compounded by the fact that tourism is being damaged significantly as a result of this Zika virus.

It is not only the birth defects this virus causes, which are so repugnant and scary, but this virus also has the ability to create very serious problems with paralysis in human beings. It has happened, and there are already reported cases of that.

This is a ravaging problem. Puerto Rico now has almost 1,000 reported cases, which include at least 128 pregnant women and probably more. One citizen died in Puerto Rico as a direct result of the Zika virus. It is estimated that 20 percent of the Puerto Rican people—or 3½ million—will be infected with this virus. We are talking 700,000 American citizens.

As of May 11, there were 1,200 Zika cases on the mainland, and Senator NELSON has talked about that in detail—as well he should as a representative of that State. No State is on the frontlines of this ravaging problem more than the State of Florida. It is a nightmare, and who knows how long before this map becomes our national nightmare. No one is making this up. This is serious.

Somehow, the Republican-controlled Congress still hasn't sent a bill to the President's desk to provide emergency funding so we can fight this devastating virus.

If we were here talking about a national emergency—floods, fires, earthquakes, all of the many issues we often come to the floor to talk about—my friend from Texas is on the floor. How many times have we come to this floor to help the State of Texas? We have helped Texas so many times, and we were all glad to do it, to pass emergency supplemental bills to help the citizens of the State of Texas. There is no reason that I can understand why we don't have a piece of legislation on the floor just like we would if there were a flood, fire, or some other emergency in a State. But, no, we are going through a process that will never end in time to take care of the problem.

Under the present process we have, this emergency spending is part of the appropriations bill. Everyone knows that the House can't even get a budget. They can't do their appropriations bills. How are we going to take these issues to conference when the House can't even come up with a budget? I don't know how we can do it any sooner than sometime toward the end of this fiscal year, which is September or October. By then, the summer will be beginning to be gone, but the mosquitos and the devastation they have left will not be gone.

Experts tell us they need this money and they need it now. Yesterday I met with the President's Director of Management and Budget, Sean Donovan, and it is clear that they desperately need this money.

It sounds as if my friend from Texas is saying: We have the Ebola money; use that. They are still working on Ebola. What was the emergency we had here 2 years ago? It was Ebola. What did we do? We provided the money so they could do the research to alleviate the spread of this scourge, and they are doing that now. We are robbing Peter to pay Paul. That is actually what we are doing.

The $1.1 billion for Zika that we invoked cloture on yesterday is a bandaid. It is not enough. Congress isn't moving fast enough to give the researchers, doctors, and public health officials what they need to combat this virus.

Now the House is going to make it even worse by passing a bill for $622 million. What would you guess they are going to use to fund this money? Let's see. What could it be? Oh, maybe ObamaCare, which they have tried to defeat 67 times, and each time it ends up the same. Einstein's definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. That is what we have with the House Republicans, and I am sorry to say this, but it has spilled over here too. They haven't tried to eliminate it over here that many times but as many times as they could. They are going to come up with a bill to provide $622 million, which will come from a number of resources, but it will principally be ObamaCare money. And $622 million is a fraction of what is needed. It is approximately 25 percent of what is really needed.

To say that the appropriations process is too slow is a gross understatement. We need to get this done now. I don't know when, if ever, these appropriations bills will be signed into law.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, has been at the forefront of all of these dreaded problems we have had in recent decades. He was a leading advocate scientifically during the AIDS epidemic we had. Here is what he said: ''When you've got an emergency situation, you really need to get funding as quickly as possible.''

The time to act is now. This summer, when Zika is on the news every day, which it will be, Senators will regret that they did not act quickly to address this crisis.

I urge my colleagues to take care of this today and provide the $1.9 billion in emergency money, just as we have done with any other national emergency we have taken care of on this floor numerous times, and do it in a procedural way that will get the money to them the quickest.

Mr. President, at this time I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 157, H.R. 3038; that all after the enacting clause be stricken; that the Nelson substitute amendment to enhance a Federal response and preparedness with respect to the Zika virus, which is at the desk, be agreed to; that there be up to 1 hour of debate equally divided between the two leaders or their designees; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the bill, as amended, be read a third time and the Senate vote on passage of the bill, as amended, and there be no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, our Democratic colleagues won't take yes for an answer. Yesterday the Murray-Blunt language, which now the Democratic leader calls a bandaid, actually obtained cloture, and I expect it will pass tomorrow as part of the underlying appropriations bill.

Mr. President, $1.1 billion on top of the $585 million that has already been reprogrammed from the Ebola fund to be used to combat the Zika virus is not a bandaid; it is a serious effort in a nonpartisan way to address a public health challenge.

As we can see from the map, Texas is right in the crosshairs. We are ground zero in the United States, along with Florida, Louisiana, and other Southern States where this mosquito is present. Thank goodness no mosquito-borne transmission has occurred yet. But I agree with my colleague from Florida. This is a serious matter, and we need to treat it seriously, but that is not what is happening now.

This is a bill that the Senate defeated cloture on yesterday, and this is an attempt to end run that defeat of a vote before the entire Senate. I am compelled to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Democratic leader.

Mr. REID. I don't know what my friend from Texas is going to tell the people from Texas this summer when there is no money available. We heard the Senator from Florida talk about the need for local governments to prepare for this virus. Some of this stuff is pretty straightforward.

How do you get rid of mosquitoes? You can't wish them away. They don't go away that way. We get rid of mosquitoes by mosquito control, and that takes money. Where does that money come from? It comes from local governments. That is why Florida is desperate for money, and they will be desperate for that money in Texas and everyplace else. Using the logic of my friend from Texas, don't worry about it. We will get you some money this fall. The money we voted on yesterday at the very earliest will not come until we wrap up our appropriations bills.

I remind everyone that the House is stuck. They can't do appropriations bills because they don't have a budget. They can't get people to agree to what they want to do. My friend PAUL RYAN has seen what John Boehner had to put up with all of those years before they ran him away from the Speakership, and he is having the same problem. This man who talked about budgeting—that was his key. He was the idea man. PAUL RYAN can't get a budget with his own Republicans in the House.

I think that my friend is saying: We got a downpayment. We took the money from Ebola. We will worry about Ebola later, and maybe we will borrow that money from someplace else to continue our research on Ebola.

Senator SCHUMER mentioned in a meeting we had a short time ago that the one thing he remembered about the last time Dr. Fauci came to our caucus and talked about this dread problem was that he said that the National Institutes of Health is very close to coming up with a vaccine for this. But we take this money—just like when we had sequestration, they were close to a flu vaccine, and that is gone. You have to do it when you can, and right now is an opportunity for us to do something to save the lives of people and especially these unborn infants.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I apologize to the Democratic leader. Apparently I wasn't able to communicate my point, which is that there is already $580 million available today to combat the Zika virus. Finally, the administration took the advice of those on this side of the aisle and said: Let's take the unused Ebola funds to fight it today while we have an orderly process by which we appropriate the money in a responsible way.

I think the Senator from Washington, Mrs. MURRAY, and Senator BLUNT, the chairman and ranking member of the appropriations subcommittee, have done a good job of winnowing down the $1.9 billion request to the $1.1 billion which I agree is the right figure. While we have some other differences, I think the Senate is acting in a responsible and bipartisan way, which is the only way things can actually get done around here.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it wasn't because of the good graces of the Members of the Republican Senate that President Obama took the money from Ebola and put it into fighting the problems we have with Zika. The President asked for this money 3 months ago. They took that money out of desperation because they had no other place to go for the money. That money is not sitting there waiting to be spent; it has been spent.

They need money. They are out of money. There is no more robbing Peter to pay Paul. This is an emergency, and it should be handled now because under the process we have, the earliest there will be help for this will be this fall.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I thank the Chair.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 3038

I have to say that I am really disappointed that Republicans once again rejected the administration's full emergency supplemental package.

It has been more than 3 months since President Obama first put forward a proposal to fight this Zika virus. He laid out what he thought he needed to respond to a crisis in a way that protected our families the best. His administration was here. They testified at hearing after hearing after hearing about the details of this proposal and made it clear that there was absolutely no reason for Congress to wait.

But, for months, our Republican leaders did nothing. They delayed. They came up with one excuse after another. They ignored the experts, ignored the scientists, and ignored the facts.

Some Republicans were saying that Zika wasn't something they were willing to give the administration a penny more for. Others said they would think about more money to fight Zika but only in return for partisan spending cuts. And others spent more time thinking about how to get political cover rather than actually trying to address this enormous problem.

But many of us knew how important this was, and we were not going to give up. We kept the pressure on. We kept pushing to get serious about dealing with this emergency, and we made sure that the mothers and fathers across the country who are scared and who wanted their government to fight this horrific virus had a voice in this process.

So while it shouldn't have taken so long, I am glad that this week many of our Republican colleagues in the Senate did finally join us at the table to open up a path for an important step forward. This was a compromise proposal, and it certainly isn't what I would have written on my own.

For example, I want to note that throughout this process, I have made it clear that a top priority of mine is making sure that women do have access to reproductive health care in light of the impacts of this virus. So I was disappointed that the Republicans insisted on including unnecessary language that simply reiterates the preexisting ban on Federal funding for abortions.

But this bipartisan agreement that we voted on yesterday would support community health centers and other providers in making sure that women have access to contraception and other critical health care. It would help make sure that women in Zika-affected areas have the ability to plan their families and prevent these tragedies, like so many we have already seen, especially compared to the House legislation that includes no support for preventive health care or outreach for family planning. I believe these resources are extremely critical, and I am going to keep fighting to continue getting us to expand this to the full range of reproductive health care that women need.

We also didn't get the full amount we had hoped for in this compromise. Democrats still believe that Congress should give the President the full funding this administration has asked for and needs.

But I am glad that, with every Democrat and 23 Republicans willing to do the right thing, we are going to pass a $1.1 billion down payment on the President's proposal and do it as an emergency bill without offsets—the way it ought to be.

So I want to thank Senator BLUNT, who worked with me to get this done, as well as my colleagues on both sides of the aisle who voted for it. Our bipartisan agreement will provide direct investments with a Zika response in Puerto Rico. It will ramp up prevention and support services for pregnant women and invest in foreign aid for Latin America and the Caribbean. It will help accelerate development of a vaccine and backfill nearly $100 million in funding the administration was forced to reprogram due to the Republicans' refusal to act.

Our agreement would accelerate the administration's work and allow money to start flowing to address this crisis, even as we continue to ask for more as needed.

Unfortunately, now we know that House Republicans have gone in a very different direction. They released an underfunded, partisan—and, frankly, in my opinion—mean-spirited bill that would provide only $622 million, which is less than a third of what is needed for this emergency, without any funding for preventive health care or family planning or even outreach to those who are at risk of getting the Zika virus.

They are still insisting that funding for this public health emergency be fully offset and that the administration should siphon the money away from the critical Ebola response and from other essential activities in order to fund Zika efforts.

The choice between the Senate and the House Zika bills is a choice between acting to protect women and families and doing nothing at all. It is a choice between a bipartisan compromise that takes an important step forward to address this emergency and a partisan embarrassment that is intended to do nothing more than provide Members with political cover. That doesn't solve this emergency.

The partisan House bill is a nonstarter, but we do have a path forward. The Senate bill has the support of Democrats and Republicans. It can move through the House, it can be signed into law, and it can get resources moving quickly to tackle this emergency quickly.

So let's get this bill to the House as quickly as possible. Every Democrat and a little less than half of the Republicans supported the bill. Let's send it to the House right now and urge them to pass it as quickly as possible.

There is no reason to keep it attached to this bill we are on and allow House Republicans to get it and slow-walk it into the fall, as our leader suggested would happen. There is no reason this funding cannot be approved and signed into law next week in time for the summer and the peak of mosquito season, which the Senator from Florida knows is coming very rapidly.

It has the support of the Senate on its own. Let's send it to the House on its own. Women and families in this country have been looking to Congress for action on Zika for months, and we here in the Senate—and House Republicans—should not make them wait any longer.

So I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 157, H.R. 3038; that all after the enacting clause be stricken; that the Blunt-Murray substitute amendment to enhance the Federal response and preparedness with respect to the Zika virus be agreed to; that there be up to 1 hour of debate, equally divided between the two leaders or their designees; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the bill, as amended, be read a third time and the Senate vote on passage of the bill, as amended, with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, again, our colleagues won't take yes for an answer. The amendment of the Senator from

Washington, along with Senator BLUNT, the chairman of the Appropriations subcommittee responsible for this, actually obtained cloture and will pass tomorrow—tomorrow—as part of this underlying appropriations bill, assuming that there are no other objections or that people want to finish that legislation. So I don't really understand why they continue to refuse to take yes for an answer.

I would say to my friend from Washington: Would the Senator modify her request to include my language at the desk, which has the exact same funding levels as the Blunt-Murray amendment but includes a pay-for using the prevention fund in the Affordable Care Act?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Senator from Washington so modify her request?

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, let me just say that the spending bill that this has now been attached to may take months—into the fall or even into the winter months—before it is approved. The Zika virus isn't going to wait for the winter months. The mosquitoes are here now, and they will continue to move very rapidly across the country, as our leader has outlined before. So taking it out of this bill—it has now been approved by a number of Senators on a bipartisan basis—and moving it quickly to the House and getting it to the President's desk means they will have the resources as quickly as possible to deal with this and to begin to deal with this in a responsible way.

Secondly, let me just say that the request that the Senator from Texas has just broached means that we are going to have to fight over cuts—cuts to women, cuts to families, cuts to critical health care efforts in order to fight the Zika virus. That is objectionable. This is an emergency supplemental, as we agreed to yesterday, and it needs to move forward that way. So I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Is there objection to the original request?

The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I wish to respond briefly to my friend from Washington. The prevention fund that was created by the Affordable Care Act that is part of the President's signature health care bill has more than adequate money in it to pay for the research, the mosquito eradication, and the other services that are necessary. It is not depriving anyone of money that they otherwise would have coming.

What it does do is it alleviates the financial burden on future generations to actually pay the money back that we insist on spending without providing for adequate offsets. So increasing deficits is why the national debt has almost doubled under this President because of the reckless spending.

We are trying to do this in a responsible, bipartisan, and, indeed, I would say, nonpartisan sort of way, but apparently that is not acceptable to our friends on the other side.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Senator object?

Mr. CORNYN. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I have listened attentively to the debate over the last 15 minutes about Zika, and it has been very entertaining to me. But it has also been interesting just to hear the numbers being thrown around. There is a series of numbers being thrown around as if it is an apples-to-apples comparison.

So let me try to break down a few things with an apples-to-apples comparison about Zika and the funding.

The President has asked for $1.9 billion for Zika. The Senate has now responded back to say: We will do the $500 million the President has already moved over from Ebola funding and add to it $1.1 billion to come up with about $1.6 billion—almost $1.7 billion—so about $200 million short, which is being declared as grossly inadequate. That is 0.2 short from what the President had asked for.

There is also being thrown around the House proposal, saying the House proposal is grossly inadequate to be able to cover what is being discussed there because it is a little over $600 million. The President wants $1.9 billion, and the House is offering $600 million. But what is not being stated is that what the Senate has done and what the President has asked for is $1.9 billion over 2 years. The House has said a little over $600 million this year and added to the Ebola funding that was already there—meaning $1.1 billion this year and then in our normal appropriations process to take it up again next year. It may be the same amount.

It has become very fascinating to me to hear some say: Well, they are cutting it in half, and it is insulting and it is all these things.

I think to myself: It is the same numbers. They are just cutting the times to be able to break it down into different numbers.

So all of these number games are very interesting, but they still don't drive at one essential thing. We do need to deal with Zika, but we also need to deal with Zika in a fiscally responsible way. The assumption that to deal with Zika means we have to throw the budget out and there is no way we can find $1 billion in a $4 trillion budget to cover Zika is laughable.

So what I propose is something very simple. Right now, the Department of State, HHS, and USAID have $86 billion in unobligated balances—right now. There is absolutely no reason $1 billion of that could not be moved to deal with Zika right now. It would be the exact same proposal that Senator MURRAY and Senator BLUNT have proposed but actually doing it with unobligated balances. There is absolutely no reason that wouldn't occur.

We know that $500 million had already been moved over from Ebola funding. That would be $1.6 billion moving over to help fight Zika.

The real issue to fighting Zika is three simple things. CDC is actually tracking the movements so we can stay attentive to it. The second thing is dealing with the mosquito population, which is aggressive spraying. The third thing is working on a vaccine. All three of those things we can do, and all three of those things have already begun. The research has already begun on the vaccine. The mosquito spraying has already begun, and working through the tracking and the movement of the disease has already started. The implication that nothing can start until this body acts is not true.

The administration, starting in January and February, came in and said: This is urgent. We need to be able to move funds, and we need to be able to have funds to do it.

Ironically, in January and February, they came and held hearings on that, but in March of this year—2 months ago—this same administration took half a billion dollars out of the economic support fund that Congress had allotted to them last December, which was earmarked especially for—get this—infectious diseases. So in March of this year, the administration took half a billion dollars out of the infectious diseases account for international infectious diseases and moved that over and gave it to the U.N. for the Green Climate Fund. Now they come to us, high and mighty, and say we need $1 billion, when the one-half billion dollars we already allotted that can be used right now along with the one-half billion from Ebola, equaling $1 billion, was already allotted by Congress—was already there—and could be in operation right now. They chose to reallocate to a different priority. So it disturbs me to hear the administration saying, ''Why aren't you doing anything about this,'' when we did last year, and then they spent that money on green climate funds rather than spending it on Zika—what it was allotted for—infectious disease control.

So here is my issue. We need to do both. We need to deal with Zika, and we need to do it in a fiscally responsible way, and we can. I understand the term ''emergency'' means one simple thing, spend more—spend more and add more debt because it is an emergency.

I don't think Americans believe that with a $4 trillion budget, we cannot cover $1 billion from previous accounts. In fact, if we want to be specific, the three accounts the Blunt-Murray amendment puts money into—they are putting $1.1 billion into a set of accounts. If we took those accounts alone, those accounts alone that they are adding $1 billion to already have $15 billion in unobligated balances in those accounts right now.

We can be efficient in what we do and still treat things seriously, and I think we should. I think it is fiscally responsible to not just say the Zika virus is

moving quickly so we need to add more debt to our children to respond to it. I think we can take care of our debt and take care of Zika.

For anyone who would say it is unheard of to be able to move funds for an emergency like this, may I remind you in 2009, this same Obama administration facing the H1N1 virus moving around the world, asked for permission to move unobligated balances out of some of these same accounts to deal with the H1N1 virus. We are just saying, if it is OK for the H1N1 virus, why is it suddenly not allowable now dealing with Zika? This is not about Zika anymore; this is about breaking the budget caps.

We need to be responsible in our spending and responsible in how we deal with Zika. Both things can be done.

With that, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside so that I may offer my amendment No. 3955 to the Blunt amendment No. 3900.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I like the Senator from Oklahoma. He is a great friend, and it pains me to reserve the right to object because I do consider him an excellent Senator.

However, the issue he raises in his unanimous consent request is to take the emergency funding of $1.1 billion out of the appropriations bill and replace that emergency funding by raiding a number of funds that would cut medical research and public health in order to address the Zika virus. What I am talking about is raiding money from cancer research, children's immunizations, and the CDC's efforts to fight other infectious diseases that are already so important to the health and welfare of this country.

The Senator, whom I consider a friend and a good Senator, is from Oklahoma in the heart of the country. Oklahoma is covered with these two strains of mosquitoes, both of which carry the Zika virus. This one is the real culprit. This is the one that gets inside your house. This is the one that lurks in the dark corners of the house. This is the one that lays larvae in a rain-filled bottle cap that is sitting upside down.

I would say to the Senator from Oklahoma that this Senator has probably been bitten by more mosquitoes than any other Senator. There was a time when I was a kid that I was bitten so much that I was almost immune, but I do not want to be bitten by this critter carrying that Zika virus.

The truth is, if you have an earthquake in the State of Oklahoma, that is an emergency, and we are going to respond in kind. If the Senator from Texas has a hurricane coming into Galveston, that is an emergency, and we are going to respond. Likewise, this is an emergency. If you don't realize it now in May, the summer months are coming.

I want to make sure everybody understands why we need to get this separate from the appropriations bill that the Senator from Washington, Mrs. MURRAY, is talking about. In order to get an appropriations bill, we have to get an agreement with the House. The House just passed a bill for $622 million, and they are going to raid ObamaCare to pay for it. There is no way we are going to get an agreement that the President is going to sign going through that appropriations process. The summer is going to be long gone, and the aegypti is going to be biting all the more, sucking the blood of Americans, and therefore, while doing that, transmitting the virus into the bloodstream of Americans.

This Senator has already described the disastrous consequences for a pregnant woman. We ought to be petrified if they are in a county where either it is poor and they don't have the funds for mosquito control or it is a well-off county and it is not budgeted and they are not ready.

It pains me to have to clash with my friend, the Senator from Oklahoma. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, there is one clarification I would like to be able to make. This amendment I have proposed—and would still stand by—allows us to be able to continue what is going on with mosquito eradication right now. That doesn't stop. I would hate for anyone in this body to promise every American that if we give DC enough money, we will make sure they are never going to be bitten by a mosquito. I am not sure that is a promise we would ever want to make because we can't keep that promise, but the amendment I propose gives the administration the latitude to be able to select which accounts this money would come from. We are talking about $86 billion of options on multiple accounts from the State Department, USAID for international aid, and also HHS. That is not for medical research and not for children getting immunizations. There is enough money in those accounts.

I will repeat back the same thing I said before. This administration transferred one-half billion dollars just 2 months ago from the infectious diseases account, noting, apparently, that we didn't need money in the infectious diseases account and moved that money to the Green Climate Fund. So for the administration to say it is more important that the U.N. get green climate funds than dealing with the Zika virus is a different set of priorities than where we are in this Congress and a different set of priorities than we put into place in December of last year.

This is an issue this administration already has the authority to deal with. It doesn't have to come from cancer research. It can come from allocating accounts. But there is no reason to add debt to our children to also deal with mosquito eradication in the United States. We can do both, and we should do both.

I yield back.

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

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

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I rise to address the subject before the Senate with regard to the HUD proposed rule, the Lee amendment, and the amendment proposed by the Senator from Maine, Ms. COLLINS. I do so as one who has 35 years of experience in the housing business affected by the Civil Rights Act, affected by the 1968 Fair Housing Act, and one who has a good deal of working knowledge about what that accomplished. What that accomplished was the end of prejudice against African Americans in the South and ethnic minorities in the Northeast and around the country to ensure that everybody had an equal opportunity—underline the word ''opportunity''—to have safe, affordable housing. That took place in 1968.

It has been a long time since 1968. Prejudice in America, although never eradicated, is almost gone. Housing access is almost universal, but there is one group of people in America who had very little access to housing because there is none available to them. We can identify them not by their name, not by their region but by their ZIP Codes. They are the neighborhoods of America that have contributed to the decline of many families and much hope and opportunity for individuals. Show me a school system or a school that is not performing, and I will show you rough neighborhoods. Show me an individual community that doesn't have the tax base it needs, and I will show you a community that doesn't have neighborhoods that are employed.

I want to bring to the attention of the Senate what I spoke on a year ago on this floor—a gentleman by the name of Thomas G. Cousins from Atlanta, GA, who founded Cousins Properties, the most successful developer in the history of Atlanta, GA; one of the leading developers in the United States of America and a man who gives back more than he ever takes.

He created the Cousins Foundation and set out in the early 1990s to find a way to address the problems of poverty, ignorance, and crime in inner-city neighborhoods. He bought something called East Lake Meadows. Some of you have watched the Fed-Ex Championship on TV and seen $10 million prizes won by professional golfers. That is on a golf course that 25 years ago

had trees growing up in the fairway, dilapidated houses around it, and was described as Little Vietnam.

But it is an area that Tom Cousins changed by changing minds, by changing attitudes, and by talking about the things that could be done, rather than what could not be done. He knew that the best way to bring those people out of poverty was to provide them with a good education. So he came to the State Board of Education, which I chaired, and asked for a waiver to create the first charter school in the Atlanta, GA, public school system's history in East Lake.

He leased the school for $1 a year for 25 years and then built for that neighborhood its own elementary school, called Drew Elementary.

Twenty-five years ago, Drew Elementary was the poorest testing school in the State of Georgia. This year, it is one of the top 10 in the State of Georgia out of 1,400. He changed the minds and attitudes of people—not their race. But he changed their minds and their attitudes about opportunity and about hope. He went into the community of dilapidated houses, crack houses, and meth houses, and bought those houses up and raised housing prices. He fixed them up and began to create a market for those houses.

The kids that formed gangs on the streets became caddies at the new country club named East Lake Country Club. They went to Georgia State University on Panther grants, granted to kids who are in need to get an education. Many of the kids in Atlanta, GA, who are getting MBAs today were educated in East Lake Meadows at Drew Elementary and had their job at the East Lake Country Club.

People do not associate golf courses, golf tournaments, and country clubs with areas of poverty and no housing, but East Lake is such a place. Because they built a blend of all types of housing—section 8 housing, rental housing, low- and moderate-income housing, midlevel housing, upper level housing, and shopping centers and the like—they took all of the things that the community did not have and then created a market for them to come.

They created a movement with Warren Buffett called Purpose Built Communities. Now, the HUD rule, which I have read, which is the issue of discussion today on the floor, is a rule that portends gathering more information to try and find ways we can end the lack of housing availability for certain Americans by bringing in data and trying to create new ways to do that.

Tom Cousins did it with private sector money. He did it in cooperation with the banking industry. He created an idea and a dream and an investment. He began to bring down the barriers of discrimination and a lack of hope and brought prosperity to a community that had not seen it—better educated kids, better developed communities, better schools, and the like.

I ask unanimous consent to have this article from the Wall Street Journal about Thomas G. Cousins and Purpose Built Communities printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the Wall Street Journal, Sept. 13, 2013]

THOMAS COUSINS: THE ATLANTA MODEL FOR REVIVING POOR NEIGHBORHOODS

(By Thomas G. Cousins)

America's greatest untapped resource isn't hidden in the ground but is sitting in plain sight: the human capital trapped in poor neighborhoods of concentrated poverty. The people living where crime and incarceration are rampant represent trillions of dollars in potential economic activity. Investing in their well-being can be a social and economic game-changer, but only if done in a way that produces results.

For a half-century, charities, nonprofits and local and federal governments have poured billions of dollars into addressing the problems plaguing these Americans. But each issue tends to be treated separately—as if there is no connection between a safe environment and a child's ability to learn, or high-school dropout rates and crime. This scattershot method hasn't worked. A better approach is to invest comprehensively in small, geographically defined neighborhoods.

That's what our East Lake Foundation has discovered, focusing on one corner of southeast Atlanta. Fifteen years ago, East Lake Meadows, a public-housing project with 1,400 residents, was a terrifying place to live. Nine out of 10 residents had been victims of a crime. Today it is a safe community of working, taxpaying families whose children excel in the classroom.

How did this happen to a place that police officers once wouldn't go without backup? We targeted a single neighborhood in 1993 and worked with community and city leaders on every major issue at the same time: mixed-income housing, a cradle-to-college education program, job readiness, and health and wellness opportunities.

The results are stunning. Violent crime is down more than 90%. Crime overall is down 73%—a level 50% better than the rest of Atlanta. Employment among families on welfare has increased to 70% from 13% in 1995. (The other 30% are elderly, disabled or in job training.)

The income of these publicly assisted families has more than quadrupled. In the surrounding area, home values have risen at 3.8 times the city average (to over $250,000 per home). A Wells Fargo bank, Publix grocery and Wal-Mart have moved in, and restaurants, shops and other services have returned.

The foundation started by focusing on housing. In 1996 and 1997, the Atlanta Housing Authority helped us secure temporary housing for the East Meadow occupants while AHA and the foundation rebuilt the place as Villages of East Lake. With city and federal government approval, we reserved half the units for families on welfare and the rest for those able to pay the market rate. This was key: A mixed-income community ensures that children are around role models—employed adults who take care of property and spend time with their children.

After negotiating with Atlanta Public Schools to secure the city's first public charter, we built Charles R. Drew School. The K–8 school, which opened in 2000, offered longer school days and an extended school year. It now serves 90% of the children in the East Lake neighborhood. Based on measures by the Georgia Department of Education, Drew is the top performing elementary school in the Atlanta school system.

The foundation also bought up surrounding residential and commercial properties, including the old East Lake golf course, once home to Grand Slam champion Bobby Jones. We restored the golf course, which created 179 jobs. Then came a smaller public course and a golf academy, where young people now learn the caddy trade and golf course agronomy. Today, East Lake Golf Club is the home of the annual PGA Tour Championship and final playoff for the FedExCup.

Thanks to private investors, such as Warren Buffett and Julian Robertson, we created Purpose Built Communities, which helps other neighborhoods adapt the East Lake model. The Meadows Community in Indianapolis and the Bayou District in New Orleans have achieved considerable gains by emulating the method in Atlanta.

Other organizations have slowly begun to adopt our approach. Habitat for Humanity, which once focused on putting up one house at a time, now partners with neighborhood associations, churches, business groups and the like to help lift up entire neighborhoods.

A better house by itself doesn't make children feel safe. East Lake's charter school alone doesn't make children eager to learn. But a decent place to live, a secure environment with adult role models, and a great school with specially trained teachers together produced change. Recently, a young woman whose life began in the old East Lake public housing project, where less than 30% of children graduated from high school, graduated summa cum laude from Georgia Tech. She's one of more than 300 Drew graduates since 2008 now heading to college.

On the national level, challenges like the ones we faced in southeast Atlanta are widespread and urgently need to be addressed. More than 25% of American children under age 3 live in poverty. Three million children drop out of school every year, rendering them ineligible for 90% of jobs. Only 59% of students graduate from high school in the 50 largest U.S. cities, and dropouts commit 75% of crimes.

These harsh realities make the way we choose to try to change them all the more important. Charities, foundations and government representatives are welcome to visit East Lake to check out this turnaround story. They won't need to bring backup.

Mr. ISAKSON. Now, the current amendment before us deals with the rule that is being promulgated by HUD dealing with the Civil Rights Act of 1968. But I want to caution everybody. It is not about discrimination because of prejudice. It is about discrimination because of lack of access. You read the testimony that went into a lot of the rule, and that is quite clear. There are a number of paralyzed veterans groups and handicapped groups that have sent letters against this amendment. Let me tell you why are they against it. They don't think anybody discriminates against them because they are handicapped. They just think they have no choice of housing because there is nothing that fits their wheelchairs or the walls in the bathroom are not reinforced or the kitchen countertops are too high.

What has happened in East Lake Meadows and in Atlanta, GA, where Purpose Built Communities set standards, is that 5 percent of all apartment buildings are built with convertible units. So up to 5 percent of the units can be converted to handicapped access: 36-inch doors, not 30-inch doors;

wainscoting on the side walls in the bathroom that allow reinforcement rods to be put in and for handles to be put on the walls; kitchen countertops that can be lowered by 8 inches so that somebody in a wheelchair can work their kitchen.

That is the type of access they want. Through the changes in code, in terms of construction code, and changes in attitude like Mr. Cousins did, we now have handicapped people that have access to affordable housing in Atlanta, GA, that is built to meet their specific needs. It is not discrimination of prejudice. It was discrimination of lack of opportunity.

The way I read the proposed rule, they are looking to take a chance to take advantage of things like Promise Built Communities and try and have private developers use Federal access to funds to create ways to create new housing that will have more accessibility and affordability for people in those type of situations.

Now, I understand that Senator COLLINS and Senator REED have an amendment they are going to offer, either as a side-by-side or as a part of the bill, which will clarify one important point: Nothing in here contains anything that portends to promulgate a rule or regulation or any zoning at a local land use authority by the Federal Government.

None of us ever wants the Federal Government to do that. But we have provided a lot of programs that have passed this Congress, this Senate, and this U.S. Government that promotes housing, such as section 8 housing, FHA housing, and VA housing. I can go on and on. We want to make sure that those finances that are available to finance purchases have houses to be purchased that meet the needs of all Americans, giving them a public accommodation and access that some of them never had before.

So with the amendment adopted by Senator COLLINS, I think you are protected against any nefarious activity that could ever be taken on by HUD, and you are doing a good thing for the State, a good thing for the United States, and a good thing for the Senate. I commend Senators REED and COLLINS on what they are doing.

I rise in support of the Collins-Reed amendment, and I will vote for it on the floor.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TOOMEY). The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I just want to thank my friend and colleague from Georgia for his extremely eloquent and persuasive presentation. The example he gave us of the development in Georgia, done by Mr. Cousins, is precisely what the HUD rule is intended to promote. That is why it is called affirmatively advancing fair housing, affirmatively furthering fair housing.

With the amendment that Senator JACK REED, THAD COCHRAN, and I are going to be offering, we will make absolutely clear that it is not HUD's role to dictate or interfere with local zoning ordinances. But what we should embrace in this country is the goals of the 1968 Fair Housing Act. The Senator from Georgia, who knows more about housing than any Member of this Senate, has stated very clearly and very eloquently in the example that he has given us what the goals are of the 1968 Fair Housing Act and the regulation that was issued by HUD last year.

Again, I would note that the regulation issued last year came from a GAO report issued in 2010 that found that HUD was not doing a particularly good job in this area. So it was not something that was devised by some out-of-touch bureaucrat. It was directly the result of the GAO report. The kind of mixed development, which has transformed neighborhoods in Atlanta and throughout this country and given hope and opportunity to those who may feel they are in the shadows of society, is exactly the goal of this regulation and of that famous civil rights era law, the 1968 Fair Housing Act.

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

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

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I wish to talk about housing issues contained in the bill we are debating, and I want to talk specifically about a project in Florida that we became aware of in October. It is named Eureka Gardens. It is a low-income, affordable housing project that uses Section 8 funds to house people of lower income, as you are all aware of that program. It is run and owned by an organization called Global Ministries Foundation. It is run by a reverend, Richard Hamlet. It is organized as a 501(c)(3), the organization that owns this building. Mr. Hamlet, Reverend Hamlet, is the head of the organization.

If you look at the Web site for Global Ministries, there is a link that says: ''What We Do.'' If you go to that section of the Global Ministries Foundation Web site, this is what it says they do: ''Providing affordable housing across the United States and ministering to the physical, spiritual and emotional needs of our residents.'' That is what they state as their business purpose. I imagine that is what they needed to state because of their 501(c)(3) not-for-profit status. However, we have a quote from Reverend Hamlet, who has said that his involvement in housing is purely business-related. He said:

> This is a business. This isn't a church mission. These are business corporations that we set up, but we're no different from a real estate investment trust or a private equity group.

That is how he described his 501(c)(3), not-for-profit Global Ministries Foundation.

Global Ministries has over 40 properties in multiple States—Alabama, Florida, Indiana, Louisiana, North Carolina, New York, Tennessee, and Georgia. In all of these States, in all of these properties, they have over 5,000 units that qualify as assisted. In 19 locations across Florida, they have over 2,000 assisted units. This particular project in Jacksonville, FL, Eureka Gardens, has 396 assisted units.

This is the problem we found with some of these properties. In Eureka Gardens, in the last year, the property was found to be in horrifying condition. I have spoken of it on the floor before. I am talking about people living in a place where there was mold on the walls, where the appliances were 15 years old, where the apartments hadn't been painted in 13 years, where windows didn't open, where staircases were literally falling down, and where the city had to come in, evacuate people, and condemn the property.

Those were the conditions in Eureka Gardens. We got involved last October to get those remedied. So there was the thinking, well, maybe this is just one property. Maybe Global Ministries only has one property that is run this way but generally they are a good actor.

This is what we found: They have two properties—Warren and Tulane Apartments in Memphis, TN—that have such poor living companies as well that HUD pulled their Federal funding from the housing.

In Atlanta, we found that their Forest Cove property has been plagued by rodents and sewage. This is what news crews reported about their property in Atlanta. It said ''building, siding, and ceiling tiles peeling from many of the buildings. . . . Garbage and stagnant green water were feet from playing children.''

At Forest Cove, this is what a tenant said to news reporters:

> I'm homeless right now. I moved out to be homeless.

Because the conditions were so bad, the guy moved out of the property. In other words, he would rather be homeless than live in a Global Ministries Foundation property.

So we have two properties in Memphis, TN, we have a property in Atlanta, and then there is another property in Jacksonville that they own. The property is called Washington Heights. It also has been noted for violation. HUD's most recent review resulted in the property barely passing Federal inspections. And I will have more to say about Federal inspections in a moment.

At the Goodwill Village property in Memphis, one resident said that he thought the issue was snakes on the property—snakes on the property. He thought they were being caused because they were coming to ''eat the rats.''

At Goodwill Village, the same property, a resident had an issue with a gas leak. The resident's home had the sink torn out, her stove and hot water disconnected, and a hole put into her wall.

Two months after all of that, no one had come by to fix it.

In Orlando, at the Windsor Cove Apartments owned by the Global Ministries Foundation, reporters saw holes in the walls where roaches and rodents came into the apartment. The same woman has a gap between her bathtub and the wall that lets water leak into the apartment below.

After issues with his properties were exposed, here is what Reverend Hamlet said: ''No one should have to live under these conditions.''

They are your properties. It is not just one property; there are multiple properties across multiple States. I want to focus specifically on the one I visited last week in Jacksonville. It was an amazing experience. Forty-eight hours before we announce we are coming, nothing—literally nothing—is happening at this property. When we announce we are coming to visit the property, suddenly a bunch of contractors show up. They put up a banner welcoming the residents to all the great stuff they do there. Suddenly work crews are walking all over, fixing the place up. All of a sudden, because we are coming to visit, all these work crews mysteriously show up.

Eureka Gardens's problems have been going on for a long time, but they only became known in October of last year when a local television station and other local media began to highlight them.

My Jacksonville office staff toured Eureka Gardens in early 2015 and in October of 2015. I want to report what they found in that one building. As I said, we have now had reports about other buildings with similar conditions run by this Global Ministries 501(c)(3), but I want to share what my staff found when they visited Eureka Gardens. They saw crumbling stairs disguised with duct tape and covered with apparent black mold. When I am talking about the stairs, I mean the stairs that connect the first floor of the building with the second floor of the building, these metal stairs. They would just put duct tape over the areas where the stairs and the wall were cracking and almost falling. They just put duct tape on it. There was mold on these stairs; they spray-painted over it. My staff found faulty electrical wiring. Do you know what they did with the faulty electrical wiring? They covered it up with a garbage bag so no one could see it. They could smell the natural gas odor being sucked from an outdoor piping system into the air-conditioning units of residents, and they found all sorts of other health and safety issues.

At Eureka Gardens, when residents were asked about housing, one resident said, ''Dogs live better than this.'' In fact, there was a 4-year-old living in Eureka Gardens who was suffering from lead poisoning, which her mother has a right to believe she got in her Eureka Gardens apartment—an apartment, by the way, paid for with your taxpayer money. Section 8 housing is Federal taxpayer money going into the hands of these slumlords, and a child now has lead poisoning because of it.

In December of last year, HUD declared Eureka Gardens to be in default of the contract, and it set a February 24, 2016, deadline to meet requirements. In February, Eureka Gardens passed this inspection, but by March HUD had written to Eureka Gardens saying the Department ''does not believe the property would currently pass another REAC inspection.''

Last Friday I visited Eureka Gardens. I saw, for example, an apartment where the window did not open. I saw an apartment where the window did not open. The window had been cracked, and do you know how they fixed it? Somebody came and put a glob of glue where the window connects next to the pane, and if you tried to open the window, it wouldn't go up. That means if there was a fire in that house, the person sleeping in that room would not be able to get out of that window unless they break it. I saw that with my own eyes last week when I was there. I saw an apartment that hadn't been painted in 13 years. I saw a stove where the knobs were unrecognizable because they were covered with glue, basically, and grime. I saw a refrigerator that looked like it was from North Korea. It had to be 15 years old. There was all sorts of rust on the side and they just spray-painted over the rust.

As I said earlier, 48 hours before I visited, Global Ministries started to fix some of these cosmetic issues. By the way, that included putting up a piece of wood with exposed nails and calling it a door. This apartment has two exits—in the front and in the back. This lady gets home from work and she opens her back door. They have boarded up the door, and there are nails sticking through the wood. She has little children. The nails were the kind that if you ran into that door because you didn't know it was there, you would get a nail to the face, to the heart, to the gut.

So you would ask yourself, all right, you have these owners of all these units and they are getting this Federal money under this HUD contract. Where does all the money go? What are they doing with all this money they make? Well, you can look at their 990 tax forms, which are available for all 501(c)(3) organizations.

Let me tell you about the 2014 tax year, which is the most recent one that is available. In the year 2014, the Reverend Richard Hamlet paid himself $495,000 plus $40,000 in nontaxable benefits. Also in 2014, the Reverend Hamlet's family members were paid an additional $218,000.

By the way, he had previously failed to disclose his family members' compensation on tax forms, which is in violation of IRS rules that require CEOs to disclose the compensation of all family members who work for an organization.

The IRS reports also show that between 2011 and 2013, Global Ministries Foundation—the landlord that owns all of these units in all of these buildings that your taxpayer money is paying for—shifted $9 million away from its low-income housing not-for-profit to its religious affiliate. There is no one here who is a more strident proponent of private and public partnerships, of faith-based initiatives, but you have these building that are crumbling. You have these people living in these deplorable conditions. In addition to paying himself half a million dollars and his family another $218,000, they took $9 million, and instead of using it to fix these units, they transferred it to the other entity they had for religious purposes.

They don't seem to want to spend the money—including the taxpayer money—on making repairs, on making sure places like Eureka Gardens are liveable. Let me tell what you they do spend their money on. They spend their money on public relations specialists, because last week when I visited Eureka Gardens, they had a public relations firm on the premises counterspinning me with the media, saying things like: Oh, well, where has RUBIO been all this time? Well, this became available in October, and since October we have been involved in it.

So they have the money to hire a law firm. They have the money to hire a lobbying firm. They have the money to hire a public relations firm. They have the money to transfer $9 million from the not-for-profit sector into their religious uses. They have the money to pay themselves half a million dollars per year, plus $40,000 in nontaxable benefits, plus $200,000 for family members, but they don't have the money to fix these units—and not just in Florida but all across this country.

Let me tell you what this behavior is. Let me tell you what Global Ministries Foundation is. It is a slumlord. They are slumlords. There are people who are living in these deplorable conditions while your taxpayer money is going into their bank account, and they are laughing at us.

By the way, the other day, this minister—he has now put these properties up for sale. He told the press: This is such a profitable business. We have so many bidders who want these properties.

Well, No. 1, if it is such a profitable business, why are you organized as a 501(c)(3)? And No. 2, where is all the money? Where are all the profits? Why aren't they being invested?

I am all in favor of faith-based organizations being involved in the public and civic life of this country, but as an organization that was organized on the principles of caring for others, this is not caring for people. This, my friends, is the stealing of American taxpayer money, subjecting people to slum-like conditions, pocketing the money, living off the money, and transferring the money.

For the life of me, I don't know how they passed any inspections. I am not a building inspector. You don't have to be one to visit this building and know there is no inspection that building should ever pass.

I would just say that this is the most outrageous behavior I have seen in public housing, and now I am hearing that the same conditions exist in Orlando and in other buildings in Jacksonville. We know they exist in Memphis. In fact, they just lost their HUD contract in Memphis. A judge just issued a ruling against them yesterday on another issue in Memphis, TN.

As a result of these conditions and other issues, I have filed four amendments I wish to briefly talk about. The first is amendment No. 3918, which passed. What it does is it shortens the required response time for contract violations from 30 days to 15 days. Within the 30 days that they found that gas leak at Eureka Gardens, four people at Eureka Gardens were hospitalized due to gas leaks. So I am glad shortening the timeframe will be a part of it.

Another amendment we passed is one that basically asks HUD to determine the state of the assessments. Even the Secretary himself has told me it is time to revisit these assessments. If you look at this property, there is no way it should have ever passed any inspections. We need to fix the inspection process in HUD because there is no reason a property like this should pass any inspection.

The third amendment I filed, and that I hope we can pass, would give State and local governments more say when HUD renews contracts for owners who have violated previous contracts. In essence, the amendment would allow the Secretary to refuse to withdraw a notice of default if the Governor of the requisite State petitions HUD to do that.

Currently, the only trigger for the Secretary to withdraw a notice is a REAC score of 60 or above. If this amendment became law, if the property passed the inspection but the Governor of the State in which the property is located requests the Secretary to overturn the result, the Secretary would have the power to do so.

This impacts Eureka Gardens and these other places because flawed inspections led HUD to recertify properties that are not up to standard. The Jacksonville City Council has been engaged and Mayor Curry of Jacksonville is supporting this amendment. It would grant them the ability to seek the Governor's support in having a say over the properties.

The last amendment I filed is Rubio amendment No. 3986, and it is to make temporary relocation assistance available for residents in situations such as those I have just described. This amendment would make tenant protection vouchers available for tenants living in units where the owner has been declared in default of a HUD Housing Assistance Payments contract due to physical deficiencies, allowing the Secretary to consider granting tenant relocation vouchers sooner in the process.

The lack of temporary relocation assistance has kept these tenants trapped in Eureka Gardens. The inability to temporarily relocate resulted in tenants being hospitalized because of gas leaks and other difficult conditions. For example, a man had to sleep in his bathtub for a week at Eureka Gardens, and tenants could not cook because the heat was shut off for days at a time.

One of the things we hear from HUD is: Well, we can take away the contract, but then what happens to all these people? We don't want to do that, and slumlords like Reverend Hamlet and his group know they can get away with this as a result.

There is probably more to be done. I said publicly that I think the Justice Department should look into these people. I think the Justice Department should look into places such as this. I think the IRS should examine their tax status. I think people like this should never again be allowed to have a single HUD contract anywhere in America. This is unacceptable, and it is happening right under our noses.

Today it is Eureka Gardens, but I mentioned all those other States. In fact, I encourage my colleagues who live in the States of Alabama, Indiana, Louisiana, North Carolina, New York, and Georgia to look into the properties that Global Ministries Foundation operates in your States. If the trends continue, if the trends hold up, then I almost guarantee you are going to find slumlike conditions in your State the way they were found in my State and the way they were found in Tennessee.

I hope I can earn my colleagues' support in bringing these reforms as a part of the bill before us today.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

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

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

OVERTIME PAY

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I believe that real long-term economic growth is built from the middle out, not from the top down, and our government and our economy and our workplaces should work for all of our families, not just the wealthiest few.

Across the country today, millions of workers are working harder than ever without basic overtime protection. That is why I am very proud to come to the floor today to express my strong support for the new overtime rule to help millions of workers and families in our country.

Back in 1938, Congress recognized the need for overtime pay. Without overtime protection, corporations were able to exploit workers' time to increase their profits. So the Fair Labor Standards Act set up a standard 40-hour workweek. By law, when workers put in more than 40 hours, their employers had to compensate them fairly with time-and-a-half pay. But those protections have eroded over the past several decades.

In today's economy, many Americans feel as if they are working more and more for less and less pay, and in many cases, they are. Right now, if a salaried worker earns just a little more than $23,000 a year, he or she is not guaranteed time-and-a-half pay. That salary threshold is much too low. In fact, it is less than the poverty level for a family of four.

Workers should not have to earn poverty wages to get guaranteed overtime protection. It is clear that overtime rules in this country are severely out of date. Consider this: Back in the mid-1970s, 62 percent of salaried workers had guaranteed overtime pay. Today, just 7 percent of salaried workers have that protection. Big corporations use these outdated overtime rules to their advantage. They force their employees to work overtime without paying them the fair time-and-a-half pay. That might be good for a big corporation's profit, but it is a detriment to a working family's economic security.

Today, the Department of Labor has issued a final rule to raise the salary threshold from about $23,000 to just over $47,000 a year. That will restore protections for millions of Americans, and it is especially important, by the way, for a parent. Think about what it would mean for a working mom, who right now works overtime and doesn't get paid for it. By restoring this basic worker protection, she could finally work a 40-hour week and spend more time with her kids or, if her employer asks her to work more than 40 hours a week, she would have more money in her pocket to boost her family's economic security.

That is why this is so important for our struggling middle class. When workers put in more than 40 hours a week on the job, they should be paid fairly for it. That is the bottom line.

I have heard from some of my Republican colleagues who don't want to update these overtime rules. If you listen closely, it sounds as though they are trying to argue that businesses in this country can't operate unless they are able to exploit workers' time and refuse them overtime pay.

Well, Democrats fundamentally disagree. In fact, when workers have economic security, when they are able to make ends meet and succeed, businesses succeed, our economy succeeds. That virtuous cycle is part of what makes America great.

If Republicans want to take away these basic worker protections, they will have to answer to millions of hardworking Americans putting in overtime without receiving a dime of extra pay. They can try, but I know that I and many others are going to be right

here fighting back for the workers and families we represent—families like Meryle's from Bellingham, WA. She said that early in her career she worked low-wage jobs and oftentimes her overtime hours went unpaid.

When Meryle heard about the Obama administration updating overtime protections, she wrote in to comment on that new rule. She said those unpaid overtime hours hurt her pocketbook, but she said she lost more than money. She was working overtime without being paid fairly for it on top of missing out on important time with her daughter.

Boosting wages and expanding economic stability and security is good for our families, and it is good for our economy. By the way, that is exactly what we should be focused on here in Congress to help build our economy from the middle out, not the top down.

For workers who want fair pay for a day's work, for the parents—like Meryle—who have sacrificed family time for overtime and not seen a dime in extra pay, for families who are looking for some much needed economic security, I urge all of my colleagues to support restoring these important overtime protections.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

(The remarks of Mrs. GILLIBRAND and Mr. GRASSLEY pertaining to the introduction of S. 2944 are printed in today's RECORD under ''Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.'')

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I wish to revisit my discussion with Senator DURBIN yesterday regarding my amendment No. 3925 to the Department of Veterans Affairs funding bill.

As I made clear yesterday, this is a commonsense amendment protecting constitutional rights. It is designed to make every effort to ensure that the Second Amendment rights of veterans are protected under the law. Yet the Democrats have objected. Because of that, our veterans will continue to not be protected by their Second Amendment constitutional rights.

Let me make myself very clear. Senator DURBIN said my amendment ''doesn't solve the problem.'' ''Doesn't solve the problem'' are his words. Well, the Department of Veterans Affairs is reporting names to the Department of Justice which are then placed on the national gun ban list, and the VA is doing so merely when a veteran is appointed a fiduciary—which does not mean he or she is dangerous. That is the problem.

As I explained yesterday, my amendment requires the VA to first determine that a veteran is a danger to self or others before reporting names. That simply solves the problem.

Senator DURBIN also said that under my amendment, ''mental health determinations would no longer count as prohibiting gun possession.'' As I stated yesterday, I do not want people who are known to be dangerous to own and possess firearms. My amendment makes that very clear.

Further, given that plain language, it is obvious that under my amendment, mental health determinations do count because some mental health problems equate to a very dangerous condition. Again, my amendment is centered on forcing the Federal Government to determine whether a veteran is a danger to self or others before revoking his or her constitutional rights to own a firearm.

Senator DURBIN said that ''tens of thousands of names currently in the NICS system''—the gun ban list—''would likely need to be purged, meaning these people could go out and buy guns.'' Now, that is not so. If anything, my amendment would require the Federal Government to look over the VA records sent to the gun ban list and verify that those persons on it are dangerous to themselves or others.

That doesn't have to be purging. Rather, the Federal Government would now have the burden of proving a veteran should not be able to exercise his or her fundamental Second Amendment rights. Since there is no purging, but rather dangerous persons will be identified via a constitutional process, it is not accurate to say that ''these people could go out and buy guns.'' Therefore, Senator DURBIN has not studied my amendment and its outcome. Really, the government should always provide constitutional due process before infringing on a fundamental constitutional right.

Senator DURBIN mentioned 174,000 names were supplied by the VA to the gun ban list and about 15,000 of them had serious mental illnesses. Actually, as of December 2015, the VA has supplied 260,381 names out of the 263,492 in the mental defective category. That happens to be 98.8 percent of the total number of people on the mental defective list that are there because of the VA and not because it has been determined their constitutional rights should be taken away.

Assuming Senator DURBIN is correct about the 15,000 who had a serious mental illness, that leaves about 245,000 who did not. Those are 245,000 people whose constitutional rights are being restricted without due process for no good reason. Not a single individual was determined to be dangerous before the VA submitted their name to this list so their constitutional rights could be violated.

My amendment, and my remarks last night, make clear that if a person is dangerous, they will not be able to possess a firearm. Therefore, Senator DURBIN's concern that my amendment will allow dangerous people to buy firearms is simply inaccurate.

Importantly, Senator DURBIN even admitted that not all the names reported to the VA are dangerous. Senator DURBIN said: ''I do not dispute what the Senator from Iowa suggested, that some of these veterans may be suffering from a mental illness not serious enough to disqualify them from owning a firearm, but certainly many of them do.''

Then, Senator DURBIN said: ''Let me just concede at the outset that reporting 174,000 names goes too far, but eliminating 174,000 names goes too far.'' I am glad that Senator DURBIN acknowledged that many of the names on the gun ban list supplied by the VA do not pose a danger and should be removed.

But again, my amendment is not about purging names from the list. I would be happy to take him up on his offer to work with him on that problem. Surely, we can agree that, going forward, the VA should start affording due process to veterans before they are stripped of their Second Amendment rights. If you really want a solution to this problem, stop objecting to this amendment.

As I stated yesterday, my amendment does three things. First, it makes the ''danger to self or others'' standard applicable to the VA. We all agree that dangerous persons must not own or possess firearms. Second, it shifts the burden of proof from the veteran and back to the Government where it belongs. Third, it fixes the constitutional due process issues by removing the hearing from the VA to the judicial system.

The last thing I will note is something on which I wholeheartedly agree with Senator DURBIN. Yesterday, he said: ''We need to find a reasonable way to identify those suffering from serious mental illness who would be a danger to themselves, their families or others, and to sort out those that don't fit in that category.''

As I have made clear, my amendment does exactly that. Why, then, are the Democrats refusing to fix this problem if they admit the problem exists? This is an outrage. We all know that veterans are being treated unfairly. My amendment fixes the problem, yet Democrats object.

What is dangerous is that Democrats are allowing veterans to be subjected to a process that casts their Second Amendment rights aside. All of this smells of hypocrisy. For months, the Democrats and their allies have been attacking me and the Republicans for not voting on the Supreme Court nominee. But the Democrats will not even allow a simple vote on protecting veterans' constitutional rights.

Can you imagine the chaos that would reign over this Chamber again if the Democrats were to take control over the Senate? I will continue to stand firm in defense of our veteran population. I will continue to fight to protect their constitutional rights from offensive and oppressive government outreach.

Our veterans are a special group. They give life and limb for our safety so that we can sleep in peace at night.

The iron fist of government must submit to the constitutional rights of veterans, and those constitutional rights have been taken away by the VA willy-nilly just because somebody needs a fiduciary—nothing to do with the competence of that veteran to not be able to buy a gun.

I yield the floor.

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

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon to speak about amendment No. 4012. I want to thank my cosponsors—Senators SESSIONS, VITTER, COTTON, and INHOFE. This amendment addresses a very serious public safety threat; that is, the threat posed by sanctuary cities. This is a problem that is not a theoretical abstraction. It is a problem that some Americans know all too well—one father, in particular.

On July 1, 2015, Jim Steinle was walking arm in arm with his daughter Kate on a pier in San Francisco. A gunman opened fire and hit Kate. Within moments, she died in her father's arms. Her last words were: ''Help me, Dad.''

What is maddening about this is that the shooter should never have been on the pier in the first place. He was an illegal immigrant. He was here illegally. He had been convicted of seven felonies, and he had been deported five times. But it gets worse.

Just 3 months prior to his shooting and killing Kate Steinle, the San Francisco police had him in custody. Federal immigration officials knew that the San Francisco police had him in custody. They knew he was here illegally, in violation of multiple deportations—a violent criminal convicted on multiple occasions. They said: Hold him until we get somebody there to pick him up and deport him. But the police refused to hold him. Instead, they released the shooter into the public.

Why did they do that? Because San Francisco is a sanctuary city. That means that they are a city that specifically—and by law, within the city—forbids their police from cooperating with Federal immigration officials. Even when the police wants to cooperate, it is against the law in the city to do so.

The local police and President Obama's administration agree that, with respect to a dangerous person, the Federal and local law enforcement authorities ought to cooperate, but the local politicians—in San Francisco, in this case—have overridden that judgment. Instead, the police, who had every opportunity to prevent this man from being on the pier that night, released him, and he went on to kill Kate Steinle.

As a father of three young children, I can't even imagine the pain that family has gone through. Sadly, the Steinles are not alone. According to the Department of Homeland Security—our current administration's Department of Homeland Security—during an 8-month period that they examined last year alone, sanctuary city jurisdictions released over 8,000 illegal immigrants, and 1,800 of them were later arrested for criminal acts. It included two cities that released individuals who had been arrested for child sex abuse. In both cases, the individuals released sexually assaulted other children again.

In the wake of these tragedies, you would think that elected officials across America would end this practice of having these dangerous sanctuary city policies. Sadly, that is not the case.

In the biggest city in my State, Philadelphia, they have taken the opposite approach. In fact, they imposed one of the most extreme versions of sanctuary cities anywhere in America. Two weeks ago, President Obama's Secretary of Homeland Security visited Philadelphia for the specific purpose of trying to persuade the city government to make a tiny exception to their sanctuary city policy. He wanted to change the policy so that the Philadelphia police would be able to notify Federal immigration officials if they are about to release from their custody a person who has been convicted of a violent felony or convicted of a crime involving a gang or is a suspected terrorist. The mayor of Philadelphia refused.

Even under those circumstances, the police of Philadelphia are forbidden from cooperating and sharing the information with Federal immigration officials.

What are the kinds of consequences for this? Consider the case of Alberto Suarez. In 2010, Alberto Suarez kidnapped and raped a girl from Montgomery County, which is just outside of Philadelphia. He bragged to the girl that the police would never be able to catch him because he is here illegally. Five months later, he kidnapped a 22-year-old woman from a Philadelphia bus stop, and he raped her. He has been apprehended, he has plead guilty, and he is awaiting sentencing. But some day, he will be released. Under the current Philadelphia city policy of being a sanctuary city, the police cannot inform Federal immigration officials when they are releasing him. This is ridiculous.

Imagine that the Philadelphia police have in their custody an illegal immigrant whom the FBI suspects of plotting a terrorist attack. The Department of Homeland Security might very reasonably say to the police: Hold on to him until we can get an agent down there to take him into custody and ask him some questions because we suspect that he is involved with a terrorist plot. The Philadelphia police's response—not by their choice but by virtue of Philadelphia's being a sanctuary city—to the Federal official is this: Could you come back again after he has actually committed the terrorist attack and been convicted of it, and then we will see if we can help you?

This makes no sense at all. This is not partisan. This policy has been criticized by the former Philadelphia mayor, former Pennsylvania Governor, and Democrat Ed Rendell. It has been criticized by President Obama's Secretary of Homeland Security and Pennsylvania law enforcement officials across the political spectrum.

Let me be very, very clear. This is not principally about immigration. It is not about immigration at all. It is about violent and dangerous criminals. Everybody knows—I certainly know—that the vast majority of immigrants are never going to commit a violent crime. It isn't about them. It is about the fact that if you have any significant population—and, certainly, 11 million people are here illegally—some subset of that population will be violent criminals. We know that.

I have an amendment. It is modeled on a bill that the Senate voted on last October. It was supported by a bipartisan majority of Senators in that vote. It deals with this problem. First of all, there is an understandable reason why some communities have become sanctuary communities, and that is because a court decision has created a legal liability for the cities if they, at the request of the Department of Homeland Security, detain someone who later turns out to have been the wrong person. That legal liability has scared a number of communities. It is understandable.

This amendment changes that. It makes it clear that when the local police are in compliance with a Department of Homeland Security detainer request, the local police have the same authority as the Department of Homeland Security. If that person has been identified wrongly, then the liability still exists. If the person's civil rights have been violated, they can sue. But the liability is with the Department of Homeland Security, as it should be, and not against local law enforcement officials who are temporarily acting on behalf of the Department of Homeland Security.

Having corrected that problem, if this amendment passes, what we say is this: If you want to, nevertheless, be a sanctuary city and refuse to allow the local police to cooperate with Federal immigration officials, then we are going to withhold community development block grant funds from such a community. As you know, these are the funds that have great discretion in the hands of local elected officials to spend on various projects.

The fact is that sanctuary cities impose a very real cost—a real cost for the Federal Government. The most important cost, by far, is the danger to society that it imposes. It is entirely reasonable for the Federal Government to withhold some of these grants in the event that a city chooses to inflict that cost on the rest of us.

This legislation is endorsed by the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, the National Sherriffs' Association, the National Association of Police Organizations, and the International Union of Police Associations,

which is a division of the AFL–CIO. It is a simple, commonsense amendment, and it stands for the simple principle that the safety of the American people matters, and the life of Kate Steinle matters.

Right up front, I want to debunk some of the misinformation that is occasionally promulgated about this amendment. One is the idea that it would discourage people from coming forward and reporting crimes or reporting that they witnessed a crime or that they were a victim of crime, and that, therefore, it is a bad idea. The fact is that our legislation has been drafted in such a way that if a local community has a law that says that local law enforcement shall not inquire about the immigration status of a crime victim or witness, according to our legislation, that doesn't make you a sanctuary city. Any city would still be free to offer that protection to people so that they would not have to fear deportation for disclosing a crime.

The fact is that this amendment is germane, and it was timely filed. It satisfies all of the relevant rules. This is the right time, and this is the legislation to consider this. It is time to stop with this politically correct nonsense and being so worried that we can't offend anyone that we are going to risk the safety of our communities.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside so I may offer my amendment No. 4012.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I reserve my right to object. The Senator from Pennsylvania has very thoughtfully pointed to significant issues with respect to immigration law and public safety, but I believe the remedy of cutting off CDBG funding is not the appropriate response to these very serious problems. Indeed, CDBG funding is available throughout the Nation to large communities and small communities, and in many cases it provides support for public safety projects, such as infrastructure that protects people, and on and on and on.

With all due respect to the Senator from Pennsylvania, I object to making the amendment pending at this time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, with all due respect to my friend and colleague from Rhode Island, I just have to say that this is exactly what Americans are so fed up with. There is a real problem out there with public safety, and they know it. This is a ridiculous and indefensible policy, but I am willing to have a debate about it. I did not ask for unanimous consent to have my amendment adopted. I asked unanimous consent to have it debated and have a vote. If a majority of Senators disagrees with me, then I don't know why they can't come down here and cast a vote and let us know. It is germane, it is in order, and it complies with all the rules.

The status quo means dangerous criminals are being released onto our streets. That is a fact.

I will tell you what is going on here. We have colleagues who are afraid to cast a vote. They are afraid of having to make a choice. They are afraid that if they vote with me to put pressure on cities to end sanctuary cities, it will offend some people, and they don't want to do that. If they vote against it, they know they are endangering their own constituents, and they don't want their constituents to know that. Rather than standing up and making a decision, what do they do? They say: Let's not allow the debate; let's not allow the amendment. This is exactly what the American people are so fed up with.

I am not giving up on this. This is a very important issue. We have a responsibility to be stewards of the money that we give these cities. I think the vast majority of Pennsylvanians, the people whom I represent, want me to be a steward who is looking after their safety, and the status quo doesn't do that. This amendment would solve a very important problem. It is outrageous that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are afraid to have this debate, afraid to go on record, and afraid to let their constituents know whether they support sanctuary cities or not. We are not finished with this issue.

I yield the floor.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, on Tuesday, Senator GRASSLEY came to the floor advocating for an amendment. His amendment dealt with access to guns for those who have been determined by the Department of Veterans Affairs to be mentally incompetent due to injury or disease.

Senator GRASSLEY's amendment was 10 lines long. It would simply cut off funds for the VA to ''treat'' any person who the VA has determined to be mentally incompetent under its current administrative process as a prohibited gun purchaser under Federal firearms laws.

On behalf of myself and other Senators, I objected to this amendment. I pointed out that Senator GRASSLEY's amendment would likely require purging the NICS background check database of thousands of records of people who have already been diagnosed with serious mental illness and referred to NICS by the VA.

As Senator GRASSLEY no doubt knows, current law requires a Federal agency that submits a record to NICS to notify the Attorney General if the basis upon which the record was submitted to NICS no longer applies. The Attorney General is then obligated to remove the record from NICS within thirty days.

If the Grassley amendment were to pass and prohibit the VA from continuing to ''treat'' a mentally incompetent person as a prohibited gun purchaser, then it casts into doubt the basis upon which tens of thousands of NICS mental health records were submitted.

So Senator GRASSLEY's amendment would likely purge those records from NICS. Tens of thousands of people with serious mental illnesses would become able to buy guns.

Senator GRASSLEY came to the floor earlier this afternoon to criticize my objection. He made two main points that I want to respond to.

First, he said that Democrats were being hypocritical for not allowing a vote on this issue.

Senator GRASSLEY must have only started paying attention to this issue recently. I can remember at least three votes we have had on the Senate floor on this issue.

In April 2013, when the Senate was under Democratic control, an amendment offered by Senator BURR that was very similar to Senator GRASSLEY's amendment was voted upon and failed to pass.

An alternative and more sensible proposal for addressing the issue of VA referrals to the NICS database was included in the Manchin-Toomey legislation which the Senate voted upon in April 2013 and again last December.

In contrast to the Burr and Grassley amendments, which specified no process for reviewing the thousands of VA mental health referrals that have already been made to NICS, the Manchin-Toomey amendment set up a notification, review, and appeal process. It wasn't perfect, but it was very credible process, and I voted for it.

That is how we should be approaching this issue, with thoughtful authorizing legislation, not 10-line appropriations riders that are airdropped in on the Senate floor.

Second, Senator GRASSLEY said that the VA has been depriving veterans of their constitutional rights willy-nilly.

I would urge Senator GRASSLEY to look at the actual process the VA undertakes.

In connection with an award of veterans benefits, the VA formally may determine as ''mentally incompetent'' a person who ''because of injury or disease lacks the mental capacity to contract or to manage his or her own affairs, including disbursement of funds without limitation.''

The types of mental disorders that qualify as ''injury or disease '' for this purpose are set forth in 38 C.F.R. 4.130 and include diseases such as schizophrenia, dementia, panic disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, and bipolar disorders, among others. Such illness or disease must be responsible for a person's inability to manage his or her own affairs for a VA determination of incompetency.

Like all VA benefit determinations, incompetency determinations are governed by clearly defined procedures to ensure due process.

Where the VA becomes aware that a veteran may be unable to manage his

or her affairs, an incompetency rating is proposed and the individual in question is provided with notice and the opportunity to submit evidence and appear before a VA hearing officer. Determinations are based on all evidence of record. Unless the medical evidence is clear, convincing, and leaves no doubt as to the person's incompetency, no determination is made. Reasonable doubt is resolved in favor of competency.

All VA determinations of incompetency may be appealed within the VA's administrative appeals process, which includes the opportunity to seek review by the Board of Veterans' Appeals. Final BVA decisions may be appealed to the independent United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.

Here is the bottom line: All of us respect our veterans, but we know that gun access by those with serious mental illness increases the risk of suicide and violence, and the VA has identified tens of thousands of people with serious mental illness.

We can work on a reasonable process, like the Manchin-Toomey legislation proposed, to make sure that the VA is not submitting mental health records inappropriately, but simply invalidating all the records that the VA has supplied to the background check database is irresponsible and dangerous.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

COMPREHENSIVE ADDICTION AND RECOVERY BILL

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I come to the floor to talk about the heroin and prescription drug epidemic that is gripping my State and the country. I come to talk about the 200,000 people in Ohio who are addicted. I come to talk about the police officers during National Police Week who are doing their jobs to address this issue and why they need more help from us and how we should provide that to them.

This is the sixth time I have come to the floor since the Senate passed on March 10 the legislation called the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act. It was voted on by a 94-to-1 vote in this Chamber, which is highly unusual. That never happens around here. It happened because in every single State people are seeing this addiction epidemic, overdose issue. We need to address it.

The House has been working on its own legislation. I have come here every single week we have been in session since we passed our legislation to urge the House to act. I come this week to thank the House for acting because on Friday of last week the House of Representatives passed legislation—again, a large bipartisan vote—18 different bills that were combined into one bill to deal with this opioid epidemic.

In some respects, it is very similar to the legislation we passed in the Senate. In other respects, it has additional provisions that I think are very helpful. In other respects, it doesn't pick up everything that is in the Senate legislation.

Our focus in the Senate would be to have a comprehensive approach, and I believe, by including some of the provisions in the House-passed version, we will come up with a more comprehensive approach, and that is what is needed. In fact, in the Senate we spent 3 months working with the House on companion legislation. We had a number of conferences here in Washington, DC—five different conferences to deal with this issue—and we came up with legislation that took best practices around the country and included them in the legislation to deal with a very real problem in our communities.

It has to be comprehensive. Yesterday I had the opportunity to speak with the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, Michael Botticelli, as well as Dr. Kana Enomoto, who is the Acting Administrator of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. It was a hearing of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee. We were talking about how to come up with the right response to this issue in so many different respects. The bottom line is, both of them strongly agree it has to be a comprehensive approach if we are going to make a difference, if we are going to begin to turn the tide and begin to save lives and get people back on track to deal with this level of drug addiction and overdose that is happening in our communities. We have to provide the resources, but we also have to ensure that the resources are wisely spent. In other words, we have to be sure we are spending the money on things that are going to be effective. I was grateful that both Director Botticelli and Dr. Enomoto said they would work with us to try to get this conference between the House and Senate done as quickly as possible. The House and Senate bills coming together is important so we can get it to the President and, more importantly, so we can get it to the communities to begin to help. They offered to continue to work with us going forward, and I appreciate that, and we will need them. Everybody needs to pull together on this.

It has been 67 days since the Senate acted. In those 67 days, if we assume that about 120 Americans are lost every day to drug overdoses, about 8,000 Americans have lost their lives through drug overdoses since the Senate passed this legislation on March 10. Think about that. That is what I call an epidemic.

Unfortunately, my State of Ohio has been particularly hard hit. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said that Ohio had the second most overdoses of any State in the Union, and the fifth highest overdose death rate. On average, we are losing about five Ohioans every day to overdoses. We lost 330 since the Senate passed the CARA legislation on March 10.

Unfortunately, since March 10 the headlines have continued to show that families are being torn apart, communities devastated. These headlines make it clear this is not slowing down. I talked to some experts on this in Ohio last week, and I asked: Tell me, are things getting better? Are we beginning to change the attitudes to turn the tide? The answer was, no, the hotline is lighting up more than ever, more people are coming for treatment, and there is more crime than ever related to this. Sadly, I do not believe, at least in my home State of Ohio, that we have begun to make the progress we have to make.

It is happening everywhere—in the cities, suburbs, and rural areas. Addiction is affecting everybody of every age no matter where you are from, no matter what neighborhood you live in. It knows no ZIP Code.

Just in the time since I spoke on the floor this last week, in the past week in Ohio, here are some things that have happened. In Northeast Ohio, in the city of Lorraine, police searched three different drug houses. This happened last Thursday. They arrested seven people possessing more than 120 grams of heroin. In Southwest Ohio, in a rural area in Brown County, a couple was arrested for possession of heroin. They have four children between the ages of 3 and 6. This happened last week. In the suburbs of Dayton, OH, this time in the suburbs, Harrison Township, police say a man was driving under the influence of heroin, veered into the wrong lane and struck a vehicle head-on, killing an innocent woman and injuring her husband. More and more traffic accidents are being linked to addiction.

In Central Ohio, in the Columbus area, the city has now spent $144,000 last year alone on Narcan, which is a miracle drug that will be able to deal with overdoses and save people's lives. Paramedics in Columbus spent 10 percent of their entire budget just on Narcan last year, reversing over 100 overdoses. Paramedic Pete Bolen says that sometimes he takes up to four overdose calls per day. I have been to police stations and firehouses around Ohio, and they tell me they are responding to more overdoses than they are fires.

Dr. Eric Adkins of Ohio State's Wexner Medical Center says that their emergency room sees two to four overdose patients every day. Last year, Wexner spent $1.2 million treating overdose patients. That is one medical center in one city.

In Chillicothe, Assistant Fire Chief Jeffrey Creed says that overdose calls are on pace to double this year compared to last year. Again, they will tell you there are more overdoses than fires.

Rita Gunning of Grove City, OH, lost her daughter Sara, who was just 30

years old, to a heroin overdose. Last year, Sara was trying to fight an opioid addiction and managed to stay clean for 50 days, but she relapsed, and 3 days later she died of an overdose. Rita is now raising Sara's three children and trying to increase the availability of naloxone across Ohio. She is on a mission because she believes this miracle drug naloxone could have saved her daughter. She said: ''Maybe if they had it that night, they could have saved Sara's life.'' She shouldn't have to say that. By the way, making naloxone more available is one thing the legislation does that was passed in the Senate. We have to be sure the House and Senate legislation does that and also provides the training that goes along with it.

Our legislation also says that when they provide naloxone, or Narcan, they provide not only training with it but also information about where to get treatment because it is not enough to apply Narcan, we need to get these people into treatment so we don't have to apply Narcan again and again and again.

Karen Young of Columbus lost her daughter Kayla when she was just 22. She had surgery when she was 20, and she was prescribed pain pills, as many of us have after surgery. She became addicted to those pain pills, and like so many others, when the pills ran out, she switched to a less expensive and more accessible alternative—heroin. She went to rehab for about 7 weeks, but she relapsed, overdosed, and died—just like that. In the span of 2 years, she developed an addiction because she went in for surgery and she died from it. As Karen put it, ''her Dad will never get to walk down the aisle with Kayla.''

Unfortunately, that is true with so many thousands of people whose lives are cut short across Ohio and across the country. The stories are heartwrenching. You hear about kids who go in to have their wisdom teeth pulled. They are given prescription pain pills. They get addicted to the pain pills. They then turn to heroin—or maybe not. Maybe they even die of an overdose from the pain pills themselves, which has happened.

This should not be happening. Overprescribing of pain medication is obviously one of the huge issues. Four out of five of the heroin addicts in Ohio started with prescription drugs. People need to know that. By the way, our legislation would allow people to know that through an awareness campaign about that very issue.

Unfortunately, these overdoses are just the tip of the iceberg in the sense that in addition to the 8,000 we have lost since March 10 in this country, there are hundreds of thousands more who are among the wounded. What do I mean by that? They have lost their jobs. They have been driven to theft or fraud to pay for their habit. They have gone to jail. They have broken relationships with loved ones because of an addiction.

I hear this time and again from recovering addicts saying: When I had this addiction, the drug was everything. It was everything. That is how my family broke up. That is how I lost my job. That is how I lost my self-respect.

I have seen the consequences firsthand. In Ohio on Monday, I visited a treatment center that was for women only. It is an extraordinary place, the only place in my hometown of Cincinnati where women can take their kids and get treatment, which has been very effective. I got the chance to meet with a number of women who are in recovery. Each had a heart-wrenching story to tell about how they got there. Each was absolutely committed to dealing with their addiction not only for their sakes but also for their baby's sake because these women were pregnant.

In the last 12 years in Ohio, there has been a 750-percent increase of babies born with addiction. This syndrome, babies born with addiction, requires babies to be taken through the same kind of rehab that adults are taken through, of course at different levels of treatment. It is a very sad situation. Many doctors and nurses, who are incredibly compassionate, tell me they don't know what the long-term consequences are.

At this treatment center called First Step Home, which is in my home town, they are doing impressive work. They are teaching women how to be better moms in addition to providing the treatment they need. They don't just get medication, they get a sense of home and security. Talking to these women and listening to their stories inspires me to make the Federal Government a better partner with First Step and other nonprofits around the country to ensure that we are, indeed, beginning to turn this tide.

Today and tomorrow, the Addiction Policy Forum, which is a coalition of advocacy groups, is leading a CARA Family Day on Capitol Hill here in Washington, DC. I will be joining them in that effort. I thank them for calling attention to this pressing issue and for their strong support of the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, CARA.

With this being National Police Week, I would also like to thank our police officers who are confronting this epidemic on the frontlines every single day. Police, other first responders, and medical personnel confront this epidemic more than anyone else. I have been told by prosecutors back home that in some counties in Ohio, more than 80 percent of the crime is directly related to this issue of heroin and prescription drug addiction. I am told that in some areas, nearly all of the thefts that are committed are done by those struggling with addiction to pay for their habit.

The Fraternal Order of Police has been incredibly helpful to us in this legislation. They contributed valuable advice and feedback during the 3 years we were crafting CARA. I am grateful for their help and for their endorsement of CARA, which was very important to getting such a strong vote on the floor of the House and Senate.

Police officers across Ohio have told me about the extent of the epidemic. They have told me about the need for the Federal Government to take action that is comprehensive.

Major Jay McDonald, who is the president of Ohio's Fraternal Order of Police has told me that ''heroin mixed with fentanyl is the most deadly drug cocktail I've witnessed in my entire career.'' I visited a place called Jody's House with him. It is a residential house for women in recovery in Marion, OH. Major McDonald told me that our response should include enforcement, prevention, and treatment. In other words, it has to be comprehensive. He is absolutely right.

Our police want CARA for a lot of reasons. For example, CARA would authorize new law enforcement task forces around the country to investigate trafficking in heroin, fentanyl, methamphetamines, and prescription drugs. Police know that these extra resources will help them to do their job. By the way, these task forces are not included in the House-passed legislation. We have to get that in conference to ensure that we are helping our police officers who are out there on the frontlines.

Another reason I think the law enforcement community wants CARA passed is that they are using naloxone more and more every day. First responders used it 16,000 times in Ohio last year—16,000 times. CARA would increase access to naloxone. It would improve the training so that they could be more effective in administering this miracle drug in time to save a life.

It would also insist, again, as it is being administered, that the drug treatment programs in the community locally are made available—information available to people—so that we are not just seeing this revolving door. If we give our police the tools they need, they will be able to save even more lives and get more people into treatment.

Our police are also helping to take drugs off the street. Since 2014, DEA agents in Ohio, working with local police departments, have seized more than 171 kilograms of heroin. Federal agents have now arrested more than 70 drug traffickers or drug dealers in Ohio in the last year alone.

Sometimes the intervention of a police officer is exactly what it takes to get somebody into treatment. I have found that again and again. Two weeks ago, there was a heartbreaking story of a woman in the Miami Valley area—Dayton area—named Cheri, who said she was glad her son was in jail because ''I would rather have him sitting behind bars in jail than have to carry him out in a body bag.''

Two weeks ago in Wellington, OH, there was a town meeting held about

the crisis. Nicole Walmsley told the story of how, after postpartum surgery at age 19, she was prescribed a prescription pain killer. She became addicted. She ended up being arrested 18 times and convicted of two felonies. ''I sold my morals; I sold my soul. Drugs became everything.''

After an overdose in Youngstown, she begged her probation officer to send her to jail. That is how bad it is. That is how difficult it is sometimes to find treatment. She asked the police officer and the judge to send her to prison because that is the best way to get good treatment, to be convicted of a felony. Even then, sometimes the best treatment is not available.

That is the status quo today. Unless and until we get a more comprehensive bill to the President and signed into law, this continues. Too many are going without treatment. Too many are afraid to come forward. Too many are treating this not as a disease that needs to be treated, which it is, but instead are concerned about the stigma.

We need to get people to come forward and come into treatment. But thanks to help from police, in the case of Nicole, as I mentioned, she did get treatment. For 3 years now, she has been living a clean and productive life and helping others do so too. Police across Ohio have been offering treatment to those struggling with addiction.

I am impressed with what is going on in Lucas County, Ohio, which is in the Toledo area. Sheriff Tharp has started a drug abuse response team that offers addiction counseling, free rides to treatment for those who need it, and followup visits for those who have overdosed. In talking to Sheriff Tharp and some of his deputies about this, they have made an incredible difference in people's lives.

In Lodi, OH, anyone can simply turn themselves in to the police, and they will get treatment with no questions asked. This is done using private donations entirely. This year they have already placed in rehabilitation 28 people who had no insurance and no income. The police there report that since they started the program, overdoses and property crimes have decreased considerably.

In Wellington and in Auglaize County, police make the same offer: Turn yourself in and get treatment. We will not ask any questions. We will get you the help you need. I am told this is also the case in Creston, OH, and Newark, OH. So locally, police departments are taking up this issue and dealing with it effectively. I salute them for that.

I also salute them for putting their lives on the line every day for all of us and for their compassionate care of those they run across who need this treatment. I know the statistics about drug abuse are heartbreaking. They can certainly be discouraging, including the relapse rates. But thanks in part to our police officers and good treatment providers around the country, such as those I visited on Monday, there are a lot of stories of hope, too, that encourage and inspire us. Many of those who are struggling have inspirational stories too.

In Colerain Township, near my hometown, police have started what is called a quick response team of police, paramedics, and addiction counselors. When they arrest someone or save them from an overdose, they get them into treatment—again, not just applying Narcan but getting them into treatment. Last summer, they found Damon Carroll, who was just 22 years old, on his bedroom floor after an overdose. They got him counseling and treatment. Damon is now living a clean and productive life working at a restaurant. You know who stops by his house and stops by the restaurant and makes sure he is okay? The police officers who found him. Thanks to our police, he is beating this. There is hope. They saved a life. They are helping this young man to live out his God-given potential.

I hope we can send comprehensive legislation to the White House as soon as possible because it is needed. It is urgent. It is an emergency. We have lost nearly 8,000 Americans since the Senate passed this Comprehensive Addiction Recovery Act. That is the status quo today. Again, that does not begin to tell the story of those who have not died because of an overdose but struggle with addiction every day.

Our police officers and those nonprofits I talked about, those treatment centers, those who are struggling with addiction—all of them deserve better. They deserve us to act. Again, we are not going to solve the problem here in Washington, DC, but we can be better partners with State and local governments, with these nonprofits, with these law enforcement officials around the country who are dealing with this issue every day. They deserve a better partner.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LEE). The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, I was pleased to come over here early before I spoke and listen to my colleague from Ohio. We have the same issues in Indiana. I think probably the Presiding Officer's State and every State has serious opioid addiction issues, particularly with our young people. We cannot solve all of the problems here. We have passed a piece of legislation. Hopefully we can reconcile with the House shortly and put it on the President's desk. In a number of ways, that will provide the support for dealing with this problem.

It is a national issue, it is a State issue, it is a city issue, it is a smalltown issue, and it is a rural America issue. It is all hands on deck here. We are losing precious lives through this scourge of addiction that is sweeping through our country.

WASTEFUL SPENDING

Mr. President, today I am back, as I have been every week for now 43 weeks for the waste of the week. The ''Waste of the Week'' is where I highlight waste, fraud, and abuse in the Federal Government system that is using hard-earned taxpayer dollars that ought to be able to be used by the taxpayer to pay the mortgage, pay the bills at the end of the week, to put aside some money hopefully for the children's education as they grow, or for any number of needs out there.

We have the responsibility and the duty to be carefully managing the tax money that is assessed to our public. ''Waste of the Week'' has pointed out some significant examples, yet drop-in-the-bucket of expenditures that have not been successful, have not been used for the purpose they are supposed to be used, part of the waste, fraud, and abuse category of now nearly—well, nearing $200 billion. That is not small change.

This week, I am highlighting a Federal program that has a lousy track record and over $7 billion in leftover money—funds Congress has appropriated for this program. Let me explain the program. In 2008, shortly after the economic recession began, Congress created something called the Home Affordable Modification Program; in short, HAMP. This is a new emergency program established to help homeowners facing financial distress to avoid foreclosure by reducing their monthly mortgage payments.

All this occurred at a time when our country truly was in distress—a serious recession. People were working less hours or no hours. Those who owned homes were finding it difficult if not impossible to pay the monthly mortgage payments.

So the HAMP program, which is a voluntary program for homeowners and mortgage lenders—if the two of them get together and agree to restructure their home loan payments, they can stay in their home, and it doesn't have to go through foreclosure. It is a sensible program at a time of real need. Lenders work through the Treasury Department to reduce those monthly mortgage payments to no higher than about one-third of the homeowners' income.

Historically, if you are telling your kids about buying a home or you are graduating from school and you want to buy a home, the solid advice has always been, don't commit yourself to more than 25 percent of the income you are earning to pay on your mortgage. You are going to need the rest of that money to pay the rest of your bills—all the utilities, food, transportation, buying a car, and so forth and so on. Well, this program said all the way up to a third. If you qualified on that, we would use 33 percent instead of 25 percent and restructure your mortgage so that you had a lower payment you had to make each month on that mortgage.

The Department of Treasury put this program in place. It was scheduled to expire at the end of 2012. In 2013, after the program had technically expired,

an inspector general found that the number of participants who ended up redefaulting on their new modified mortgage was ''increasing at an alarming rate.''

What is this word ''redefaulting''? Look, if you don't pay your mortgage payments, you are in default. If you are in default long enough, the bank or the mortgage company that is holding your mortgage says: We are going to foreclosure and take your house back because you are not making payments. This program was designed to help people avoid that catastrophe.

Redefaulting is the process by which the person, having already agreed to—with the mortgage company and with the support of the Federal Government, the person agreed to a program to lower the payments so they could keep their house. They defaulted again, so the technical term is redefaulting, but it is two defaults. So if Joe Smith has problems and he gets with his lender, he gets a new program, but then down the line, he defaults again.

According to the inspector general, this became something that needed to be addressed because we simply cannot continue to proceed with this program with the taxpayers' dollars if the participants aren't doing their share.

Despite the poor performance, the administration unilaterally—and how many times have we seen this happen during the Obama administration?—bypassing Congress, they unilaterally extended the program beyond its December 2012 expiration date. Interestingly enough, even with this extension, the number of applicants steadily declined. People either couldn't meet the measures or they didn't need it. The economy was improving, and they didn't need to do this. According to the Treasury Department, the number of HAMP participants declined because there was a shrinking number of eligible mortgagees.

Given that the outcomes of those receiving help were largely subpar and the number of applicants was declining, you would think we would come to the conclusion that the program needed to be terminated. It was already extended past the deadline, but on the basis of what was happening with the program, essentially we should terminate that.

When HAMP was created, the goal was to help about 4 million homeowners. Unfortunately, as it turned out, the program ended with only 1.3 million homeowners making it through the trial phase and ultimately being accepted into the program. Of those people, about one-third ultimately redefaulted, costing taxpayers an additional $1.5 billion.

We had a broken program. What was left in the fund with the Treasury was $7 billion. Some people call these slush funds. This is money that has been appropriated, put into a program—not expended in the program but sits there. How many times have we heard about government agencies with excess taxpayer money saying: Don't give it back.

Now, of course, this is the Treasury. Sometimes we say: Give it back to the Treasury. This is the Treasury itself. Well, don't terminate this and give it back; we might want to use it for something else.

That is a classic way of describing how Washington often works. Spend all the money that is appropriated to you, or they will reduce the money they give you next year. I previously sat on the Appropriations Committee, and this is not a one-off proposition. Every year, we have to scrub through these agencies' expenditures, and we find that there is excessive spending at the end of the fiscal year so that they don't get a reduced amount of funds sent to them for the next fiscal year.

Think of the ways this money could be used if it was put back into the Treasury. No. 1, it could be used for essential Federal functions. Wouldn't NIH like to have $7 billion to be able to hopefully break through on a wonder drug that would address Alzheimer's or diabetes or something else? Wouldn't the Department of Defense want to have this money for the shortcomings they have had because of the drastic reduction in expenditures for our national defense and security? Wouldn't any number of Federal agencies that produce essential programs that have to be addressed financially want to use that money for the right purposes? Most important of all, wouldn't the taxpayer want to get that money back or not have it spent at all or use it? Wouldn't the Treasury want to use it to reduce our ever-deepening national defense? So there are a lot of uses for this money that is sloshing around in a trust fund—not a trust fund, but sloshing around in the fund held by the Treasury Department.

This is a waste because it is sitting there. It is going to be spent on something that it was not intended to be spent on. For that reason, it becomes the waste of the week. As the waste of the week, we add $7 billion to our ever-growing total of waste, fraud, and abuse, taking our total overall to $170 billion. This is not small change. We have people struggling in America to make ends meet. They live paycheck to paycheck. They want their hard-earned dollars that are taken from their paycheck used for the right purposes. If the money is not used for the right purposes, they don't want to send it; they want it back.

We have an accountability to the American people, the people we represent, to do the best we can to provide the most efficient, effective use of their tax dollars. If we can't provide that—this is just, as I said, a drop in the bucket. I could be standing here every day with a waste of the day. I could be standing here every hour with a waste of the hour. We have a responsibility to be accountable to the people whose money is taken by the Federal Government and used. They don't mind using it for the right things. Maybe a veterans program needs that $7 billion to treat more veterans better than the way they are treated now.

In any event, we add this, and we have $170-plus billion in documented waste, fraud, and abuse.

I will be back next week with the next version, and we will continue to expose funding that is unnecessary and is putting a real burden on our hard-earned tax dollars being paid to the Federal Government.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

IRAN'S INFLUENCE ON IRAQ AND SYRIA

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I rise today to draw attention to the pernicious and malign impact that the Iranian Government and its intrusion into Iraq and Syria are having on regional security, on the condition of people in those two countries, and on the stability and future of that whole region.

Today, Iraq is riven by sectarian divides, confronted with the presence of barbaric ISIS terrorists in its north and west, and led by a tragically fragile government. Meanwhile, the oppression of the murderous regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria has helped create a humanitarian crisis on the scale of nothing we have seen since the Second World War.

Iran claims that it wants to be a legitimate, contributing member of the international community, but despite those claims, Iran has played and continues to play a major role in fomenting instability in Iraq and Syria and in exacerbating security, political, and military crises in both countries.

Today, I wish to give just a brief overview of the tragedies of Iraq and Syria, explain Iran's destabilizing role in each country, and highlight a number of the steps I think the United States can take to counter Iran's dangerous influence.

Let's begin with where we are today in Iraq. In recent months, Iraqi and coalition forces have reduced the territorial presence of ISIS in Iraq by roughly 40 percent. Since taking office in 2014, Prime Minister Haydar al-Abadi has taken concrete steps to reduce corruption, to share power with Kurdish and Sunni leaders, and to form a competent, technocratic government that can deliver real results for the Iraqi people and reduce the many grievances that have forced Iraqis into the arms of extremists. Yet dangerous divides continue to paralyze the Abadi government, hindering Iraq's ability to fight ISIS and to defend against the terrorist attacks that have killed hundreds of people, 200 in the last week alone.

As coalition forces retake land previously captured by ISIS, ISIS appears to be bringing its savage and barbaric tactics to the capital city of Baghdad in brutal attacks in recent days and in other attempts to stoke sectarianism and to distract the Abadi government

from its efforts to retake the major city of Mosul. Sectarian divisions among the Iraqi people and within the government itself make political reconciliation and a coherent national military campaign against ISIS even more difficult.

Syria, meanwhile, faces a nearly unimaginable humanitarian crisis. Since March of 2011, more than 400,000 Syrians have been killed and more than 1 million injured because the Assad regime has engaged in a murderous campaign against its own people in order to cling to power. Some estimates put the number of dead as high as half a million Syrians. Nearly 5 million Syrians have been forced out of their own country, with 6.5 million displaced internally and 13.5 million in need of humanitarian assistance. Even more tragically, a huge number of those Syrians have been unable to receive international aid or relief because the Assad regime blocks access to international aid organizations.

Rather than playing a constructive role in this tortured, difficult region, such as by contributing more meaningfully to the anti-ISIS fight or by moderating conflicting factions, Iran continues to prop up the Assad regime. In fact, without Iran's help, I believe Assad would have likely fallen or come to the table to negotiate peace by now. Instead, Iran continues to foment instability, sectarian violence, and support terrorism.

In Iraq, Iran continues to fund Shia militias who seek to capitalize upon and exacerbate tensions between Iraq's Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish populations. Iranian-backed Shia militias have pushed ISIS out of some areas, but rather than allowing Sunni civilians to peaceably return and rebuild, they have engaged in killings and human rights violations against the very Sunni communities they have just liberated from ISIS.

According to Human Rights Watch, in response to ISIS bombings in the Iraqi town of Muqdadiyah in January of 2016, Shia militias ''demolished Sunni homes, stores, and mosques'' and abducted and killed dozens of Sunni civilians. This is just one of many examples of atrocities committed by Iranian-backed Shia militias in recent months. These killings further raise tensions and drive more recruits to ISIS and other extremist groups.

In Syria, Iran has joined Russia in providing the aid that has kept the Assad regime in power, despite hundreds of thousands willing to fight against Assad and despite the coordinated effort of many countries.

Although Iran's Government denies the presence of its military forces in Syria, it is clear that in addition to financial support and weapons, Iran has sent thousands of its own troops to reinforce the murderous regime of Assad. One estimate puts the number of Iranian forces in Syria at 3,000, including 2,000 of the elite Quds Force, a select group of fighters from the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, the hard-line group dedicated to preserving the reactionary Iranian Government. In total, more than 700 Iranians are believed to have been killed in Syria, directly contradicting Iran's claims that it is not involved in the conflict. In fact, Iraq recently doubled down on its support for Assad by sending soldiers from the regular Iranian army to join the IRGC troops on the ground in Syria. There are rumors that they are even mobilizing and deploying Afghans and others from the region to join militias in support of Assad.

Although it remains clear that a lasting resolution to the Syrian conflict will be impossible until Assad leaves power, Ali Akbar Velayati, a senior adviser to Iranian Supreme Leader Khamenei, said in a recent televised interview that ''the removal of Assad . . . is a redline for us.''

As long as Iran continues to increase its support—its military support, its financial support—for Assad, it will bear direct responsibility for the carnage in Syria, rising extremism on all sides of the conflict, and the humanitarian exodus from Syria that is causing massive suffering and destabilizing countries on three continents.

This behavior from Iran is a clear sign that the regime is not to be trusted, does not intend to comply with international norms, and deserves close scrutiny and constant pushback from the United States and our allies.

Briefly—noting another colleague who stands to speak soon—there are a number of steps the United States and our allies have to take in response. At the very least, to prevent Iran from obtaining the material necessary to advance its nuclear program, we must work with our allies to tightly enforce all four corners of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the nuclear agreement between Iran, the United States, and other world powers.

We must continue to work with our allies and their navies to interdict Iran's ongoing illegal weapons shipments to support the Houthis and other of their terrorist proxies in the region, not just in Yemen, but in Gaza, Bahrain, and Lebanon. Since February, U.S. forces and allied navies have, on at least three occasions, interdicted in international waters shipments of thousands of AK–47s, anti-tank missiles, grenade launchers, sniper rifles, and other weapons destined from Iran to the Houthi rebels in Yemen.

The United States must continue to maintain sanctions on Iran for its support for terrorism, its human rights violations, and its continued illegal ballistic missile tests. We must be willing to sanction both individuals and entities linked to the IRGC and Iran's continued and illegal ballistic missile program. In addition to punishing Iran for its dangerous and provocative behavior, these actions send a signal to Iran that the international national community will not tolerate its ongoing bad behavior.

We have to use diplomatic channels to urge countries such as Russia to not sell more dangerous arms to the Iranian regime—allegedly defensive arms that will simply further destabilize the regime—and to press Russia to allow U.N. Security Council action in response to Iran's recent ballistic missile tests.

Finally, we have to continue to make smart investments in training, technology, and innovation, on which our military depends. America's ability to push back on Iran critically depends on maintaining a credible conventional military deterrent.

The United States must do everything we can to support our allies in the Middle East, in particular by strengthening our partnership with the State of Israel, by concluding a new 10-year memorandum of understanding that provides a reliable long-term and significantly enhanced pathway toward support. Senator GRAHAM and I, along with 81 of our colleagues, recently wrote a letter to the President urging the administration to support a stronger MOU to ensure Israel has the resources it needs to defend itself in this chaotic region.

In closing, in the years to come, I hope this body will be just as dedicated to enforcing the terms of the nuclear agreement with Iran and pushing back on Iran's continued dangerous behavior outside the parameters of the deal as we were in the months leading up to its consideration in this body. Iran continues to exercise a malign influence on Iraq, on Syria, and the region. It is our responsibility to use every tool we have to make it clear to Iran that we will contain its bad behavior and we will not tolerate its ongoing actions.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I rise to discuss my amendment with Senator BLUMENTHAL that would extend the Veterans Choice Card Program for 3 years and restore funding that was moved out of the program last year.

Our amendment is critically important. It extends the Veterans Choice Card Program so it does not expire prematurely next year. It restores funding removed from the program last year to pay for other VA programs, provides additional funding to stabilize the VA Choice Card Program for the next 3 years while Congress works on a long-term solution to reform veterans health care, and allows the Secretary of the VA to standardize and modernize the way it pays all the doctors, hospitals, and clinics participating in the many programs the VA offers to veterans to get the care they need in their communities.

I was very proud 2 years ago that Congress acted quickly to pass major VA reform legislation following the scandal in care that resulted in the deaths of hundreds of veterans waiting endlessly for care. We now know that

what was originally uncovered in Phoenix, AZ, had been occurring throughout the country. Fortunately, we acted decisively, and in a bipartisan manner, by passing the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act in near-record time. That law provided extra emergency funding for the VA to hire doctors and nurses and to build more hospitals and clinics.

Perhaps the most important and the most promising piece of the legislation was the $10 billion emergency fund for the Veterans Choice Card Program. This program allows any veteran who has to wait more than 30 days for an appointment or lives more than 40 miles from a VA facility to visit a participating doctor in their community instead of continuing to wait for care with no options. After an extremely difficult start, the Veterans Choice Card Program is now authorizing more than 150,000 appointments for veterans care per month—over 6,000 per workday.

According to the VA, as of the end of March, nearly 1 million appointments for veterans had been scheduled under the Veterans Choice Card Program. Each of these appointments represents a veteran's appointment that would have otherwise been delayed potentially for months in the VA's scheduling system.

An extra advantage of the Choice Card is it also helps veterans who don't use it. By enabling some veterans to receive care in their community, the VA is able to free up its appointment backlog and accommodate veteran appointments sooner.

Over the last year, the number of participating doctors and medical professionals in the Veterans Choice Program in the western region has jumped from around 95,000 to nearly 160,000. The turnover rate is very low. More than 90 percent of all doctors are being paid within 30 days, and the great majority of doctors are choosing to stay in the Veterans Choice Card Program to treat our Nation's veterans.

Unfortunately, under current law, the Veterans Choice Card Program is scheduled to expire in the middle of next year. The Veterans Choice Card Program is capped at $10 billion in emergency spending and 3 years of operation, whichever is reached first.

I know Members on both sides of the aisle don't want to return to the status quo of never-ending wait times for appointments and poor care at the VA. Too many of our constituents have been harmed, too many lives devastated.

I remember standing on the Senate floor in 2014 and urging passage of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act. At that time, we acknowledged the Veterans Choice Program was a first step toward fully reforming the VA. That law created a blue-ribbon Commission on Care that is still meeting and owes Congress recommendations this summer on long-term reform, but we need time for hearings, investigations, oversight and analysis of the Commission's report to get long-term reform right.

As the chairman and ranking member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee will attest, this is the dictionary definition of an emergency. While we cannot rush the reforms the VA health care system needs, we also cannot bring the Veterans Choice Program to a full stop. Too many veterans and VA hospitals depend on the Veterans Choice Program to provide care in a timely fashion.

I have heard from multiple Administrators and VA officials who have told me and my staff that they do not know what they will do if the Veterans Choice Card Program ends. I urge my colleagues to adopt this amendment and commit to continuing the hard work of enacting long-term reform to the VA health care system.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment in order to call up amendment No. 4039 with the changes that are at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from New York.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, JOHN MCCAIN is my good friend for whom I have ultimate respect. I was just informed of this amendment and was informed it would not enable—we have a real problem in Rochester, where they do not have enough VA services. They have to drive very far away to go to a big metropolitan area.

I am going to object, hoping I can talk to my friend from Arizona to see if we can work this out. So I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I don't know what the credentials are of the Senator from New York as far as veterans are concerned, but I know this. I know that what the Senator from New York is stopping is 160,000 veterans—160,000 veterans—from participating in this program in the western part of the United States.

Mr. SCHUMER. If my colleague will yield. What I am simply asking for is not to block it but to sit and talk with him to see what exactly his amendment does and the effect it will have on Rochester.

I was just told of it. That is all I want to do. I don't know the details. I have great respect for my friend, but I have an obligation to the veterans in Rochester who have come to me about their problem, and so I want to talk to my colleague about it.

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I hope very strongly that my colleague and friend the Senator from New York and Senator MCCAIN will succeed in resolving this potential roadblock to amendment No. 4039, because I very fervently support it.

The amendment would extend the temporary Veterans Choice Program for an additional 3 years and provide funding to do so. The extension of this program is vital, and the current authorization is coming to an end. At this point, we lack a path forward on any of the proposals to overhaul the VA's care in the community program.

While the Veterans Choice Program has been far from perfect, requiring multiple legislative and administrative changes to make it function for veterans, extending it for an additional 3 years will allow us to address these necessary changes that Senators TESTER and BURR have provided in a bipartisan way in the committee earlier this year. I remain committed to working with them and with Chairman ISAKSON to make further changes to the program as well as continuing to improve access to care within the VA, which is the preferred choice for many veterans.

In addition to extending Choice, this amendment also would allow the VA to move closer to consolidating existing programs for care in the community, eliminating some of the bureaucratic hurdles to smooth contracting for the VA. I thank my colleague from Arizona Senator MCCAIN for championing this cause because this amendment will ensure that all veterans currently using Project ARCH to access care through the VA will be grandfathered into the Veterans Choice Program. This is important for some veterans in rural areas to maintain continuity in care. It is of great interest to our colleagues from Maine and Kansas and other States where these veterans live, primarily, but to all of us who care about veterans health care.

I urge my colleagues to support this amendment as well as to support The Veterans First Act, another bipartisan bill I was pleased to work on with Chairman ISAKSON to achieve—that bill makes additional changes to veterans health care to improve opioid therapy, access to chiropractic care, as well as ensuring strong accountability within the Department.

Again, I express my appreciation to my colleague and friend Senator MCCAIN and say that I look forward to working with him closely on this amendment, which would be helpful, in my view, to the Veterans Choice Program. Without this extension, the Veterans Choice Program would expire next year before Congress enacts long-term reform for veterans health. The stability provided by this extension and funding will help ensure maximum participation by doctors, hospitals, and clinics in the community who wish to treat our veterans.

This amendment is one I support, having worked with my colleague Senator MCCAIN on it, and I am very hopeful we can move forward with the support of this body.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I would tell Senator SCHUMER's staff that he may want to come back.

What Senator SCHUMER is asking for is a 25-year lease on a clinic in Rochester, NY, according to his staff.

I have been privy to examples of blocking the greater good because of a specific geographic area, but I have to say that I haven't seen anything quite like this one.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum, and I will talk one more time with the Senator from New York.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, this is an important issue that is being discussed on the floor. I join Senator BLUMENTHAL certainly in my commitment to do whatever we can to extend more choice to veterans.

I believe there are less than a handful of issues in which the VA is, in all likelihood, the best provider. They should be better at post-traumatic stress than anything else. The VA should be better at IED-attack injuries. They should be better at prosthetics. There is no reason they should be the better place to have your heart valve replaced or your kidney cancer dealt with.

More choice for veterans is better for veterans, and will make the VA a better provider than the VA is today. So I am certainly supportive of that discussion.

Mr. President, Senator WARNER and I today have filed an amendment to the transportation bill, which is the part of this debate that deals with transportation. The BRIDGE Act creates new ways to help us fund our Nation's infrastructure.

Last year, Congress was finally able to come together to pass a bipartisan highway bill, the FAST Act. It took a while to get to the FAST Act. We had 37 short-term extensions of the highway bill from 2009 on, but we finally have a 5-year highway bill that provides certainty for the next 5 years. This is a chance when, at every level of government, we can now put extra tools in the toolbox, and we can involve the private sector in ways that it has not been involved as a funding partner. There are many things the private sector can do in partnership with the public sector.

Strengthening our overall infrastructure, especially our transportation network, is vital to boosting economic growth, to creating jobs, and to increasing competitiveness in Missouri, in Senator WARNER's State of Virginia, and across the Nation. Current infrastructure fails to meet our current needs, including our drinking water, highways and ports, and energy transmission.

In addition to all the things we see above ground, there are many things below ground that need to be dealt with. Part of the storm water system in the city of St. Louis was built while Abraham Lincoln was President. It is amazing how long wood will last if you keep it soaked in water for 152 years or so, but that is what a part of that system is all about. We are way short in infrastructure investments. Senator WARNER and I, for three Congresses now, have been trying to find the best way to add more ability to do more of the things that need to be done. We have a transportation system that is interconnected, with an extensive network of highways, roads, and bridges, and of freight and passenger railroads, urban and rural rail transit systems, airports, waterways, and pipelines. All of those things make us more competitive than we would be otherwise, and more competitive means better jobs. It means that people living paycheck to paycheck have an opportunity to have paycheck to paycheck plus savings. They have an opportunity to have paycheck to paycheck plus retirement. They have an opportunity to see those things happen that need to happen in their lives and for their families.

The transportation system links our country. It links urban and rural America. It serves as the backbone for interstate commerce, and it connects the United States to the rest of the world. Our economic competitiveness and our ability to export in the most competitive way is very dependent on our infrastructure.

The American energy revolution is directly related to the ability to access unconventional oil and gas. We have more new American energy than we ever dreamed possible. We can access that energy, but we don't have a way to transport the energy that we need to use it most efficiently.

The Greater Mississippi River Basin—the biggest contiguous piece of agricultural land in the world—is where the waterways of the country come together. These waterways allow us to be more competitive. They allow farmers to easily ship their products to domestic and foreign markets. A modern transportation system will be key to remaining competitive with other grain producers elsewhere in the world. Brazil is a great example of a country whose ability to grow agricultural products has far outgrown its infrastructure. The ability to compete—the ability to get things to market, the ability to get things all over the world—is dramatically impacted by that.

The American Society of Civil Engineers continues to give the United States poor marks on our infrastructure and says that we need billions of dollars in investment over the next several years to bring it up to adequate conditions.

The BRIDGE Act is not a way for Federal taxpayers to become responsible for every local obligation but for States and communities, along with the Federal Government, to have new ways to do the things that need to be done. We can't continue to ignore the infrastructure needs of the country. We particularly can't continue to ignore the infrastructure needs of the country that we can't see.

We just saw appropriate attention in Flint, MI, to a problem that didn't meet the eye because it is underground. The gas lines, the water lines, the storm sewer lines all need attention. The capital markets and private sector investors have growing interest in being a part of meeting that great infrastructure need. The BRIDGE Act will incentivize private sector investment by establishing an independent infrastructure financing authority to provide loans and loan guarantees to critical infrastructure projects, including transportation, water, and energy infrastructure. It is a proposal like the ones we need to help close the gap that needs to be closed.

During this week—a week in which I am not sure how the planning worked here—we have the transportation bill on the floor during infrastructure week. I think we ought to give serious consideration not just to the infrastructure that we appropriate money for but the process and the tools we put in place so that the infrastructure needs of the country can be met.

I am certainly pleased to get to work with Senator WARNER on this project. We have had lots of input from people who understand the infrastructure needs of the country. I hope the Congress will look at this as one of the things that can be done to help meet those needs.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

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

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

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I thank Senator WARNER from Virginia and Senator SCHUMER from New York. They are committed to the veterans in their States and in this country.

I believe we have worked out an agreement to try to get the veterans the services they have earned and are not receiving at this time.

AMENDMENT NO. 4039 TO AMENDMENT NO. 3896

Mr. President, the usual calm and quiet conversation has led to a conclusion that now I can ask unanimous

consent to set aside the pending amendment in order to call up amendment No. 4039.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Arizona [Mr. MCCAIN] proposes an amendment numbered 4039 to amendment No. 3896.

Mr. MCCAIN. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To extend and expand eligibility for the Veterans Choice Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs and to establish consistent criteria and standards relating to the use of amounts under the Medical Community Care account of the Department of Veterans Affairs)

At the end of title II of division B, add the following:

EXTENSION AND EXPANSION OF VETERANS CHOICE PROGRAM

SEC. 251. (a) EXTENSION.—The Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (Public Law 113–146; 38 U.S.C. 1701 note) is amended—

(1) in section 101(p)(2), by striking ''3 years'' and inserting ''6 years''; and

(2) in section 802(d)(1), by striking ''$10,000,000,000'' and inserting ''$17,500,000,000''.

(b) EXPANSION OF ELIGIBILITY.—Subsection (b)(2) of section 101 of such Act is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (C)(ii), by striking ''; or'' and inserting a semicolon;

(2) in subparagraph (D)(ii)(II)(dd), by striking the period at the end and inserting ''; or''; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(E) has received health services under the pilot program under section 403 of the Veterans' Mental Health and Other Care Improvements Act of 2008 (Public Law 110–387; 38 U.S.C. 1703 note) and resides in a location described in section (b)(2) of such section.''.

(c) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—(1) Subsection (g)(3) of such section is amended by striking ''or (D)'' and inserting ''(D), or (E)''.

(2) Subsection (q)(2)(A) of such section is amended—

(A) in clause (iii), by striking ''; and'' and inserting a semicolon;

(B) in clause (iv), by striking the period at the end and inserting ''; and''; and

(C) by adding at the end the following new clause:

''(v) eligible veterans described in subsection (b)(2)(E).''.

(d) EMERGENCY REQUIREMENT.—The amounts made available under the amendments made by subsection (a) are designated by the Congress as an emergency requirement pursuant to section 251(b)(2)(A)(i) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (2 U.S.C. 901(b)(2)(A)(i)).

(e) QUARTERLY REPORT.—Not less frequently than quarterly until all amounts deposited in the Veterans Choice Fund under section 802 of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (Public Law 113–146; 38 U.S.C. 1701 note) are exhausted, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Appropriations and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Appropriations and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives an update on the expenditures made from such Fund to carry out section 101 of such Act during the quarter covered by the report.

ESTABLISHMENT OF CRITERIA FOR PROVISION OF SERVICES UNDER MEDICAL COMMUNITY CARE ACCOUNT

SEC. 252. In using amounts made available in this title for the Medical Community Care account of the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish consistent criteria and standards—

(1) for purposes of determining eligibility of non-Department health care providers to provide health care under the laws administered by the Secretary, including standards relating to education, certification, licensure, training, and employment history; and

(2) for the reimbursement of such health care providers for care or services provided under the laws administered by the Secretary, which to the extent practicable shall—

(A) use rates for reimbursement that are not more than the rates paid by the United States to a provider of services (as defined in section 1861(u) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395x(u))) under the Medicare program under title XVIII of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395 et seq.) for the same care or services;

(B) incorporate the use of value-based reimbursement models to promote the provision of high-quality care to improve health outcomes and the experience of care for veterans; and

(C) be consistent with prompt payment standards required of Federal agencies under chapter 39 of title 31, United States Code.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Arizona for working with us on this very important issue of making sure that veterans in a number of our States are able to get quality care in a location that is convenient to them, and I appreciate his partnering with me and Senator SCHUMER and others on this issue.

Mr. President, I was going to rise earlier when the Senator from Missouri spoke to talk about the question around infrastructure investment. This is infrastructure investment week, and stakeholders from across the country are here to continue to raise the question that we need to do more to rebuild our Nation's crumbling infrastructure. We all know that recently we passed a 5-year highway bill, and I supported it. The FAST Act—as it was called—was a good bill, but it included only modest increases in funding. Whether we look at our region's Metro or the Memorial Bridge that many of us travel on a regular basis or airports or water systems all over the country, it is clear that we need to look at additional ways to invest in our Nation's infrastructure.

Senator BLUNT and I have filed an amendment to the current Transportation appropriations bill that we had before us that would establish a National Infrastructure Financing Authority. The BRIDGE Act that is cosponsored by six Republicans and six Democrats is bringing about a new tool to make innovative ways to finance projects. I believe my friend, the Senator from Connecticut, is a supporter of this type of approach.

Our bipartisan BRIDGE Act creates a $10 billion government loan fund—a loan fund that will repay. It doesn't add a single dime to the Federal deficit. All experts say this modest initial investment ultimately could unlock up to $300 billion in private sector capital to invest in our Nation's infrastructure.

Let's be honest. We all know why we are here. The funding mechanisms that our transportation system relies on are simply unsustainable. We spend more money each year just in maintaining our highway trust fund and highway system than our highway trust fund brings in, yet our needs continue to grow.

The American Society of Civil Engineers recently gave the United States a D-plus grade on infrastructure. I don't know about my friend, the Senator from New York, but I am sure that he often preferred grades better than D-plus when he was a student.

If we look over recent times, this is not a Democrat or Republican issue; this is a problem that has been gnawing at this country for some time. There has been a 50-percent decrease in infrastructure investment as a percentage of our GDP since the 1970s. The United States spends less than 2 percent of our gross domestic product on infrastructure.

According to the American Society of Civil Engineers, underinvestment in our national infrastructure will cost each American family $3,400 a year. That is wasted time. That is a city in gridlock. That is not being able to get to work and not being able to be with one's family. The most significant gap, of course, is not only in water but, obviously, in transportation, where it has been estimated that an additional $1 trillion is needed across the network—including roads, bridges, rail—during the next decade. Again, I point to many of the Members in this body and so many of the folks who work for us simply traveling across the Memorial Bridge, one of our Nation's icons, which is basically in a crumbling state.

Meanwhile, if we look at nations around the world in terms of what they are doing—remember the United States is under 2 percent of GDP investment and infrastructure—Europe and India spend about 5 percent of their GDP on an annual basis in infrastructure. China spends nearly 9 percent. Australia already has a national infrastructure financing authority. China also has a national infrastructure funding authority that is building out national high-speed rail networks.

Think about it. For most of the 20th century, it was American infrastructure that led to America's economic dominance in the 20th century. Today, whether that is flying into our airports, looking at our rail system, or looking at our crumbling roads and systems, in many ways, America's infrastructure is a disgrace and actually retards economic growth.

As we tighten our belts at the State level—and I say that as a former Governor—and at the Federal level, we

need to do everything we can to invest in infrastructure as a means of not only providing jobs but helping the flow of goods and people and services to stay competitive in the global economy.

Despite the recent passage of the so-called FAST Act, only 6 percent of infrastructure funding in the United States is from the private sector. With over $2.2 trillion sitting on private ledgers looking for a place to invest, that meager 6-percent figure, in terms of private sector investment in infrastructure, could be dramatically increased.

The BRIDGE Act, the bill I am working on with Senator BLUNT, establishes such an authority. It complements existing Federal programs scattered across several ages. It allows us to consolidate the expertise it takes to go against Wall Street in putting together infrastructure financing programs.

This new authority could provide an important new tool for State and local governments to partner with the private sector to invest in our Nation's infrastructure.

Let me be clear. Infrastructure financing alone isn't a silver bullet. If you finance, you have to pay those dollars back. But when we are looking at interest rates at record lows, failure to take advantage of accessing these private markets with interest rates at these low levels is the equivalent of political malfeasance. In terms of the BRIDGE Act, this program would complement existing programs such as TIFIA and WIFIA, which already provide good work.

My hope is that joining with Senator BLUNT and 12 of our colleagues—equal numbers of Democrats and Republicans—if not on this bill, we will act on the BRIDGE Act and provide this critically important needed infrastructure tool to our tool kit to make sure that our roads, bridges, airports, water and sewer systems are functioning and allow America to compete in the 21st century economy.

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

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

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I will be very brief. A number of us have clinics that serve our veterans population. I have one in Rochester. The Senator from Virginia has one in Hampton Roads, and there are others on both sides of the aisle where there is a potential problem because of the way CBO scored it. We have agreed that, rather than piggyback on the McCain amendment, we would figure out a bipartisan way to solve this problem in the NDAA bill. I very much appreciate the commitment of my friend from Arizona to help us solve that problem.

I know we will have the complete cooperation of our ranking member, Senator REED, and I look forward to trying to solve the problem for the benefit of veterans throughout the country who don't get the services they need, and we can move forward at least in 17 areas where they will.

I yield the floor.

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

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, as the ranking member of the VA Committee, I want to join my colleague from New York, and having worked with Senator MCCAIN on this amendment, I am very pleased that the McCain-Blumenthal amendment has been made pending and that we have an agreement to authorize those VA leases that were requested over the last fiscal year when we turned to the National Defense Authorization Act.

I want to stress that these leases have been requested over the last several fiscal years, and this agreement embodies a situation that has to be addressed. I thank my colleague from Arizona for working with me on the amendment and now being so understanding on these requests, at least in committing to make sure that we address this very strongly felt need.

I also want to thank my colleague from Virginia for his work on this issue and for his work on the infrastructure spending measure that he has offered and that I have supported for years. I hope that we can get it done because the infrastructure of our Nation, as well as that of my State, requires that we commit the money as an investment. It is not funding. It is not spending. It is an investment in our future. We can't have a 21st century economy unless we have a 21st century infrastructure—roads, bridges, rail, airports. I am pleased and proud to join him in this effort.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

AMENDMENT NO. 3897

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, in a piece of legislation of this size, this scope, and this magnitude, there is always much to praise. Unfortunately, from time to time there is much to criticize.

Specifically, I rise today to try to correct one major mistake in this bill. As currently written, it permits the Department of Housing and Urban Development to proceed to the implementation of its radical new regulation, the insultingly misnamed affirmatively furthering fair housing rule, or AFFH.

Proponents of AFFH, including President Obama, claim that AFFH fulfills the original purpose and promise of the Fair Housing Act of 1968. The truth is, HUD's new housing rule isn't the fulfillment but a betrayal of the Fair Housing Act of 1968. The purpose of the Fair Housing Act was to protect the God-given right of individuals and families, regardless of their skin color or their ethnicity, to buy and rent homes where they please. By contrast, the explicit purpose of HUD's new rule is to empower Federal bureaucrats to dictate where a community's low-income residents will live. This is not what progress looks like.

AFFH not only grants unprecedented new powers to HUD—powers that were not contemplated and have no legitimate basis in the Fair Housing Act of 1968—but it will ultimately hurt the very people it purports to help—public housing residents, especially African-American public housing residents who too often find themselves trapped in dysfunctional, broken neighborhoods.

To make matters worse, this new rule will end America's unique and uniquely successful commitment to localism and diversity and make neighborhood-level construction decisions subject to the whims of future Presidents. If this past year has not yet done enough to give you pause about handing over such power to the executive branch, then you are not paying close enough attention.

I am offering an amendment today, No. 3897, that would prohibit HUD from using Federal taxpayer money to carry out the affirmatively furthering fair housing rule. The House of Representatives has already passed this amendment twice and will likely do so again in the near future. We should follow the lead of the House of Representatives in this regard.

Here is how the rule works. AFFH requires cities and towns across the country to audit their own local housing policies under close supervision by HUD regulators who may have never lived anywhere near the city, town, or municipality in question. If any aspect of a community's housing and demographic patterns fails to meet HUD bureaucrats' expansive definition of ''fair housing,'' the local government must submit a plan to reorganize the community's housing practices according to the preferences and priorities set not by the community in question but by the bureaucrats—the bureaucrats in Washington, possibly hundreds or even thousands of miles away.

Critics of AFFH often say and I have said myself that this rule turns HUD into a sort of national zoning board with the power to unilaterally rewrite local zoning laws and land use regulations in every city and town in America. But that is not quite how the rule works, and that is why Senator COLLINS' amendment would not do anything to prevent the implementation of the very things we worry about with AFFH. In the 10 months since the rule was finalized, it has become clear that the mechanics of AFFH are much more underhanded and subversive than critics have often claimed. Under the new rule, HUD doesn't replace local housing authorities, it conscripts them into its service. This gets to the very heart of the difference between my amendment and the amendment offered by my distinguished colleague, the senior Senator from Maine, Ms. COLLINS.

The danger of AFFH is not that HUD will direct local governments and public housing authorities to make specific changes to their zoning policies; it will just threaten them by tying obedience to Federal community development block grants. Obedience to the commands of Federal regulators will be a conditional precedent of sorts to the ongoing receipt of Federal funds under the CDBG Program.

CDBG is a Federal grant program controlled by HUD, one that allocates some $3 billion per year to local governments to help them address a variety of community development needs, including providing adequate and affordable public housing for their community. Traditionally, local officials have been more or less free to use their CDBG funds according to their own community's unique needs and specific priorities, but under AFFH, HUD officials will withhold local government CDBG funds unless that local government adopts HUD's preferred housing policies.

Predictably, proponents of the rule claim this will be a collaborative process, with local government officials in the driver's seat while the bureaucrats at HUD merely provide support and guidance, but the 10-month track record of AFFH suggests that precisely the opposite will be true. In fact, I have already heard from the housing authority of Salt Lake County, predicting that the cost of complying with AFFH will stretch their already thin resources, add hundreds of hours of bureaucratic paperwork to their workloads, and eliminate their autonomy to determine the best ways to provide adequate, low-cost housing to their community.

The problem with HUD's new rule has nothing to do with the stated intentions behind it. In a press release announcing the finalization of AFFH, HUD Secretary Julian Castro said: ''Unfortunately, too many Americans find their dreams limited by where they come from, and a ZIP code should never determine a child's future.'' I completely agree. There is no disputing that the neighborhood in which a child grows up might affect his educational, social, and professional outcomes in the future. Nor is there any disagreement that far too many children today are raised in dysfunctional neighborhoods because it is the only place their parents can find affordable housing. The lack of affordable housing is not a new problem in America—just ask anyone who has ever had to pay rent in one of the major metropolitan areas controlled by the Democratic Party—but neither is the solution. The best way to make housing more affordable is to allow more housing to be built, and the best way to help low-income citizens find fair and affordable housing is to empower them to live in a neighborhood that meets their needs.

The history of Chicago is instructive here. In the 2000s, the Chicago city government demolished many of its public housing facilities without any kind of a plan to replace them. Those with the resources and wherewithal to choose where to live moved to places where housing was cheap and economic opportunity was plentiful, but the less fortunate were relocated to more remote, less prosperous towns, towns like Dubuque, IA, at the behest of—who else?—the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

In 2008 the city of Dubuque was struggling to meet the needs of its own public housing residents. Yet in stepped the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development declaring that the city's housing policies would fail to meet the agency's fair housing standards and that therefore the city would be ineligible to receive Federal funding from HUD unless the local government actively recruited Section 8 voucher holders from Chicago. Unwilling to lose access to Federal funding on which the city had come to rely, the small Iowa town acquiesced to HUD's demands—aggressive and unacceptable as they were. This imposed an enormous administrative burden on the city's resource-strapped housing agencies, but HUD's real victims were Chicago's public housing residents who were forcibly displaced to an unknown town 200 miles from the city they used to call home. Unless we pass this amendment to defund the disastrously misguided AFFH rule, this is what the future of public housing in America will look like.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this amendment and reaffirming that low-income families are not statistics to be managed by distant bureaucrats; they are human beings—our neighbors in need who deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.

I thank the Presiding Officer, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I listened very carefully to the presentation made by my colleague from Utah, Senator LEE, and I wish to respond to the concerns he raised. Indeed, if the picture he drew were accurate, I might be a supporter rather than an opponent of his amendment.

First, let me be clear that there is nothing in our bill that authorizes this rule. This rule was issued pursuant to HUD's normal regulatory authority in response to a report, which I will discuss in a moment, that was issued by the GAO, the Government Accountability Office.

The amendment offered by Senator LEE would prohibit funding for HUD's rule that is known as the affirmatively furthering fair housing rule. It was finalized in July of last year, but it is based on a requirement from the landmark civil rights-era law, the 1968 Fair Housing Act. That law mandates that HUD ensure that recipients of HUD funding not only prevent discrimination but also act to further the goals of fair housing that are outlined in this landmark law. In fact, repeatedly over the years, Congress has reinforced this goal. As recently as 1998, the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act required HUD program recipients to affirmatively further fair housing.

When we talk about fair housing, it is important that we remember we are talking about not only prohibiting discrimination based on race but also discrimination based on disabilities, ethnic origin, and even against families with children. In fact, in fiscal year 2015, 56 percent of all reported complaints of housing discrimination were initiated by people with disabilities, and that is why so many organizations that are representing our disabled citizens are so strongly opposed and concerned about Senator LEE's amendment.

For example, the Paralyzed Veterans of America, an organization that was founded by servicemembers who returned home after World War II with spinal cord injury, believes that HUD's rule will help curb discrimination against people with disabilities, including our veterans and our seniors. According to the Paralyzed Veterans of America, the alarming trend of more than 50 percent of complaints about housing discrimination being initiated by individuals with disabilities will affect Americans returning from conflicts abroad, as well as a growing percentage of our seniors who are suffering from or living with disabilities. The organization also believes that HUD's rule will help local governments identify strategies and solutions to expand accessible and supportive housing choices for our seniors and our veterans.

I wish everyone had heard Senator ISAKSON's eloquent speech on the floor this afternoon when he talked about a wonderful, inclusive mixed-income housing development in Atlanta that has included a charter school and a Y. The children's test scores have gone up and crime has decreased because of the model that was adopted for this particular development.

Earlier I mentioned that it is important to know that HUD issued this new rule in response to a specific 2010 GAO report.

Members in this Chamber are always looking to GAO for information, advice, and recommendations on how we can improve the effectiveness and the efficiency of Federal programs to make sure they are fulfilling the mandates we have written and to make sure they are serving the people they are intended to serve in the manner Congress intended.

GAO took a look at the fair housing requirements and particularly the requirement in the Fair Housing Act that recipients of HUD's grants were to affirmatively advance fair housing. It was very critical of the haphazard nature of HUD's oversight and the fact that communities didn't know whether they were in compliance. There was

also a lack of tools, of community involvement, and of assessments to make sure those goals were being met.

Once HUD issued its final rule, the GAO was satisfied and closed out its recommendations. As the Presiding Officer is well aware, there are times when Federal agencies never implement GAO's recommendations, or take years to do so, and we in the Senate have to hammer the agencies over and over again on why they didn't implement GAO's recommendations. Well, in this case, HUD did so.

So not only was the origin of the rule the GAO report but also communities were seeking better tools and more guidance. Senator KAINE, a former mayor of Richmond and a former Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, was eloquent in describing the fact that he welcomed these rules because it was so hard when he was the mayor to know exactly how to accomplish the goal of affirmatively advancing fair housing. What exactly did that mean to HUD?

Indeed, there is an excellent article that appeared in The Hill today by the director of the PolicyLink Center for Infrastructure Equity and the co-director of the Promise Neighborhoods Institute that talked about the history of this rule. In particular—and I want to quote—the authors say:

> The opposition ignores the fact that the rule was developed in response to city- and state-level requests for better tools and improved guidance; that it involved significant input from local-level innovators and experimenters; and that it was piloted in 74 regions nationwide over five years in the Sustainable Communities Initiative through a tool called the fair housing and equity assessment.

It lists cities across the country, including Salt Lake City, ironically; Denver, St. Paul, and Dallas, which have all invested in affordable housing, in transit-oriented developments to ensure that residents would have access to affordable transit and housing choices, just as examples.

So the idea that this rule came out of thin air is just not accurate. It is based on a law that has been on the books for decades—a law that is a landmark civil rights-era law—the 1968 Fair Housing Act. It is based on a GAO report in 2010 which said HUD wasn't doing a good job. It is based on requests from States and communities for more tools and more guidance from HUD.

So this rule was not developed by our committee. It was not authorized by our committee. It comes from the 1968 law which, as I said, has been reaffirmed in at least three subsequent laws that this body has passed. It comes from a GAO report, and it involved a lot of input.

Now, according to Senator LEE, and we heard him speak about it today, he fears HUD is going to be turned into—I believe he called it a national zoning authority for every neighborhood, and Federal bureaucrats thousands of miles away in Washington will be in charge of our local communities.

First, let me say I do not believe that to be the case, and I believe it is a misreading of the guidance. However, I would never want that either. That is why, along with my colleagues Senator JACK REED and Senator THAD COCHRAN, we have introduced an amendment to ensure that HUD cannot do that, to prohibit HUD from being involved in local zoning decisions so the recipients of Federal dollars will continue to make their own local decisions to address the Federal requirements.

Because there has been so much misrepresentation about our amendment, let me read to my colleagues exactly what it says. It couldn't be more clear: None—none—of the funds made available by this act may be used by the Department of Housing and Urban Development to ''direct a grantee to undertake specific change to existing zoning laws as part of carrying out'' the final rule entitled ''affirmatively furthering fair housing.''

I don't know how the amendment could be any clearer than that. We have made sure the worst fear, the worst scenario the sponsor of this amendment has conjured up, cannot occur if our amendment passes.

On the other hand, I want to point out what Senator LEE's amendment would do. It would prevent HUD from providing the necessary technical assistance, guidance, and help that localities have continuously asked HUD to provide to ensure that they don't get sued, that they are not susceptible to costly and unnecessary fair housing litigation brought by individuals or outside groups. They want HUD's help, but under the Lee amendment no funding could be used to give them that kind of help. I don't see how that makes sense. That is how broadly written his amendment is.

I want to correct something else that was said. Senator LEE talked about the enormous burden this rule will impose on the recipients of HUD funds. To be clear, the rule requires the recipients to complete the fair housing analysis only once every 5 years—once every 5 years—similar to all other HUD requirements in their consolidated plans. So that argument, in my judgment, also falls.

Let me say that we are all aware of concerns, despite the tremendous progress that has been made in this country, about the lack of progress in providing housing opportunities to all Americans. That is why in our bill we try to deal with homeless veterans—we do deal with homeless veterans. We put in $57 million for additional vouchers for homeless veterans, even though the administration wanted to eliminate that important program. We are continuing to work on that.

Finally, let me respond to a specific case that Senator LEE mentioned involving Chicago and Dubuque. To begin with, it is simply a mistake in a statement to say that Chicago residents were ''forced to relocate to Dubuque.'' That is just not accurate. It is true that this is a Federal voucher program and, as Republicans, we usually like vouchers because we want Americans to have choices about where they live. So the section 8 program, for example, which is a voucher-based program, doesn't say that you can only use it in Portland, ME, or Providence, RI, or Salt Lake City, UT, or Chicago, IL. It is a program that allows people to live where they want to live, but it is a program with a long waiting list in most cities. Nothing—also, despite what has been written—nothing in the rule requires that Dubuque be considered part of Chicago. That is not a statement that the sponsor of the amendment made today, but it is a statement that has been circulated by some outside groups and it is simply ridiculous. It is absolutely absurd.

The concerns raised with Dubuque are related to a settlement that the city reached with HUD in 2013, which was well before this rule was finalized. The agreement was the result of a compliance review under the Civil Rights Act—title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964—which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in programs receiving assistance. Sadly, the city of Dubuque was found to not be in compliance with the Civil Rights Act because the city was purging and closing wait lists for the section 8 voucher program and creating residency requirements that are not allowed. Indeed, it is sad to say, in the letter of finding, HUD wrote: ''The City of Dubuque knew its actions would limit or deny the participation of African Americans in its Section 8 program.'' I would hope we could all agree—I am sure we could all agree—that is just wrong.

So the Dubuque case, rather than being an example of the bizarre consequences of this rule, as has been portrayed, is in fact yet another reminder that even in this day and age there continue to be some clear violations of the Fair Housing Act.

I hope my colleagues will join me in voting against Senator LEE's amendment. I am sure he is well-intentioned, but the effects of this amendment would be very harmful to the goals we all share of fair housing in America.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I rise to support my colleague, the chairman of the subcommittee, Senator COLLINS of Maine, in opposition to the amendment offered by the Senator from Utah. This amendment would prohibit HUD from implementing or enforcing its Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing regulations.

I think it is important to remind everyone of the reasoning for and history behind these regulations. The Fair Housing Act of 1968 was enacted because banks, landlords, and developers were excluding people from buying or renting in certain neighborhoods based on race. Under the Fair Housing Act, communities are required to take steps to further fair housing in order to prevent discrimination and segregation.

I think we have come a long way since 1968, and I don't think anyone is arguing the premise, purpose, or beneficial aspects of the Fair Housing Act. The law is based on trying to ensure that Americans have fair access to housing, no matter their race, physical ability, family status, or religion.

People should be able to live according to their own choice and resources. I hope that we can all agree that people should not be turned away from a home or neighborhood because of their religion, family status, disability, or race. Frankly, that was the aspiration in 1968 and still, too often, remains an aspiration. HUD is trying to give local communities the tools and resources needed to live up to the legislative mandate that we imposed and continue to impose.

As the chairman said so well, these regulations don't emanate from some person in a room thinking a great thought. In 2010, the Government Accountability Office did an audit to assess compliance with the Fair Housing Act. That is the GAO's job. That office checks whether Federal agencies are doing what we—the Congress—tell them to do. GAO found that many HUD grantees did not analyze impediments to fair housing—that we were giving money to organizations throughout this country and that they were not even making attempts to analyze the impediments that existed to fair housing.

GAO also found that those organizations that did analyze impediments to fair housing often failed to establish any goals or objectives to address them. The organizations just found them and did not act. That is not what the Fair Housing Act requires.

GAO also found that HUD was unable to determine if a community was actually meeting its obligations under the Fair Housing Act. HUD simply did not know whether the requirements of the Fair Housing Act were being implemented at the local level.

HUD is often criticized for not effectively responding to GAO, but here they responded. HUD developed regulations that insist that grantees conduct a fair housing analysis and submit that assessment to HUD for review.

As a result of this proposed regulation, HUD went through a 2-year rulemaking process. This was not some whimsical spur-of-the-moment decision or press release to say: Let's do this.

The process was 2 years long, fully open to public hearing, comment and review, and susceptible to challenge in court if it did not measure up to the Administrative Procedure Act or the Fair Housing Act. This process has resulted in regulations that will actually carry out the intent of the Congress.

To reinforce and clarify what the chairman has said, these regulations do not change existing law and do not in any way dictate local zoning decisions. In fact, these regulations simplify the responsibility of grantees to comply with the Fair Housing Act because they give grantees the data and tools to help communities comply with the law.

These regulations do not require grantees to gather new data because HUD provides the data to them. To help communities comply with the Fair Housing Act, HUD is working closely with grantees, providing technical assistance, and holding training sessions across the country. This is a collaborative effort. It is an effort that does not dictate a national outcome. HUD is helping localities, working with their particular situation, to develop a response to the legislative requirements that we have been emphatically insisting upon since 1968.

We are also working, as we should, to ensure that this process is continually evaluated by HUD, and streamlined and simplified—particularly, when it comes to dealing with small communities that cannot bear the administrative overhead that some larger cities might be able to bear. HUD is providing assistance to ensure that these grantees are complying with the Fair Housing Act.

We all understand—and this principle applies not just to HUD programs, but every program—that grantees have an obligation to use Federal resources responsibly and consistently with legal requirements. The Fair Housing Act requires that access to housing not be denied because of race, disability, or other protected category. This is what we should expect for all recipients of Federal support—that they follow the law.

This improved process, in my view, protects communities and ensures that they still have a choice of how they meet their obligations under the Fair Housing Act. There is nothing in these regulations that undermines the ability of a local community to determine these solutions, but these communities must recognize their responsibilities. Their solutions are ones that will be organic to the community—what works for them, given the objective of ensuring that there are no artificial impediments to access housing.

It is also important to note that, if HUD is prevented from implementing these regulations, there is no change to the obligations that these communities have under the Fair Housing Act. This law has been in place for 48 years. Those requirements will still remain in place and will not only be opportunities, but also obligations to take action in certain cases.

Senator KAINE was on the floor this morning stating that, as a young lawyer in Richmond, VA, he became an advocate for fair housing because people came to him with complaints, and he took those complaints to court. What we are trying to do, interestingly enough, is to avoid all of that by having a process where the impediments have been removed by a local solution.

The amendment that Senator LEE proposes would prevent HUD from satisfying these GAO recommendations to provide guidance, clarity, and support for these grantees. This amendment makes grantees liable for compliance without the tools and data needed to comply. Ironically, it probably puts grantees in a worse position.

So I join the chairman and urge all of my colleagues to reject this amendment.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I want to express my strong support for the 2017 Transportation and Housing and Urban Development appropriations bill. Senator COLLINS and Senator REED deserve tremendous credit for their leadership on this bipartisan bill.

Congress has the basic responsibility to determine how we spend hard-earned taxpayer dollars. It is a responsibility that my colleagues and I on the Appropriations Committee take very seriously. Debating and passing these annual bills provides accountability. It is an important part of setting priorities, making choices, and reducing waste.

Last week, the Senate passed an energy and water appropriations bill crafted by Senators ALEXANDER and FEINSTEIN. While I don't serve on their subcommittee, I was very proud to support their bill, and I congratulate them on moving forward and making the process work.

The 2017 Transportation and HUD appropriations bill is the latest example of the Senate's return to regular order. This process enables all Senators to play an active role in the legislative process and to address concerns that are important to their States. This bill is crafted with bipartisan support, and it helps to drive the growth of our Nation. Senators COLLINS and REED have put in a lot of work to prepare this bill for consideration, as have both of their staffs. The discretionary spending in this bill is within the budget caps, and it reflects a responsible approach. The bill strengthens our country's infrastructure and transportation system.

This week is recognized as Infrastructure Week, and I have heard from several Arkansans that this must remain a priority. Our citizens have opportunities, and our Nation is a powerful economic force, thanks in part to our roads and bridges, airports, waterways, and related structures. We need to maintain our roads because they provide a reliable way to move goods and services around the country and, with the rest of our infrastructure, to countries around the world. These investments lead to job creation and greatly benefit our economy.

The bill provides critical funding to modernize air traffic control. While our current system is second to none in safety, the FAA must accelerate its progress toward operating a more efficient system. A modern air traffic control system will be more convenient for travelers, it will save money, and it will clean the environment by reducing the amount of fuel used by aircraft.

The bill provides critical funding to improve air traffic certification services. These improvements can help aircraft manufacturers, including those in Arkansas, that are fighting to win in a competitive global market.

The bill provides critical highway funding that is consistent with the long-term highway bill we passed last year under the leadership of Senators INHOFE and BOXER. I am pleased that this bill includes a provision I offered to empower the State to designate a portion of Highway 67 in Arkansas, from North Little Rock to Walnut Ridge, as ''Future I–57.'' Arkansas has invested hundreds of millions of dollars to build an interstate-quality road, and we are now calling it what it is. The presence of an official interstate highway is one of the initial key factors that developers consider when determining where to make major investments such as building new factories.

Community leaders along this stretch of road shared their excitement about the future designation. Buck Layne, executive director for the Searcy Regional Chamber of Commerce, says this will improve the transportation network and expand economic development opportunities.

Jon Chadwell, executive director for the Newport Economic Development Commission, says this will open up opportunities to Arkansas business and give companies an even greater access to national and global markets.

Walnut Ridge mayor Charles Snapp says this designation will open a lot of doors, and Walnut Ridge aldermen voted this week to support this designation.

Resolutions of support for the I–57 designation have been passed by the Newport Economic Development Commission, as well as the chambers of commerce in Bald Knob, Cabot, Jacksonville, Lawrence County, Newport, Sherwood, and Searcy. Other expressions of support will be received in communities throughout the central Arkansas and northeast Arkansas regions.

This designation is an important step to make Arkansas a better connected State that is open for business. This bill also sets high priorities and provides critical funding through programs like community development block grants. These programs work because they allow decisions to be made at the local community level.

I appreciate the efforts to make sure rural States like Arkansas are not left behind by housing and development programs.

I compliment the chair and ranking member on working to address Member priorities under these programs.

We are also jointly considering the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs bill. Senators KIRK and TESTER have worked very hard to put together a good package for the Senate to debate. Their bill funds the VA at record levels and invests in priorities such as veterans health care, benefit claims processing, the Board of Veterans' Appeals, and the VA inspector general, as well as prosthetic research. It includes funding for projects to ensure military readiness and improve the quality of life for our military families.

I grew up in a military family, and I have been honored to serve on the Veterans' Affairs Committee since my first day in the House of Representatives. The needs of veterans are very important to me, and I am proud to support the work that Senator KIRK and Senator TESTER have done to provide funding for 2017. These are funding and policy priorities for both sides of the aisle.

I encourage my colleagues to support this legislation because it creates an environment that helps grow our economy, reins in spending, and takes care of our veterans.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I would like to recognize the work of the chairman and ranking member on the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Subcommittee for their good work on this very important appropriations bill.

I recognize that, while we haven't had a multiple series of votes on amendments on this bill, I know the floor managers have been working aggressively to process amendments and make this appropriations bill—not only the T-HUD bill but also the MILCON bill—a good appropriations measure. So I thank my colleagues for their respective efforts, and I am pleased to see us processing appropriations bills here on the Senate floor.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Mr. President, I wish to take a few minutes this evening to talk about the Affordable Care Act and some of the impacts that we are seeing in my State of Alaska. We referred to this as the ACA, the Affordable Care Act, but most of the folks, when I talk to them back home, call it the ''un-Affordable Care Act'' because we are not seeing how it is making health care insurance—any kind of care—more affordable.

Last year, nationally, we saw a dozen co-ops fail that were created by the ACA, which literally threw people into turmoil, leaving in question if they had any insurance at all.

UnitedHealth, one of the largest providers in the country, has been forced off the exchanges in numerous States.

Just last week we had the news back home that Moda Health was going to be withdrawing from the Alaska market in 2017. What that means is that we will be a State with only one option in the individual market next year. So what that means for the some 14,000 Alaskans who are currently on a Moda plan is that they are going to be forced to change insurers next year. But I guess it is an easy choice when you only have a choice of one on the individual market there.

Then, of course, just last week we saw signs that the administration's payments of the cost-share reduction were unconstitutional. So we can only assume that is going to further exacerbate problems.

This week in the Wall Street Journal, there was an article about the ever-shrinking market for rural areas. The article mentioned a small business owner in Kodiak, AK, a bookkeeper, who is worrying about what the price of premiums will be when you are left with only one option. She made this statement:

> It's going to be a monopoly, basically; ''here's the price, take it or leave it.''

That is what happens when you have just one.

As the market continues to fail in other States, we are seeing other States lose their options as well. Alabama and Wyoming are also now left with only one choice. More States may be facing this in the near future.

The Wall Street Journal article goes on to point out that the ''patchwork of coverage reflects continued instability in the individual market as companies shift their geographic footprints to avoid areas that have turned out to generate steep losses and focus on places that they believe that they can get their ACA business into the black.''

So what that means for States like Alaska that are very rural and that have some of the highest health care costs in the Nation: We are just not attractive enough to foster competition. At the end of the day, who suffers? It is the Alaskans. It is those who are seeking the care.

The administration says the market just needs to ''stabilize and evolve,'' but what about this bookkeeper in Kodiak? What about the educators out there? What about parents who are left wondering: What do we do in the meantime?

It used to be that the Federal Government broke up monopolies and worked to foster competition in order to benefit consumers, but now what we are seeing at least playing out in my State is, through bad law and failed policies, we see that same government creating de facto monopolies in the individual marketplace.

I find it deeply troubling that as these health insurance options continue to shrink, any hope of curbing the rapid increase of premium rates also disappears. We are constantly asked by our constituents: Are my premiums going to continue to increase? We are talking about monthly premiums in the State of Alaska amounting to $3,000 a month for a family. Think about that. That is not affordable in anybody's book. It is not beyond the realm of possibility given what we have already seen. Last year in Alaska, between Moda and Premera, the two that are covering on the individual market, the increases were over 30 percent, somewhere between 32 and 35 percent increases over the previous year.

I have been on the floor, and I have shared stories of hard-working Alaskans who are paying a couple of thousand dollars a month for the cheapest bronze plan that is available on the exchange. I have spoken about how the ACA has been called the single greatest threat to quality public education. The reason for that is our school districts are being faced with hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines under the Cadillac test when it is imposed. I have relayed stories from employers who are saying: I can't afford to expand my business. I won't expand my business because of the employer mandate—harming not only the businesses but the workers themselves.

The bottom line, and I hear it from all corners of the State, is that the ACA is not working for us in Alaska.

I had a group of Realtors from around the State visit me in my office here last week. One woman in the group said that she was paying $2,500 a month. She has a family of four. She has a $6,000 deductible for her coverage. She said: You know, it is really hard for us to keep making these payments every month. They don't qualify for the subsidy.

I talked to another young family from Eagle River who was forced to switch from Premera to Moda after the ACA passed because the premium increases were not sustainable, and even then, when they switched, they were paying $1,200 a month with a $10,000 deductible. So what happens when you have a deductible like that? You put off that health care.

But think about it. It just makes it so hard to run a business. It makes it so hard to pay for your day-to-day experiences.

Worse yet, for that family from Eagle River, they went from Premera to Moda because their premiums were too high. Now Moda is leaving, so they have to go back to the insurer that was too high before. This family is scrambling. What are they going do? How are they going to be able to afford insurance in the future?

As the costs continue to rise, these small businesses are wondering: How long do we keep our doors open if these costs continue at these rates?

In Anchorage, a couple who has Moda has been paying $2,500 a month, with a $10,000 deductible—an increase of $1,000 a month over their premiums for last year. Now they are going to be switching to the only company on the individual market in 2017. They are going to see yet another increase.

A woman in Anchorage whom we talked to has watched year after year as her rates increased from $500 a month to nearly $2,000 a month. She is basically holding her breath for what the 2017 premiums rates will hold. We don't know yet in Alaska. Because of the announcement from Moda, we are not sure what the increase will be coming from the other insurer.

More and more, I am hearing from folks who say that they feel it is just cheaper to simply not buy insurance, to pay the tax penalty and then hope and pray that nobody in the family gets sick. Hoping to not get sick is not a health plan. As more and more Alaskans are dropping out, costs for those who stay in go up, driving more to drop out, and you have this death spiral within the system.

The deeper we get into life under the ACA, the deeper Alaskans fall into a hole. The ACA has failed the people of our State. This one-size-fits-all approach rarely works for a State as diverse as Alaska. It certainly has not worked in the realm of health insurance.

This is not the only place where we are seeing the law failing. There is more that needs to be done to make the Affordable Care Act work for rural parts of the country that have specialized needs thanks to higher medical costs, lack of access, and now fewer insurance options.

We in Congress need to take a serious look at the trends we have seen and work on solutions that will provide the flexibility that is needed for the States to make a difference when it comes to access to affordable care.

I have consistently supported full repeal of the ACA. I voted to do so on several occasions now. But I have also recognized that it was going to be difficult, if not impossible, in this administration to do so. But I have supported steps that will reduce the burdens of the ACA and I think work to address some of the most harmful provisions in the law. One example is full repeal of the Cadillac tax I just mentioned. The Cadillac tax will only worsen conditions in Alaska, with nearly 62 percent of customers who will be facing that tax if the Cadillac tax were to be implemented. Again, I repeat, in our State, not only are our health care costs so high, but our insurance costs are so high.

Whether you are in what would be considered a Cadillac plan because of the benefits or it is just because you are paying so much for it, it is assumed that those benefits are good. Sixty-two percent of the folks in Alaska would be impacted by this tax. It is a prime example of the ACA hurting small, rural States, because so many of us have more expensive health care due to the remoteness and due to our lower population size. Then those States are forced to take money away from things, like our school districts, where they are trying to put the money into public education, into other services, to pay for the cost. So our State suffers, boroughs suffer, our schools suffer, and our Alaskan families suffer.

As we look to the end of this administration and looking to next year, I would hope that we can seriously address the problem that the ACA has created for so many areas of our country.

For rural States like Alaska, the approach to health care needs to focus on more than forcing people to just buy insurance and, unfortunately, buy expensive insurance. We need to work to find solutions to these issues, whether it be through the creation of a nationwide insurance pool so that policies are not limited to one State, as they are currently. Right now, as I say, Alaska is not a very attractive market. We have small numbers. We have high costs. Who is going to come? How are we going to get a greater pool?

We need to look more critically at how we improve the cost of transparency of medical procedures. We need to look critically at these special enrollment periods and see if people are finding loopholes that allow them to game the system.

Expanding both health savings and flexible spending accounts will allow people to save what they think they should and make the choices for themselves instead of the government forcing things on individuals.

When we think about those areas where we can save money through not spending it in the first place—an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure—we should be incentivizing people to live healthier lifestyles in order to prevent and bring down the incidence of chronic disease. Type 2 diabetes—largely preventible through lifestyle changes—costs an estimated $176 billion a year. Obesity-related illnesses cost an estimated $190 billion a year. A recent study found that a 10-percent drop in smokers could save $63 billion in health care costs per year. It makes zero sense to be paying providers to treat these problems after they have arisen rather than trying to focus on the front end, paying for lifestyle changes and case management that would significantly reduce the cost of treating these diseases.

I have been working to find solutions that will help support Alaska's rural needs, especially those related to access and workforce development because if we can improve the overall access to treatment and options to medical providers, we then take steps to reduce the cost of medical procedures.

I have supported the Family Health Care Accessibility Act that will improve the care provided by community health centers by enabling them to utilize volunteer primary care providers. Community health centers—I think so many of us recognize the benefits and the crucial role they serve in meeting the needs of rural and underserved communities, allowing patients to receive local treatment instead of being forced to travel far from home for treatment.

Steps like these that help to improve access are just some of the ways I think we should be rethinking our approach to health care in the broader sense as we seek to alleviate the burdens that have been imposed by the ACA.

I have continued over several Congresses now to introduce the Medicare Patient Empowerment Act. This is legislation that would give patients the

option to negotiate with their provider. Medicare would pay the typical fee the patient negotiates for the difference there, but we face a very unique situation in our State. Again, a one-size-fits-all prescription doesn't work for us. We have incredibly low reimbursement rates for Medicare in Alaska, so you have very few providers that will accept Medicare. When you are newly Medicare eligible or you come into the State, it is tough to find anybody who will see you.

If there is some flexibility to negotiate prices, what we are trying to do with this bill is cut through the red-tape, allow Medicare beneficiaries to benefit from increased access, and enable patients to have the relationships they have built with their physicians. We have a very fast-rising senior population in the State, and it is going to be increasingly important to make sure they have the option to seek the care they need.

I do not support compulsory health insurance but do believe individuals with preexisting conditions should receive care. As we discuss these important issues in the Senate, I continue to work to address—again—these issues that have presented themselves with implementation of the ACA. So working to a place where we fully repeal and replace the ACA is where we need to be.

There have been several Republican proposals that would not only replace this unworkable law but replace it with consumer-based reforms. Senator BURR of North Carolina, Senator HATCH of Utah, and Senator CASSIDY of Louisiana all have been working on important measures that take steps to get us to a place where what we are talking about is affordable health care, a reality that works for all Americans, whether you are in Alaska or you are in North Carolina.

Obviously, there is much work in front of us. Again, it is important to recognize the frustration so many are feeling as they are seeing their costs increase, their access going nowhere, and let them know we continue to work on these very difficult issues. Alaskans deserve it. Americans deserve it.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

MEMORIAL FOR FALLEN EDUCATORS

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I wish to speak for just a few moments about the Memorial for Fallen Educators in conjunction with the National Teachers Hall of Fame located on the campus of Emporia State University in Emporia, KS.

When someone asks the question, ''Other than your family, name a person who has made a difference in your life,'' the answer has never been my Senator, my Congressman. More often the response is a teacher. That answer speaks volumes about the influence of an educator on the lives of young people. Teachers fulfill a variety of roles by encouraging our children, instilling values, and challenging them. Too often we take this profession for granted, and the people who make education possible are teachers.

Each one of us remembers a teacher. We remember in the first grade or second grade when they helped us sound out the big words or guided our hands as we struggled to make out the shapes of letters.

We remember the middle school teacher or the gym teacher who taught us how to spike the volleyball or sink the winning hoop while playing in the playoffs. We remember the high school science teacher who helped us dissect frogs or build a box made of toothpicks that would protect the egg as it dropped from a two-story building.

Our teachers are our friends, our mentors, and our role models. The lessons they teach us stick with us for a long time after we have left their classrooms. Their jobs are never done, and educators know that often the last ringing bell of the afternoon, rather than signaling the end of their workday, begins the beginning of a new kind of work—grading homework, tutoring individual students, or prepping for the next day's lesson plan.

Educators work round-the-clock on behalf of the kids they instruct. They take on a job that requires more hours than there are in the day because they believe in their students and because they know how crucial their efforts are in seeing these students succeed. I believe we change the world one person at a time, and it happens in classrooms across Kansas and around the country every day.

Teachers often forfeit material gain for the thrill of seeing a student's eyes light up when they discover a new concept or grasp a new idea. Teachers have long understood they truly shape the world by their work, and their greatest product is an educated society.

Unfortunately, each day teachers walk into their classrooms they are also subject to threats of bullying or violence. Far too many educators have lost their lives in the line of their professional duty. Teachers have been killed at the hands of students, and many have been killed protecting their students from adults perpetrating violent acts.

To honor these slain teachers, the National Teachers Hall of Fame, under the leadership of the director, Carol Strickland, created the Memorial for Fallen Educators. The memorial, which was dedicated 2 years ago at Emporia State University, stands alongside the National Teachers Hall of Fame. I had the honor of visiting the site last September.

Already built and paid for, the memorial lists the names of educators across the country since 1764 who have lost their lives while working with students. It is owned and cared for by the National Teachers Hall of Fame and Emporia State University.

I introduced legislation last year that would designate the Memorial for Fallen Educators as a national memorial. The more than 100 fallen teachers whose names are etched in marble taught in schools across the country. As a nation, together we should recognize the incredible sacrifices they each made because of their dedication to educating young people—their dedication to caring, loving, and protecting young people.

This legislation has no cost to the taxpayer and private funds will be used to maintain the memorial. It simply brings the site—the only one in the United States dedicated to fallen educators—the national prestige it merits.

As the Senate considers the national memorials proposed for designation, I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting this worthy tribute to our fallen teachers. Anyone who has ever been inspired by an educator should visit the memorial and recognize and remember those honorable lives which have been lost.

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.

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

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

AMENDMENTS NOS. 3967, 3992, 4011, 4024, AND 4042 TO AMENDMENT NO. 3896

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the following amendments be called up en bloc and reported by number: amendment No. 3967, submitted by Senator PAUL; amendment No. 3992, submitted by Senator JOHNSON; amendment No. 4011, submitted by Senator NELSON; amendment No. 4024, submitted by Senator ISAKSON; and amendment No. 4042, submitted by Senator WARNER.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the amendments en bloc by number.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Maine [Ms. COLLINS], for others, proposes amendments numbered 3967, 3992, 4011, 4024, and 4042 to amendment No. 3896.

The amendments are as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 3967

(Purpose: To provide for the identification of certain high priority corridors on the National Highway System and to include and designate certain route segments on the Interstate System)

On page 41, strike lines 12 through 25 and insert the following:

''(89) United States Route 67 from Interstate 40 in North Little Rock, Arkansas, to United States Route 412.

''(90) The Edward T. Breathitt Parkway from Interstate 24 to Interstate 69.''.

(b) INCLUSION OF CERTAIN ROUTE SEGMENTS ON INTERSTATE SYSTEM.—Section 1105(e)(5)(A) of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 is

amended in the first sentence by striking ''and subsection (c)(83)'' and inserting ''subsection (c)(83), subsection (c)(89), and subsection (c)(90)''.

(c) DESIGNATION.—Section 1105(e)(5)(C)(i) of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 is amended by adding at the end the following: ''The route referred to in subsection (c)(89) is designated as Interstate Route I–57. The route referred to in subsection (c)(90) is designated as Interstate Route I–169.''.

AMENDMENT NO. 3992

(Purpose: To ensure timely access for Inspectors General to records, documents, and other materials)

At the appropriate place in division A, insert the following:

SEC. ____. (a) None of the funds made available in this Act may be used to deny an Inspector General funded under this Act timely access to any records, documents, or other materials available to the department or agency over which that Inspector General has responsibilities under the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.), or to prevent or impede that Inspector General's access to such records, documents, or other materials, under any provision of law, except a provision of law that expressly refers to the Inspector General and expressly limits the Inspector General's right of access.

(b) A department or agency covered by this section shall provide its Inspector General with access to all such records, documents, and other materials in a timely manner.

(c) Each Inspector General shall ensure compliance with statutory limitations on disclosure relevant to the information provided by the establishment over which that Inspector General has responsibilities under the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.).

(d) Each Inspector General covered by this section shall report to the Committees on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and the Senate within 5 calendar days any failures to comply with this requirement.

AMENDMENT NO. 4011

(Purpose: To ensure the safety of properties covered under a housing assistance payment contract)

In division A, strike section 225 and insert the following:

SEC. 225. (a) Any entity receiving housing assistance payments shall maintain decent, safe, and sanitary conditions, as determined by the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (in this section referred to as the ''Secretary''), and comply with any standards under applicable State or local laws, rules, ordinances, or regulations relating to the physical condition of any property covered under a housing assistance payment contract.

(b) The Secretary shall take action under subsection (c) when a multifamily housing project with a section 8 contract or contract for similar project-based assistance—

(1) receives a Uniform Physical Condition Standards (UPCS) score of 30 or less;

(2) fails to certify in writing to the Secretary within 3 days that all Exigent Health and Safety deficiencies identified by the inspector at the project have been corrected; or

(3) receives a UPCS score between 31 and 59 and has received consecutive scores of less than 60 on UPCS inspections.

Such requirements shall apply to insured and noninsured projects with assistance attached to the units under section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f), but do not apply to such units assisted under section 8(o)(13) (42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)(13)) or to public housing units assisted with capital or operating funds under section 9 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437g).

(c)(1) The Secretary shall notify the owner and provide an opportunity for response within 15 days after the results of the UPCS inspection are issued. If the violations remain, the Secretary shall develop a plan to bring the property into compliance within 30 days after the results of the UPCS inspection are issued and must provide the owner with a Notice of Default with a specified timetable, determined by the Secretary, for correcting all deficiencies. The Secretary must also provide a copy of the Notice of Default to the tenants, the local government, any mortgagees, and any contract administrator. If the owner's appeal results in a UPCS score of 60 or above, the Secretary may withdraw the Notice of Default.

(2) At the end of the time period for correcting all deficiencies specified in the Notice of Default, if the owner fails to fully correct such deficiencies, the Secretary may—

(A) require immediate replacement of project management with a management agent approved by the Secretary;

(B) impose civil money penalties, which shall be used solely for the purpose of supporting safe and sanitary conditions at applicable properties, as designated by the Secretary, with priority given to the tenants of the property affected by the penalty;

(C) abate the section 8 contract, including partial abatement, as determined by the Secretary, until all deficiencies have been corrected;

(D) pursue transfer of the project to an owner, approved by the Secretary under established procedures, which will be obligated to promptly make all required repairs and to accept renewal of the assistance contract as long as such renewal is offered;

(E) transfer the existing section 8 contract to another project or projects and owner or owners;

(F) pursue exclusionary sanctions, including suspensions or debarments from Federal programs;

(G) seek judicial appointment of a receiver to manage the property and cure all project deficiencies or seek a judicial order of specific performance requiring the owner to cure all project deficiencies;

(H) work with the owner, lender, or other related party to stabilize the property in an attempt to preserve the property through compliance, transfer of ownership, or an infusion of capital provided by a third-party that requires time to effectuate; or

(I) take any other regulatory or contractual remedies available as deemed necessary and appropriate by the Secretary.

(d) The Secretary shall also take appropriate steps to ensure that project-based contracts remain in effect, subject to the exercise of contractual abatement remedies to assist relocation of tenants for major threats to health and safety after written notice to and informed consent of the affected tenants and use of other remedies set forth above. To the extent the Secretary determines, in consultation with the tenants and the local government, that the property is not feasible for continued rental assistance payments under such section 8 or other programs, based on consideration of (1) the costs of rehabilitating and operating the property and all available Federal, State, and local resources, including rent adjustments under section 524 of the Multifamily Assisted Housing Reform and Affordability Act of 1997 (''MAHRAA'') and (2) environmental conditions that cannot be remedied in a cost-effective fashion, the Secretary may, in consultation with the tenants of that property, contract for project-based rental assistance payments with an owner or owners of other existing housing properties, or provide other rental assistance.

(e) The Secretary shall report quarterly on all properties covered by this section that are assessed through the Real Estate Assessment Center and have UPCS physical inspection scores of less than 60 or have received an unsatisfactory management and occupancy review within the past 36 months. The report shall include—

(1) the enforcement actions being taken to address such conditions, including imposition of civil money penalties and termination of subsidies, and identify properties that have such conditions multiple times;

(2) actions that the Department of Housing and Urban Development is taking to protect tenants of such identified properties; and

(3) any administrative or legislative recommendations to further improve the living conditions at properties covered under a housing assistance payment contract.

AMENDMENT NO. 4024

(Purpose: To direct the Secretary of Transportation to issue a final rule requiring the use of speed limiting devices on heavy trucks not later than 6 months after the date of the enactment of this Act)

In division A, on page 49, between lines 6 and 7, insert the following:

SEC. 142. Not later than 6 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Transportation shall issue a final rule requiring the use of speed limiting devices on trucks with a gross vehicle weight rating in excess of 26,000 pounds.

AMENDMENT NO. 4042

(Purpose: To provide additional funds for the National Park Service for certain projects)

On page 37, between lines 17 and 18, insert the following:

SEC. 122. (a) TRANSFER OF AMOUNTS.—

(1) STATE OF VIRGINIA.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Of the total amount apportioned to the State of Virginia under section 104 of title 23, United States Code, for fiscal year 2017, the Secretary of Transportation shall, by the later of November 30, 2016, or 30 days after the enactment of this Act, transfer to the National Park Service—

(i) an amount equal to—

(I) $30,000,000; multiplied by

(II) the ratio that—

(aa) the amount apportioned to the State of Virginia under such section 104; bears to

(bb) the combined amount apportioned to the State of Virginia and the District of Columbia under such section 104; and

(ii) an amount of obligation limitation equal to the amount calculated under clause (i).

(B) SOURCE AND AMOUNT.—For purpose of the transfer under subparagraph (A), the State of Virginia shall select at the discretion of the State—

(i) the programs (among those for which funding is apportioned as described in that subparagraph) from which to transfer the amount specified in that subparagraph; and

(ii) the amount to transfer from each of those programs (equal in aggregate to the amount calculated under subparagraph (A)(i)).

(2) DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Of the total amount apportioned to the District of Columbia under section 104 of title 23, United States Code, for fiscal year 2017, the Secretary of Transportation shall, by the later of November 30, 2016, or 30 days after the enactment of this Act, transfer to the National Park Service—

(i) an amount equal to—

(I) $30,000,000; multiplied by

(II) the ratio that—

(aa) the amount apportioned to the District of Columbia under such section 104; bears to

(bb) the combined amount apportioned to the State of Virginia and the District of Columbia under such section 104; and

(ii) an amount of obligation limitation equal to the amount calculated under clause (i).

(B) SOURCE AND AMOUNT.—For purpose of the transfer under subparagraph (A), the District of Columbia shall select at the discretion of the District—

(i) the programs (among those for which funding is apportioned as described in that subparagraph) from which to transfer the amount specified in that subparagraph; and

(ii) the amount to transfer from each of those programs (equal in aggregate to the amount calculated under subparagraph (A)(i)).

(3) FEDERAL LANDS TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM.—Of the amounts otherwise made available to the National Park Service under section 203 of title 23, United States Code, not less than 10 percent shall be set aside for purposes of this section.

(b) ELIGIBILITY AND FEDERAL SHARE.—The amounts under subsection (a) shall be—

(1) available to the National Park Service only for projects that—

(A) are eligible under section 203 of title 23, United States Code;

(B) are located on bridges on the National Highway System that were originally constructed before 1945 and are in poor condition; and

(C) each have an estimated total project cost of not less than $150,000,000; and

(2) subject to the Federal share described in section 201(b)(7)(A) of title 23, United States Code.

(c) OTHER FUNDS AND OBLIGATION LIMITATION.—Any funds and obligation limitation transferred under subsection (a) shall be in addition to funds or obligation limitation otherwise made available to the National Park Service under sections 203 and 204 of title 23, United States Code.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now vote on these amendments en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I know of no further debate on these amendments.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

If not, the question occurs on agreeing to the amendments en bloc.

The amendments (Nos. 3967, 3992, 4011, 4024, and 4042) were agreed to en bloc.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

AMENDMENTS NOS. 3997; 3998; 3933; 4030; 4008; 3920; 3969; 3935, AS MODIFIED; 4038; 4043; 3980; 3944; 3993; 3910; 4005; 4029; AND 4023 TO AMENDMENT NO. 3896

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the following amendments be called up en bloc and reported by number: Kirk No. 3997; Tester No. 3998; Perdue No. 3933; Mikulski No. 4030; Daines No. 4008; Brown No. 3920; Inhofe No. 3969; Boxer No. 3935, as modified; Flake No. 4038; Manchin No. 4043; Flake No. 3980; Feinstein No. 3944; Johnson No. 3993; Klobuchar No. 3910; Heller No. 4005; Durbin No. 4029; and Sasse No. 4023.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the amendments by number.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Maine [Ms. COLLINS], for others, proposes amendments numbered 3997; 3998; 3933; 4030; 4008; 3920; 3969; 3935, as modified; 4038; 4043; 3980; 3944; 3993; 3910; 4005; 4029; and 4023 en bloc to amendment No. 3896.

The amendments are as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 3997

(Purpose: To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide for the inspection of medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs)

At the end of title II of division B, add the following:

SEC. 251. INSPECTION OF KITCHENS AND FOOD SERVICE AREAS AT MEDICAL FACILITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and not less frequently than annually thereafter, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall provide for the conduct of inspections of kitchens and food service areas at each medical facility of the Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure that the same standards for kitchens and food service areas at hospitals in the private sector are being met at kitchens and food service areas at medical facilities of the Department.

(b) AGREEMENT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall seek to enter into an agreement with the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospital Organizations under which the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospital Organizations conducts the inspections required under subsection (a).

(2) ALTERNATE ORGANIZATION.—If the Secretary is unable to enter into an agreement described in paragraph (1) with the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospital Organizations on terms acceptable to the Secretary, the Secretary shall seek to enter into such an agreement with another appropriate organization that—

(A) is not part of the Federal Government;

(B) operates as a not-for-profit entity; and

(C) has expertise and objectivity comparable to that of the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospital Organizations.

(c) REMEDIATION PLAN.—

(1) INITIAL FAILURE.—If a kitchen or food service area of a medical facility of the Department is determined pursuant to an inspection conducted under subsection (a) not to meet the standards for kitchens and food service areas in hospitals in the private sector, that medical facility fails the inspection and the Secretary shall—

(A) implement a remediation plan for that medical facility within 48 hours; and

(B) Conduct a second inspection under subsection (a) at that medical facility within 7 days of the failed inspection.

(2) SECOND FAILURE.—If a medical facility of the Department fails the second inspection conducted under paragraph (1)(B), the Secretary shall close the kitchen or food service area at that medical facility that did not meet the standards for kitchens and food service areas in hospitals in the private sector until remediation is completed and all kitchens and food service areas at that medical facility meet such standards.

(3) PROVISION OF FOOD.—If a kitchen or food service area is closed at a medical facility of the Department pursuant to paragraph (2), the Director of the Veterans Integrated Service Network in which the medical facility is located shall enter into a contract with a vendor approved by the General Services Administration to provide food at the medical facility.

(d) REPORTS.—

(1) QUARTERLY.—Not less frequently than quarterly, the Director of each Veterans Integrated Service Network shall submit to Congress a report on inspections conducted under this section during that quarter at medical facilities of the Department under the jurisdiction of that Director.

(2) SUBSEQUENT PERIOD.—A Director of a Veterans Integrated Service Network may submit to Congress the report described in paragraph (1) not less frequently than semiannually if the Director does not report any failed inspections for the one-year period preceding the submittal of the report.

SEC. 252. INSPECTION OF MOLD ISSUES AT MEDICAL FACILITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and not less frequently than annually thereafter, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall provide for the inspection of mold issues at medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(b) AGREEMENT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall seek to enter into an agreement with the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospital Organizations under which the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospital Organizations conducts the inspections required under subsection (a).

(2) ALTERNATE ORGANIZATION.—If the Secretary is unable to enter into an agreement described in paragraph (1) with the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospital Organizations on terms acceptable to the Secretary, the Secretary shall seek to enter into such an agreement with another appropriate organization that—

(A) is not part of the Federal Government;

(B) operates as a not-for-profit entity; and

(C) has expertise and objectivity comparable to that of the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospital Organizations.

(c) REMEDIATION PLAN.—If a medical facility of the Department is determined pursuant to an inspection conducted under subsection (a) to have a mold issue, the Secretary shall—

(1) implement a remediation plan for that medical facility within 48 hours; and

(2) Conduct a second inspection under subsection (a) at that medical facility within 90 days of the initial inspection.

(d) REPORTS.—

(1) QUARTERLY.—Not less frequently than quarterly, the Director of each Veterans Integrated Service Network shall submit to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and Congress a report on inspections conducted under this section during that quarter at medical facilities of the Department under the jurisdiction of that Director.

(2) SUBSEQUENT PERIOD.—A Director of a Veterans Integrated Service Network may submit to Congress the report described in paragraph (1) not less frequently than semiannually if the Director does not report any mold issues for the one-year period preceding the submittal of the report.

AMENDMENT NO. 3998

(Purpose: To provide for coverage under the beneficiary travel program of the Department of Veterans Affairs of certain disabled veterans for travel in connection with certain special disabilities rehabilitation)

At the end of title II of division B, add the following:

SEC. 251. COVERAGE UNDER DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS BENEFICIARY TRAVEL PROGRAM OF TRAVEL IN CONNECTION WITH CERTAIN SPECIAL DISABILITIES REHABILITATION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 111(b)(1) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(G) A veteran with vision impairment, a veteran with a spinal cord injury or disorder, or a veteran with double or multiple amputations whose travel is in connection with care provided through a special disabilities rehabilitation program of the Department (including programs provided by spinal cord injury centers, blind rehabilitation centers, and prosthetics rehabilitation centers) if such care is provided—

''(i) on an in-patient basis; or

''(ii) during a period in which the Secretary provides the veteran with temporary lodging at a facility of the Department to make such care more accessible to the veteran.''.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the beneficiary travel program under section 111 of title 38, United States Code, as amended by subsection (a), that includes the following:

(1) The cost of the program.

(2) The number of veterans served by the program.

(3) Such other matters as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall take effect on the first day of the first fiscal year that begins after the date of the enactment of this Act.

AMENDMENT NO. 3933

(Purpose: To require a report on modernizing and replacing hangers of the Army's Combat Aviation Brigade)

At the appropriate place in division B, insert the following:

SEC. ___. Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the Army shall submit to Congress a report that includes—

(1) a detailed description of the age and condition of the aircraft maintenance hangars of the Army's Combat Aviation Brigade;

(2) an identification of the most deficient such hangers;

(3) a plan to modernize or replace such hangars; and

(4) a description of the resources required to modernize or replace such hangers.

AMENDMENT NO. 4030

(Purpose: To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide access to therapeutic listening devices to veterans struggling with mental health related problems, substance abuse, or traumatic brain injury)

On page 217, line 4 of Title 2 in Division B, strike the period and insert '': *Provided further*, That the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall provide access to therapeutic listening devices to veterans struggling with mental health related problems, substance abuse, or traumatic brain injury.''

AMENDMENT NO. 4008

(Purpose: To require a report on the use of defense access road funding to build alternate routes for military equipment traveling to missile launch facilities)

At the appropriate place in title I of division B, insert the following:

SEC. ___. Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall conduct a study and submit to Congress a report on the use of defense access road funding to build alternate routes for military equipment traveling to missile launch facilities, taking into consideration the location of local populations, security risks, safety, and impacts of weather.

AMENDMENT NO. 3920

(Purpose: To extend the requirement of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to submit a report on the capacity of the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide for the specialized treatment and rehabilitative needs of disabled veterans)

At the end of title II of division B, add the following:

EXTENSION OF REQUIREMENT FOR REPORT ON CAPACITY OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO PROVIDE FOR SPECIALIZED TREATMENT AND REHABILITATIVE NEEDS OF DISABLED VETERANS

SEC. 251. Section 1706(b)(5)(A) of title 38, United States Code, is amended, in the first sentence, by striking ''through 2008''.

AMENDMENT NO. 3969

(Purpose: To require that amounts be made available to Directors of Veterans Integrated Service Networks to assess, evaluate, and improve the health care delivery by and business operations of medical centers of the Department of Veterans Affairs)

At the end of title II of division B, add the following:

SEC. 251. From the amount made available in this title under the heading ''Medical Support and Compliance'', up to $18,000,000 shall be made available for Directors of Veterans Integrated Service Networks to contract with appropriate non-Department of Veterans Affairs entities to assess, evaluate, and improve the health care delivery by and business operations of medical centers of the Department under the jurisdiction of each such Director.

AMENDMENT NO. 3935, AS MODIFIED

(Purpose: To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to treat certain marriage and family therapists as qualified to serve as marriage and family therapists in the Department of Veterans Affairs)

At the end of title II of division B, add the following:

(a) Not later than 180 days after the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall begin an assessment of whether the hiring of marriage and family therapists trained at Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education accredited institutions is adversely impacting the ability of the Department of Veterans Affairs to hire marriage and family therapists.

(b) The assessment should also include what steps the Department of Veterans Affairs is taking to increase hiring of marriage and family therapists.

(c) Not later than one year after the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit the report to the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees.

AMENDMENT NO. 4038

(Purpose: To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide for the conduct by the Office of Inspector General of the Department of Veterans Affairs of an inspection or audit of the use of a grant to renovate a veteran's cemetery in Guam)

At the end of title II of division B, add the following:

SEC. 251. Not later than September 30, 2017, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall—

(1) provide for the conduct by the Office of Inspector General of the Department of Veterans Affairs of an inspection or audit of the use of Federal award GU1103 in the amount of $3,265,487 that was awarded in 2013 to renovate a veteran's cemetery in Guam under the Veterans Cemetery Grants Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs, including—

(A) an itemized accounting of the use of such award; or

(B) if no such itemized accounting is possible, an explanation of why any amounts in connection with such award are unaccounted for;

(2) submit to the Committee on Appropriations and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Appropriations and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the results on the inspection or audit conducted under paragraph (1); and

(3) publish the results on the inspection or audit conducted under paragraph (1) on a publicly available Internet website of the Department.

AMENDMENT NO. 4043

(Purpose: To authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to use amounts appropriated under this Act for the Department of Veterans Affairs to improve the veteran-to-staff ratio for each program of rehabilitation conducted under chapter 31 of title 38, United States Code)

At the end of title II of division B, add the following:

SEC. 251. (a) The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may use amounts appropriated or otherwise made available in this title to ensure that the ratio of veterans to full-time employment equivalents within any program of rehabilitation conducted under chapter 31 of title 38, United States Code, does not exceed 125 veterans to one full-time employment equivalent.

(b) Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on the programs of rehabilitation conducted under chapter 31 of title 38, United States Code, including—

(1) an assessment of the veteran-to-staff ratio for each such program; and

(2) recommendations for such action as the Secretary considers necessary to reduce the veteran-to-staff ratio for each such program.

AMENDMENT NO. 3980

(Purpose: To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to submit to Congress a plan on modernizing the system of the Veterans Health Administration for processing claims by non-Department of Veterans Affairs health care providers for reimbursement for health care provided to veterans under the laws administered by the Secretary)

At the end of title II of division B, add the following:

SEC. 251. Not later than September 30, 2017, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to Congress a plan on modernizing the

system of the Veterans Health Administration for processing claims by non-Department of Veterans Affairs health care providers for reimbursement for health care provided to veterans under the laws administered by the Secretary.

AMENDMENT NO. 3944

(Purpose: To authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out certain major medical facility projects for which appropriations are being made for fiscal year 2016)

At the end of title II of division B, add the following:

SEC. 251. AUTHORIZATION OF CERTAIN MAJOR MEDICAL FACILITY PROJECTS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

(1) The Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2016, which was passed by the Senate on November 10, 2015, without a single vote cast against the bill, and the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016 include the following amounts to be appropriated to the Department of Veterans Affairs:

(A) $35,000,000 to make seismic corrections to Building 208 at the West Los Angeles Medical Center of the Department in Los Angeles, California, which, according to the Department, is a building that is designated as having an exceptionally high risk of sustaining substantial damage or collapsing during an earthquake.

(B) $158,000,000 to provide for the construction of a new research building, site work, and demolition at the San Francisco Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

(C) $161,000,000 to replace Building 133 with a new community living center at the Long Beach Veterans Affairs Medical Center, which, according to the Department, is a building that is designated as having an extremely high risk of sustaining major damage during an earthquake.

(D) $468,800,000 for construction projects that are critical to the Department for ensuring health care access and safety at medical facilities in Louisville, Kentucky, Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis, Missouri, Perry Point, Maryland, American Lake, Washington, Alameda, California, and Livermore, California.

(2) The Department is unable to obligate or expend the amounts described in paragraph (1), other than for construction design, because the Department lacks an explicit authorization by an Act of Congress pursuant to section 8104(a)(2) of title 38, United States Code, to carry out the major medical facility projects described in such paragraph.

(3) Among the major medical facility projects described in paragraph (1), three are critical seismic safety projects in California.

(4) Every day that the critical seismic safety projects described in paragraph (3) are delayed increases the risk of a life-threatening building failure in the case of a major seismic event.

(5) According to the United States Geological Survey—

(A) California has more than a 99 percent chance of experiencing an earthquake of magnitude 6.7 or greater in the next 30 years;

(B) even earthquakes of less severity than magnitude 6.7 can cause life threatening damage to seismically unsafe buildings; and

(C) in California, earthquakes of magnitude 6.0 or greater occur on average once every 1.2 years.

(6) On January 20, 2016, the Senate passed this legislation by unanimous consent as S. 2422, 114th Congress.

(b) AUTHORIZATION.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may carry out the following major medical facility projects, with each project to be carried out in an amount not to exceed the amount specified for that project:

(1) Seismic corrections to buildings, including retrofitting and replacement of high-risk buildings, in San Francisco, California, in an amount not to exceed $180,480,000.

(2) Seismic corrections to facilities, including facilities to support homeless veterans, at the medical center in West Los Angeles, California, in an amount not to exceed $105,500,000.

(3) Seismic corrections to the mental health and community living center in Long Beach, California, in an amount not to exceed $287,100,000.

(4) Construction of an outpatient clinic, administrative space, cemetery, and columbarium in Alameda, California, in an amount not to exceed $87,332,000.

(5) Realignment of medical facilities in Livermore, California, in an amount not to exceed $194,430,000.

(6) Construction of a medical center in Louisville, Kentucky, in an amount not to exceed $150,000,000.

(7) Construction of a replacement community living center in Perry Point, Maryland, in an amount not to exceed $92,700,000.

(8) Seismic corrections and other renovations to several buildings and construction of a specialty care building in American Lake, Washington, in an amount not to exceed $16,260,000.

(c) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS FOR CONSTRUCTION.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2016 or the year in which funds are appropriated for the Construction, Major Projects, account, $1,113,802,000 for the projects authorized in subsection (b).

(d) LIMITATION.—The projects authorized in subsection (b) may only be carried out using—

(1) funds appropriated for fiscal year 2016 pursuant to the authorization of appropriations in subsection (c);

(2) funds available for Construction, Major Projects, for a fiscal year before fiscal year 2016 that remain available for obligation;

(3) funds available for Construction, Major Projects, for a fiscal year after fiscal year 2016 that remain available for obligation;

(4) funds appropriated for Construction, Major Projects, for fiscal year 2016 for a category of activity not specific to a project;

(5) funds appropriated for Construction, Major Projects, for a fiscal year before fiscal year 2016 for a category of activity not specific to a project; and

(6) funds appropriated for Construction, Major Projects, for a fiscal year after fiscal year 2016 for a category of activity not specific to a project.

AMENDMENT NO. 3993

(Purpose: To ensure timely access for Inspectors General to records, documents, and other materials)

At the appropriate place in division B, insert the following:

SEC. ____. (a) None of the funds made available in this Act may be used to deny an Inspector General funded under this Act timely access to any records, documents, or other materials available to the department or agency over which that Inspector General has responsibilities under the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.), or to prevent or impede that Inspector General's access to such records, documents, or other materials, under any provision of law, except a provision of law that expressly refers to the Inspector General and expressly limits the Inspector General's right of access.

(b) A department or agency covered by this section shall provide its Inspector General with access to all such records, documents, and other materials in a timely manner.

(c) Each Inspector General shall ensure compliance with statutory limitations on disclosure relevant to the information provided by the establishment over which that Inspector General has responsibilities under the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.).

(d) Each Inspector General covered by this section shall report to the Committees on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and the Senate within 5 calendar days any failures to comply with this requirement.

AMENDMENT NO. 3910

(Purpose: To authorize the use of amounts for Medical Services to be used to furnish rehabilitative equipment and human-powered vehicles to certain disabled veterans)

On page 238, line 22, insert after ''equipment'' the following: ''(including rehabilitative equipment for veterans entitled to a prosthetic appliance under chapter 17 of title 38, United States Code, which may include recreational sports equipment that provides an adaption or accommodation for the veteran, regardless of whether such equipment is intentionally designed to be adaptive equipment, such as hand cycles, recumbent bicycles, medically adapted upright bicycles, and upright bicycles)''.

AMENDMENT NO. 4005

(Purpose: To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to submit to Congress a report on the progress of the Department of Veterans Affairs in completing the Rural Veterans Burial Initiative)

At the end of title II of division B, add the following:

SEC. 251. Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives a report that contains an update on the progress of the Department of Veterans Affairs in completing the Rural Veterans Burial Initiative and the expected timeline for completion of such initiative.

AMENDMENT NO. 4029

(Purpose: To make funds available to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to hire Medical Center Directors and employees for other management and clinical positions with vacancies)

At the end of title II of division B, add the following:

SEC. 251. Of the funds made available in this title for fiscal year 2017 for medical support and compliance, not less than $21,000,000 shall be made available to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to hire Medical Center Directors and employees for other management and clinical positions that are critical to the Department of Veterans Affairs in order to fill vacancies in such positions.

AMENDMENT NO. 4023

(Purpose: To protect congressional oversight of the executive branch by ensuring individuals may speak with Congress)

At the end of title II of division B, add the following:

SEC. 251. None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available in this title may be used by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to enter into an agreement related to resolving a dispute or claim with an individual that would restrict in any way the individual from speaking to members of Congress or their staff on any topic not otherwise prohibited from disclosure by Federal law.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now vote on these amendments en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. COLLINS. I know of no further debate on these amendments.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

If not, the question is on agreeing to the amendments en bloc.

The amendments (Nos. 3997; 3998; 3933; 4030; 4008; 3920; 3969; 3935, as modified; 4038; 4043; 3980; 3944; 3993; 3910; 4005; 4029; and 4023) were agreed to en bloc.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, at 11:15 a.m. on Thursday, May 19, all postcloture time be considered expired on the Blunt-Murray amendment No. 3900; further, that if cloture is invoked on the Collins substitute amendment No. 3896, the Cornyn amendment No. 3899 and the Nelson amendment No. 3898 be withdrawn; that it be in order for Senator COLLINS or her designee to call up amendment No. 3970, and that there be no second degrees in order to the Collins amendment No. 3970 or the Lee amendment No. 3897.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. COLLINS. For the information of all Senators, at 11:15 a.m. tomorrow, the Senate is expected to proceed to three rollcall votes: a motion to waive the budget with respect to the Blunt-Murray Zika amendment, adoption of the Blunt amendment, and cloture on the pending substitute. Senators should expect additional votes to complete action on the bill and any pending amendments during tomorrow's session of the Senate.

MORNING BUSINESS

CBO COST ESTIMATE—S. 329

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, in compliance with paragraph 11(a) of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources has obtained from the Congressional Budget Office an estimate of the costs of S. 329, Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook Wild and Scenic River Act, as reported from the committee. The full estimate is available on CBO's Web site, www.cbo.gov.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the summary of the estimate be printed in the RECORD.

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

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

S. 329—LOWER FARMINGTON RIVER AND SALMON BROOK WILD AND SCENIC RIVER ACT

(January 15, 2016)

S. 329 would designate segments of the Lower Farmington Rivers and Salmon Brook in Connecticut as components of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Under the legislation, the National Park Service (NPS) would administer the river segments in partnership with an advisory committee composed of local representatives. Based on the cost of similar management partnerships in the region, CBO estimates that NPS would provide about $170,000 annually to the advisory committee to manage the river segments. Thus, CBO estimates that implementing the bill would cost about $1 million over the 2016–2020 period; such spending would be subject to the availability of appropriated funds.

Enacting S. 329 would not affect direct spending or revenues; therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures do not apply. CBO estimates that enacting S. 329 would not increase net direct spending or on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year period beginning in 2026.

S. 329 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act and would impose no costs on state, local, or tribal governments.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Marin Burnett. The estimate was approved by H. Samuel Papenfuss, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.

CBO COST ESTIMATE—S. 556

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, in compliance with paragraph 11(a) of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources has obtained from the Congressional Budget Office an estimate of the costs of S. 556, Sportsmen's Act of 2015, as reported from the committee. The full estimate is available on CBO's Web site, www.cbo.gov.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the summary of the cost estimate be printed in the RECORD.

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

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

S. 556—SPORTSMEN'S ACT OF 2015

(May 18, 2016)

Summary: S. 556 would amend existing laws and establish new laws related to the management of federal lands. It would authorize the sale of certain federal land and permit the proceeds from those sales to be spent. The bill also would establish a fund to carry out deferred maintenance projects on lands administered by the National Park Service (NPS) and would permanently authorize the transfer of funds to the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).

CBO estimates that enacting the bill would increase both direct spending and offsetting receipts (which are treated as reductions in direct spending) by $65 million and $80 million respectively over the 2017–2026 period; therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures apply. Enacting S. 556 would not affect revenues. Based on information from the affected agencies, CBO also estimates that implementing the legislation would cost $486 million over the 2017–2021 period, assuming appropriation of the amounts authorized to be deposited into the NPS Maintenance and Revitalization Fund.

CBO estimates that enacting S. 556 would not increase net direct spending or on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2027.

S. 556 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA) and would benefit state, local, and tribal agencies by authorizing federal grants to support conservation, historic preservation, and recreational activities. Any costs would be incurred by those entities, including matching contributions, would be incurred voluntarily.

CBO COST ESTIMATE—S. 782

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, in compliance with paragraph 11(a) of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources has obtained from the Congressional Budget Office an estimate of the costs of S. 782, Grand Canyon Bison Management Act, as reported from the committee. The full estimate is available on CBO's Web site, www.cbo.gov.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the summary of the cost estimate be printed in the RECORD.

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

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

S. 782—GRAND CANYON BISON MANAGEMENT ACT

(January 8, 2016)

S. 782 would require the National Park Service (NPS) to publish a management plan to humanely reduce the population of bison in the Grand Canyon National Park within 180 days of enactment of the legislation. Based on information provided by the NPS, CBO expects that publishing the management plan within that timeframe would require the agency to expedite its ongoing planning process and increase discretionary costs by an insignificant amount.

Enacting S. 782 would not affect direct spending or revenues; therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures do not apply. CBO estimates that enacting S. 782 would not increase net direct spending or on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year period beginning in 2026.

S. 782 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act and would not affect the budgets of state, local, or tribal governments.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Marin Burnett. The estimate was approved by H. Samuel Papenfuss, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.

CBO COST ESTIMATE—S. 1592

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, in compliance with paragraph 11(a) of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources has obtained from the Congressional Budget Office an estimate of the costs of S. 1592, a bill to clarify the description of certain Federal land under the Northern Arizona Land Exchange and Verde River Basin Partnership Act of 2005 to include additional land in the Kaibab National Forest, as reported from the committee. The full estimate is available on CBO's Web site, www.cbo.gov.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the summary of the cost estimate be printed in the RECORD.

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

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

S. 1592—A BILL TO CLARIFY THE DESCRIPTION OF CERTAIN FEDERAL LAND UNDER THE NORTHERN ARIZONA LAND EXCHANGE AND VERDE RIVER BASIN PARTNERSHIP ACT OF 2005 TO INCLUDE ADDITIONAL LAND IN THE KAIBAB NATIONAL FOREST

(December 22, 2015)

S. 1592 would amend current law to clarify that the Secretary of Agriculture is authorized to convey about 238 acres of federal land to a summer camp in Arizona. Under current law, the Secretary is authorized to convey 212 acres to the camp.

Based on information provided by the Forest Service, CBO estimates that implementing the legislation would not affect the federal budget. Because CBO expects that the acreage that could be conveyed under the bill would not generate any income over the next 10 years, enacting S. 1592 would not affect direct spending. Enacting the bill also would not affect revenues; therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures do not apply. CBO estimates that enacting S. 1592 would not increase net direct spending or on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year period beginning in 2026.

S. 1592 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA). The bill would modify the terms of a land exchange between the federal government and a private business, which would have a small incidental effect on property taxes collected by the state and local governments in Arizona. That effect, however, would not result from an intergovernmental mandate as defined in UMRA.

The CBO staff contacts for this estimate are Jeff LaFave (for federal costs) and Jon Sperl (for intergovernmental mandates). The estimate was approved by H. Samuel Papenfuss, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.

CBO COST ESTIMATE—S. 2069

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, in compliance with paragraph 11(a) of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources has obtained from the Congressional Budget Office an estimate of the costs of S. 2069, Mount Hood Cooper Spur Land Exchange Clarification Act, as reported from the committee. The full estimate is available on CBO's Web site, www.cbo.gov.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the summary of the estimate be printed in the RECORD.

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

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

S. 2069—A BILL TO AMEND THE OMNIBUS PUBLIC LAND MANAGEMENT ACT OF 2009 TO MODIFY PROVISIONS RELATING TO CERTAIN LAND EXCHANGES IN THE MT. HOOD WILDERNESS IN THE STATE OF OREGON

(January 5, 2016)

S. 2069 would amend current law to modify the terms of a land exchange between the Forest Service and the Mt. Hood Meadows ski area in Oregon. The bill would reduce the amount of land the agency would be authorized to convey to the ski area from 120 acres to 107 acres. The bill also contains provisions aimed at expediting the exchange.

Based on information provided by the Forest Service, CBO estimates that implementing the legislation would not affect the federal budget. Because CBO expects that enacting the bill would not affect whether the exchange would occur or when it would take place, we estimate that enacting the bill would not affect direct spending. Enacting the bill also would not affect revenues. Therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures do not apply. CBO estimates that enacting S. 2069 would not increase net direct spending or on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year period beginning in 2026.

S. 2069 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Jeff LaFave. The estimate was approved by H. Samuel Papenfuss, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.

FEDERAL MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC LANDS AND RESOURCES

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I wish to speak about a column written by Ms. Karen Budd-Falen, a Wyoming attorney, entitled ''Major Regulatory Expansion of ESA Listing and Critical Habitat Designation.'' The article was published in the Wyoming Livestock Roundup on March 19, 2016.

Through a variety of rules, regulations, and seemingly innocuous proposals, agencies under this administration have gone outside their congressionally given authorities and willfully ignored the intent of the very statutes that authorize Federal management of public lands and resources.

In the article, Karen raises a series of concerns, concerns I share, about the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's calculated efforts to change key parts of the Endangered Species Act. Through a series of administrative revisions, the Service has substantially changed the way critical habitat is designated for species listed for protection under the act. Critical habitat, as Karen recognizes in her article, is ''. . . generally habitat upon which the species depends for survival. Importantly critical habitat can include both private and/or federal land and water.'' Karen outlines that, through piecemeal revisions, the Service has effectively removed all limitations of this definition.

No longer will the Service be limited to enact Federal policy on a precise area where a species lives. Now a Federal agency may implement any number of restrictions on a ''significant portion'' of the range a species may or may not inhabit, for an undetermined period of time. The Service has made it clear that even ''potential habitat'' can be controlled, even if it is unclear whether the species will ever use that area.

Karen also raises concerns about notification of private landowners, consideration of economic impacts, and the undeniable link between changes the Service has made and an increase in Federal permitting. The link between these changes and the intent of this administration is clear: any action taken on any land, no matter whether private or public, can now be considered under Federal jurisdiction if the Service so chooses. Not only is this arbitrary, but it is a clear case of Federal overreach.

In Wyoming, we know that the most successful habitat conservation efforts are conducted by people on the ground who have a vested interest in the health of wildlife and the landscape they inhabit. These people are local business owners, local landowners, ranchers, and State experts. These people understand both the needs of the landscape and the scope of appropriate conservation efforts, things that Washington officials seemingly fail to grasp or willfully ignore.

Unfortunately, the alarm that Karen has sounded is one of many currently deafening the American people. Karen has likened the Service's critical habitat reforms to the Environmental Protection Agency's controversial waters of the United States campaign. The comparison is apt. This administration has perpetuated a culture of Big Government by ignoring the biological, economic, and social realities of its irresponsible policies.

Federal actions such as this dilute the effectiveness of successful conservation efforts and create limitless uncertainty for private landowners. I urge my colleagues to continue to stand with rural Americans who must not bear the brunt of irresponsible Federal overreach.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the article written by Karen Budd-Falen.

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

[From the Wyoming Livestock Roundup; Mar. 19, 2016]

MAJOR REGULATORY EXPANSION OF ESA LISTING AND CRITICAL HABITAT DESIGNATION

(By Karen Budd-Falen)

While private property owners were vehemently protesting the EPA's expansion of jurisdiction under the Clean Water Act, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries, collectively FWS, were bit-by-bit expanding the federal government's overreach on private property rights and federal grazing permits through the Endangered Species Act (ESA). This expansion is embodied in the release of four separate final rules and two final policies that the FWS admits will result in listing more species and expanding designated critical habitat.

To understand the expansiveness of the new policies and regulations, a short discussion of the previous regulations may help. Prior to the Obama changes, a species was listed as threatened or endangered based upon the ''best scientific and commercial data available.'' With regard to species that are potentially threatened or endangered ''throughout a significant portion of its range'' but not all of the species'' range, only those species within that ''significant portion of the range'' are listed not all species throughout the entire range.

Once the listing is completed, FWS is mandated to designate critical habitat. Critical habitat is generally habitat upon which the species depends for survival. Importantly critical habitat can include both private and/or federal land and water. Critical habitat is

to be based upon the ''best scientific and commercial data available'' and is to include the ''primary constituent elements'' (PCEs) for the species. PCEs are the elements the species needs for breeding, feeding and sheltering. Final critical habitat designations are to be published with legal descriptions so private landowners would know whether their private property or water was within or outside designated boundaries. Critical habitat designations are also made with consideration of the economic impacts. Under the ESA, although the FWS cannot consider the economic impacts of listing a species, all other economic impacts are to be considered when designating critical habitat, and if the economic impacts in an area are too great, the area could be excluded as critical habitat as long as the exclusion did not cause extinction of the species.

With regard to the critical habitat designation itself, critical habitat determinations are made in two stages. First, the FWS considers the currently occupied habitat and determines if that habitat (1) contains the PCEs for the species and (2) is sufficient for protection of the species. Second, the FWS looks at the unoccupied habitat for the species and makes the same determinations, i.e., (1) whether areas of unoccupied habitat contain the necessary PCEs and (2) if including this additional land or water as critical habitat was necessary for protection of the species. The FWS then considers whether the economic costs of including some of the areas are so high that the areas should be excluded from the critical habitat designation. In simplest terms, FWS would weigh or balance the benefits of designation of certain areas of critical habitat against the regulatory burdens and economic costs of designation and could exclude discreet areas from a critical habitat designation so long as exclusion did not cause species extinction. This was called the ''exclusion analysis.''

Starting with a new 2012 rule and extending to the 2015 rules and policy, those considerations have all changed, and in fact, FWS has admitted that the new rules will result in more land and water being included in critical habitat designations.

The first major change is the inclusion of ''the principals of conservation biology'' as part of the ''best scientific and commercial data available.'' Conservation biology was not created until the 1980s and has been described by some scientists as ''agenda-driven'' or ''goal-oriented'' biology.

Second, the new Obama policy has changed regarding a listing species ''throughout a significant portion of its range.'' Now, rather than listing species within the range where the problem lies, all species throughout the entire range will be listed as threatened or endangered.

Third, based upon the principals of conservation biology, including indirect or circumstantial information, critical habitat designations will be greatly expanded. Under the new regulations, FWS will initially consider designation of both occupied and unoccupied habitat, including habitat with potential PCEs. In other words, not only is FWS considering habitat that is or may be used by the species, FWS will consider habitat that may develop PCBs sometime in the future. There is no time limit on when such future development of PCEs will occur, or what types of events have to occur so that the habitat will develop PCEs. FWS will then look outside occupied and unoccupied habitat to decide if the habitat will develop PCEs in the future and should be designated as critical habitat now. FWS has determined that critical habitat can include temporary or periodic habitat, ephemeral habitat, potential habitat and migratory habitat, even if that habitat is currently unusable by the species.

Fourth, FWS has also determined that it will no longer publish the text or legal descriptions or GIS coordinates for critical habitat. Rather it will only publish maps of the critical habitat designation. Given the small size of the Federal Register, I do not think this will adequately notify landowners whether their private property is included or excluded from a critical habitat designation.

Fifth, FWS has significantly limited what economic impacts are considered as part of the critical habitat designation. According to a Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals decision, although the economic impacts are not to be considered as part of the listing process, once a species was listed, if FWS could not determine whether the economic impact came from listing or critical habitat, the cost should be included in the economic analysis. In other words, only those costs that were solely based on listing were excluded from the economic analysis. In contrast, the Ninth Circuit Court took the opposite view and determined that only economic costs that were solely attributable to critical habitat designations were to be included. Rather than requesting the U.S. Supreme Court make a consistent ruling among the courts, FWS simply recognized this circuit split for almost 15 years. However, on Aug. 28, 2013, FWS issued a final rule that determined that the Ninth Circuit Court was ''correct'' and regulatorily determined that only economic costs attributable solely to the critical habitat designation would be analyzed. This rule substantially reduces the determination of the cost of critical habitat designation because FWS can claim that almost all costs are based on the listing of the species because if not for the listing, there would be no need for critical habitat.

Sixth, FWS has determined that while completing the economic analysis is mandatory, the consideration of whether habitat should be excluded based on economic considerations is discretionary. In other words, under the new policy, FWS is no longer required to consider whether areas should be excluded from critical habitat designation based upon economic costs and burdens.

The problem with these new rules is what it means if private property or federal lands are designated as critical habitat or the designated habitat only has the potential to develop PCEs. Even if the species is not present in the designated critical habitat, a ''take'' of a species can occur through ''adverse modification of critical habitat.'' For private land, that may include stopping stream diversions because the water is needed in downstream critical habitat for a fish species or that haying practices, such as cutting of invasive species to protect hay fields, are stopped because it will prevent the area from developing PCEs in the future that may support a species. It could include stopping someone from putting on fertilizer or doing other crop management on a farm field because of a concern with runoff into downstream designated habitat. Designation of an area as critical habitat—even if that area does not contain PCEs now—will absolutely require more federal permitting, i.e. Section 7 consultation, for things like crop plans or conservation plans or anything else requiring a federal permit. In fact, one of the new regulations issued by Obama concludes that ''adverse modification of critical habitat'' can include ''alteration of the quantity or quality'' of habitat that precludes or ''significantly delays'' the capacity of the habitat to develop PCEs over time.

While the agriculture community raised a huge alarm over the waters of the U.S., FWS was quietly implementing these new rules, in a piecemeal manner, without a lot of fanfare. Honestly, I think these new habitat rules will have as great or greater impact on the private lands and federal land permits as does the Ditch Rule, and I would hope that the outcry from the agriculture community, private property advocates, and our Congressional delegations would be as great.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO JENNIFER WAITES

● Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, I wish to recognize Jennifer Waites, a 911 emergency dispatcher from Helena, MT, who was named the 2016 911 Dispatcher of the Year by the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services. Waites has been with Helena's 911 center for the past 7 years, working the 3 a.m. to 11 p.m. shift as the ''first, first responder'' for the medical emergencies in Helena.

Many refer to Waites as a ''silent hero,'' going about her work day-in and day-out performing a wide variety of tasks that are largely completed under the radar. Whether it is responding to multiple calls at once or relaying information to responding units as efficiently as possible, she knows that serving the people who call in is her top priority and is what motivates her to carry out all tasks with timeliness and care.

Waites is humble enough to admit that her job could not be made possible without the joint efforts from the rest of her team. Waites said, ''Just knowing that you're here and you can make someone else's day a little bit better and get the help that they need is really beneficial for everyone involved.''

It is my honor to recognize Jennifer Waites today. And I thank you on behalf of Montana for your exceptional service and responsibility you have undertaken to the people in our great State.●

65TH ANNIVERSARY OF BUENO FOODS

● Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the 65th anniversary of Bueno Foods, a New Mexico family-owned business and one of the Southwest's premier producers of New Mexican foods, including our State's iconic chile from Hatch, NM, and the surrounding Rio Grande Valley.

In 1946, when several brothers from the Baca family returned home from serving in World War II, they scraped together enough money to start a small grocery business. Although the business started off successfully, the Bacas soon learned how difficult it was for a small community market to compete with larger grocery store chains, so they decided to specialize, manufacturing corn and flour tortillas and traditional holiday favorites like tamales and posole. The Baca brothers also noticed that more households owned freezers, and they asked themselves around the family dinner table: Why don't we take our heritage and preserve it?

With this idea, Bueno Foods was born in 1951. Today Bueno Foods manufactures a full line of more than 150 authentic New Mexican and Mexican food products and currently employs more than 250 employees.

I commend Buenos Foods for taking an active role in the community and contributing to organizations that serve some of our most vulnerable New Mexicans, including impoverished children, the homeless, and the hungry.

Bueno Foods is a strong partner with New Mexico's renowned chile pepper farmers. The chile industry in New Mexico, including both growers and processors, is an integral part of our agricultural and cultural heritage and New Mexico-grown chile peppers remain the most sought after. New Mexico is a leading producer of American-grown chile peppers, and I am pleased that our State's chile farmers and Bueno Foods have come together to protect authentic New Mexico-grown chile.

I congratulate Bueno Foods on 65 years of success as they work to keep our State's chile industry strong and produce the quality foods that can only be from New Mexico.●

300TH ANNIVERSARY OF STRATHAM, NEW HAMPSHIRE

● Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, the town of Stratham in New Hampshire is celebrating its 300th anniversary this year. Today Stratham is a classic New England community, proud of its family-friendly quality of life and looking forward to its annual town fair in June. The culmination of this year's fair will be the 300th anniversary dinner dance at Stratham Hill Park on June 25, celebrating the establishment of the township of Stratham in 1716.

Of course, the human history of what is now Stratham, located between the Great Bay and Exeter in southeastern New Hampshire, goes back many centuries prior to the arrival of the first English explorers and settlers. The land was originally inhabited by the Pennacook Tribe, Algonquian-speaking Native Americans, who were among the first to encounter European colonists in what is today New England.

In 1640, an Englishman named Thomas Wiggin established the first settlement in what was then called Squamscott Patent, and through the remainder of the 1600s, people continued to arrive in the settlement. By the early 1700s, residents petitioned George Vaughn, Lieutenant Governor of the Province of New Hampshire, to incorporate a new town. On March 20, 1716, he granted their request and ordered that ''Squamscott Patent land be a township by the name of Stratham, and that there be a meeting house built for public worship of God with all convenient speed.'' The town was given authority under King George I to elect selectmen, hold town meetings, collect taxes, build a meeting house and hire a ''learned and orthodox minister.'' At the initial gathering of town leaders, they appointed a committee of five to take care of building a meeting house, which would be used both for church services and meetings of the selectmen. Stratham Community Church now stands on the site of that original meeting house.

As a resident of the Seacoast, I regularly visit Stratham. It is hometown and headquarters to corporate giants Lindt chocolate and Timberland footwear, whose products include the Stratham Heights line of women's high-fashion boots. The town also takes pride in its smaller stores, cafes, and restaurants, places where people know your name and where the small businessowners are right there every day. But Stratham's greatest assets are its citizens, who are unfailingly gracious and friendly.

Of course, the big event in Stratham is its annual town fair, one of the oldest in the Granite State. The fair got its start in 1966, when Stratham held a giant party to celebrate its 250th anniversary. A half century later, that party has evolved into a sprawling fair that draws visitors from across southeastern New Hampshire, nearly tripling Stratham's usual population of 7,250. This year, as I said, the fair's gala dinner dance at Stratham Hill Park will be the culmination of the town's 300th anniversary celebrations.

Stratham's motto is ''inspired by the past, committed to the future.'' The town does indeed have a long and rich history, and it has entered the 21st century as a forward-thinking community with a vibrant economy. Even as Stratham grows, it has preserved its small town charm, hospitality, and lifestyle.

I congratulate all the folks in Stratham on this landmark 300th anniversary. I wish everyone a wonderful celebration in June.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

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

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

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

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

PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE

REPORT ON THE CONTINUATION OF THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY THAT WAS ORIGINALLY DECLARED IN EXECUTIVE ORDER 13303 OF MAY 22, 2003, WITH RESPECT TO THE STABILIZATION OF IRAQ—PM 49

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the President of the United States, together with an accompanying report; which was referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs:

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to the stabilization of Iraq that was declared in Executive Order 13303 of May 22, 2003, is to continue in effect beyond May 22, 2016.

Obstacles to the orderly reconstruction of Iraq, the restoration and maintenance of peace and security in the country, and the development of political, administrative, and economic institutions in Iraq continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. Accordingly, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to the stabilization of Iraq.

BARACK OBAMA.

THE WHITE HOUSE, *May 18, 2016*.

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

At 12:40 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bills:

S. 1492. An act to direct the Administrator of General Services, on behalf of the Archivist of the United States, to convey certain Federal property located in the State of Alaska to the Municipality of Anchorage, Alaska.

S. 2143. An act to provide for the authority for the successors and assigns of the Starr-Camargo Bridge Company to maintain and operate a toll bridge across the Rio Grande near Rio Grande City, Texas, and for other purposes.

H.R. 4923. An act to establish a process for the submission and consideration of petitions for temporary duty suspensions and reductions, and for other purposes.

H.R. 4957. An act to designate the Federal building located at 99 New York Avenue, N.E., in the District of Columbia as the ''Ariel Rios Federal Building''.

The enrolled bills were subsequently signed by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

ENROLLED BILLS PRESENTED

The Secretary of the Senate reported that on today, May 18, 2016, she had presented to the President of the United States the following enrolled bills:

S. 1492. An act to direct the Administrator of General Services, on behalf of the Archivist of the United States, to convey certain Federal property located in the State of Alaska to the Municipality of Anchorage, Alaska.

S. 1523. An act to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to reauthorize the National Estuary Program, and for other purposes.

S. 2143. An act to provide for the authority for the successors and assigns of the Starr-Camargo Bridge Company to maintain and operate a toll bridge across the Rio Grande near Rio Grande City, Texas, and for other purposes.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. MCCAIN, from the Committee on Armed Services, without amendment:

S. 2943. An original bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2017 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 114–255).

By Mr. INHOFE, from the Committee on Environment and Public Works, with an amendment:

S. 1724. A bill to provide for environmental restoration activities and forest management activities in the Lake Tahoe Basin, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 114–256).

By Mr. COCHRAN, from the Committee on Appropriations:

Special Report entitled ''Further Revised Allocation to Subcommittees of Budget Totals For Fiscal Year 2017'' (Rept. No. 114–257).

By Mr. INHOFE, from the Committee on Environment and Public Works, without amendment:

H.R. 3114. A bill to provide funds to the Army Corps of Engineers to hire veterans and members of the Armed Forces to assist the Corps with curation and historic preservation activities, and for other purposes.

By Mr. INHOFE, from the Committee on Environment and Public Works, with amendments:

S. 2754. A bill to designate the Federal building and United States courthouse located at 300 Fannin Street in Shreveport, Louisiana, as the ''Tom Stagg Federal Building and United States Courthouse''.

EXECUTIVE REPORT OF COMMITTEE

The following executive report of a nomination was submitted:

By Mr. INHOFE for the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

*Jane Toshiko Nishida, of Maryland, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

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

By Mr. MCCAIN:

S. 2943. An original bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2017 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; from the Committee on Armed Services; placed on the calendar.

By Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself and Mrs. GILLIBRAND):

S. 2944. A bill to require adequate reporting on the Public Safety Officers' Benefit program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mrs. MURRAY (for herself, Mr. HATCH, Mr. KAINE, Mr. SCOTT, Mr. FRANKEN, and Ms. COLLINS):

S. 2945. A bill to promote effective registered apprenticeships, for skills, credentials, and employment, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. BOOKER (for himself and Ms. MIKULSKI):

S. 2946. A bill to amend title 5, United States Code, to include certain Federal positions within the definition of law enforcement officer for retirement purposes, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. BLUMENTHAL:

S. 2947. A bill to establish requirements regarding quality dates and safety dates in food labeling, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mrs. MURRAY (for herself, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mrs. MCCASKILL, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Ms. BALDWIN, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. BENNET, and Mr. WYDEN):

S. 2948. A bill to plan, develop, and make recommendations to increase access to sexual assault examinations for survivors by holding hospitals accountable and supporting the providers that serve them; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself, Mr. PORTMAN, Ms. STABENOW, and Mr. KIRK):

S. 2949. A bill to amend and reauthorize the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act of 1990; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. GARDNER (for himself and Mr. HATCH):

S. 2950. A bill to require the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency to receive, process, and pay certain claims relating to the Gold King Mine spill; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Ms. MURKOWSKI:

S. 2951. A bill to amend the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 to impose penalties and provide for the recovery of removal costs and damages in connection with certain discharges of oil from foreign offshore units, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

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

By Mr. LEAHY (for himself, Mr. MCCONNELL, and Mr. MARKEY):

S. Res. 469. A resolution commemorating the 100th anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising, a seminal moment in the journey of Ireland to independence; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. MORAN (for himself and Mr. MANCHIN):

S. Res. 470. A resolution recognizing the 100th anniversary of the Portland Cement Association, the national organization for the cement manufacturing and concrete industry; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. INHOFE (for himself and Mrs. BOXER):

S. Res. 471. A resolution designating the week of May 15 through May 21, 2016, as ''National Public Works Week''; considered and agreed to.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 366

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 366, a bill to require Senate candidates to file designations, statements, and reports in electronic form.

S. 461

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the name of the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 461, a bill to provide for alternative financing arrangements for the provision of certain services and the construction and maintenance of infrastructure at land border ports of entry, and for other purposes.

S. 590

At the request of Mrs. MCCASKILL, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HEINRICH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 590, a bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 and the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act to combat campus sexual violence, and for other purposes.

S. 1082

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1082, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for the removal or demotion of employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs based on performance or misconduct, and for other purposes.

S. 1139

At the request of Ms. KLOBUCHAR, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1139, a bill to amend the Help America Vote Act of 2002 to require States to provide for same day registration.

S. 1176

At the request of Mr. UDALL, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1176, a bill to amend the

Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to reform the system of public financing for Presidential elections, and for other purposes.

S. 1428

At the request of Mr. BARRASSO, the name of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1428, a bill to amend the USEC Privatization Act to require the Secretary of Energy to issue a long-term Federal excess uranium inventory management plan, and for other purposes.

S. 1479

At the request of Mr. INHOFE, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. CARPER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1479, a bill to amend the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 to modify provisions relating to grants, and for other purposes.

S. 1883

At the request of Mr. REED, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1883, a bill to maximize discovery, and accelerate development and availability, of promising childhood cancer treatments, and for other purposes.

S. 1982

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. CARPER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1982, a bill to authorize a Wall of Remembrance as part of the Korean War Veterans Memorial and to allow certain private contributions to fund the Wall of Remembrance.

S. 2100

At the request of Mr. SCHATZ, the name of the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2100, a bill to prohibit the sale or distribution of tobacco products to individuals under the age of 21.

S. 2279

At the request of Mr. MERKLEY, the name of the Senator from Wisconsin (Ms. BALDWIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2279, a bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a program to increase efficiency in the recruitment and hiring by the Department of Veterans Affairs of health care workers that are undergoing separation from the Armed Forces, to create uniform credentialing standards for certain health care professionals of the Department, and for other purposes.

S. 2465

At the request of Mrs. GILLIBRAND, the name of the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2465, a bill to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 15 Rochester Street in Bergen, New York, as the Barry G. Miller Post Office.

S. 2483

At the request of Mr. UDALL, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2483, a bill to prohibit States from carrying out more than one Congressional redistricting after a decennial census and apportionment, to require States to conduct such redistricting through independent commissions, and for other purposes.

S. 2531

At the request of Mr. KIRK, the names of the Senator from Utah (Mr. LEE), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO) and the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER) were added as cosponsors of S. 2531, a bill to authorize State and local governments to divest from entities that engage in commerce-related or investment-related boycott, divestment, or sanctions activities targeting Israel, and for other purposes.

At the request of Ms. MURKOWSKI, her name was added as a cosponsor of S. 2531, supra.

S. 2551

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the name of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2551, a bill to help prevent acts of genocide and mass atrocities, which threaten national and international security, by enhancing United States civilian capacities to prevent and mitigate such crises.

S. 2577

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the names of the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT) and the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) were added as cosponsors of S. 2577, a bill to protect crime victims' rights, to eliminate the substantial backlog of DNA and other forensic evidence samples to improve and expand the forensic science testing capacity of Federal, State, and local crime laboratories, to increase research and development of new testing technologies, to develop new training programs regarding the collection and use of forensic evidence, to provide post-conviction testing of DNA evidence to exonerate the innocent, to support accreditation efforts of forensic science laboratories and medical examiner offices, to address training and equipment needs, to improve the performance of counsel in State capital cases, and for other purposes.

S. 2584

At the request of Mr. KIRK, the names of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY), the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) and the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER) were added as cosponsors of S. 2584, a bill to promote and protect from discrimination living organ donors.

S. 2641

At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the names of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET) and the Senator from Maryland (Ms. MIKULSKI) were added as cosponsors of S. 2641, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act, in relation to requiring adrenoleukodystrophy screening of newborns.

S. 2707

At the request of Mr. SCOTT, the names of the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. AYOTTE), the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY) and the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO) were added as cosponsors of S. 2707, a bill to require the Secretary of Labor to nullify the proposed rule regarding defining and delimiting the exemptions for executive, administrative, professional, outside sales, and computer employees, to require the Secretary of Labor to conduct a full and complete economic analysis with improved economic data on small businesses, nonprofit employers, Medicare or Medicaid dependent health care providers, and small governmental jurisdictions, and all other employers, and minimize the impact on such employers, before promulgating any substantially similar rule, and to provide a rule of construction regarding the salary threshold exemption under the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, and for other purposes.

S. 2725

At the request of Ms. AYOTTE, the name of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2725, a bill to impose sanctions with respect to the ballistic missile program of Iran, and for other purposes.

S. 2750

At the request of Mr. THUNE, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2750, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code to extend and modify certain charitable tax provisions.

S. 2779

At the request of Mr. COONS, the name of the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2779, a bill to reauthorize the Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership, and for other purposes.

S. 2785

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2785, a bill to protect Native children and promote public safety in Indian country.

S. 2840

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2840, a bill to amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to authorize COPS grantees to use grant funds for active shooter training, and for other purposes.

S. 2854

At the request of Mrs. MCCASKILL, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2854, a bill to reauthorize the Emmett Till Unsolved Civil Rights Crime Act of 2007.

S. 2912

At the request of Mr. JOHNSON, the names of the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. PERDUE), the Senator from Utah (Mr. HATCH), the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE), the Senator from

Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE) and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN) were added as cosponsors of S. 2912, a bill to authorize the use of unapproved medical products by patients diagnosed with a terminal illness in accordance with State law, and for other purposes.

S. 2921

At the request of Mr. ISAKSON, the names of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. COATS) and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS) were added as cosponsors of S. 2921, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the accountability of employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, to improve health care and benefits for veterans, and for other purposes.

S. 2933

At the request of Ms. BALDWIN, the name of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) was withdrawn as a cosponsor of S. 2933, a bill to prohibit certain health care providers from providing non-Department health care services to veterans, and for other purposes.

S. 2934

At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2934, a bill to ensure that all individuals who should be prohibited from buying a firearm are listed in the national instant criminal background check system and require a background check for every firearm sale.

S. 2938

At the request of Mr. DAINES, the name of the Senator from Utah (Mr. HATCH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2938, a bill to direct the Secretary of the Interior to reestablish the Royalty Policy Committee in order to further a more consultative process with key Federal, State, tribal, environmental, and energy stakeholders, and for other purposes.

S. 2941

At the request of Mrs. FEINSTEIN, the name of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2941, a bill to require a study on women and lung cancer, and for other purposes.

S. CON. RES. 35

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the names of the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO) and the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. AYOTTE) were added as cosponsors of S. Con. Res. 35, a concurrent resolution expressing the sense of Congress that the United States should continue to exercise its veto in the United Nations Security Council on resolutions regarding the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

S. RES. 459

At the request of Mrs. FEINSTEIN, the name of the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 459, a resolution recognizing the importance of cancer research and the vital contributions of scientists, clinicians, cancer survivors, and other patient advocates across the United States who are dedicated to finding a cure for cancer, and designating May 2016, as ''National Cancer Research Month''.

S. RES. 466

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the names of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN) and the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 466, a resolution recognizing National Foster Care Month as an opportunity to raise awareness about the challenges of children in the foster-care system, and encouraging Congress to implement policy to improve the lives of children in the foster-care system.

AMENDMENT NO. 3923

At the request of Mr. BOOKER, the name of the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3923 intended to be proposed to H.R. 2577, a bill making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 3925

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the names of the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) and the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 3925 intended to be proposed to H.R. 2577, a bill making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 3927

At the request of Mr. COONS, the name of the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3927 intended to be proposed to H.R. 2577, a bill making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 3933

At the request of Mr. PERDUE, the name of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3933 proposed to H.R. 2577, a bill making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 3934

At the request of Mr. KING, the name of the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3934 proposed to H.R. 2577, a bill making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 3935

At the request of Mrs. BOXER, the name of the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3935 proposed to H.R. 2577, a bill making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 3941

At the request of Mr. BOOKER, the name of the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3941 proposed to H.R. 2577, a bill making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 3944

At the request of Mrs. FEINSTEIN, the name of the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3944 proposed to H.R. 2577, a bill making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 3948

At the request of Mr. HELLER, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3948 proposed to H.R. 2577, a bill making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 3951

At the request of Mr. HELLER, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3951 intended to be proposed to H.R. 2577, a bill making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 3957

At the request of Mr. LEE, the name of the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. PAUL) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3957 intended to be proposed to H.R. 2577, a bill making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 3970

At the request of Mr. COCHRAN, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3970 intended to be proposed to H.R. 2577, a bill making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 3981

At the request of Mr. FLAKE, the name of the Senator from Nebraska

(Mr. SASSE) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3981 intended to be proposed to H.R. 2577, a bill making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 3998

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the names of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN), the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) and the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 3998 proposed to H.R. 2577, a bill making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 4002

At the request of Mr. BLUMENTHAL, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 4002 intended to be proposed to H.R. 2577, a bill making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself and Mrs. GILLIBRAND):

S. 2944. A bill to require adequate reporting on the Public Safety Officers' Benefit program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I rise to speak about a bill I am introducing along with Senator GRASSLEY called the Public Safety Officers' Benefits Improvement Act.

When our first responders make the decision to join a police department or a fire department or an EMT squad, they do so knowing they might encounter hazards on the job that threaten their lives or even end their lives. These men and women work in some of the highest pressure and most dangerous environments—shootouts, fires, natural disasters, terror attacks.

Think about your own communities back home. When disaster strikes, when there is an emergency, who shows up first, speeding to the scene and ready to help? It is our police officers, it is our firefighters, and it is our EMT workers. Our public safety officers know that death or serious injury is a real risk in their jobs, but they show up to work anyway, ready to help and willing to sacrifice, if that is what it takes to keep their communities safe.

When first responders die as a result of their work, we all have the responsibility to help take care of their surviving family members. In 1984, more than three decades ago, Congress did the right thing and created a program called the Public Safety Officers' Benefit Program to help these families.

Whenever a tragedy struck and a first responder was killed on the job or passed away because of their job, these grieving families could take a little bit of comfort in knowing they would have the financial support they needed with this program. They knew they would have help from this program, transitioning to a life without their loved one.

In recent years, the families applying to the program have faced confusing and inconsistent requirements. They have faced long delays in receiving compensation. Before, when a loved one died on the job, the family would get compensation from this program without any serious delay. But now the burden to claim these funds and then retrieve them has been placed on the families—the same families this program is supposed to be helping.

As a result, hundreds of families who are already grieving now have to dig through public records themselves. They have to endure an exhausting paper chase with no guidance. And they have to go far beyond a reasonable doubt to prove to the Justice Department that their loved one did, in fact, serve as a first responder and sacrificed his or her life for this job.

Last fall, USA Today reported that of the more than 900 cases they reviewed, the average wait for a decision by the program about compensation was more than 1 year. For some families, it was 2 years, and for some, the wait was 3 years. This even includes our first responders who worked at Ground Zero. Think about the unnecessary stress these delays have placed on our families who lost loved ones.

We know we must fix this program. We must fix this program. These families of our fallen public safety officers are not getting the compensation they deserve, that their loved ones have earned, in the timely manner they need.

This bill—Senator GRASSLEY's and mine—is a bipartisan bill that fixes this problem. The Public Safety Officers' Benefits Improvement Act would make this compensation program more transparent and more efficient, and it would make sure it works.

The bill would require the program to report publicly the status of every claim so that families can know if and why their compensation is being delayed. It would give weight to the findings and records of Federal agencies, State agencies, and local agencies about the cause of the public safety officer's death so that families don't have to reproduce records that already exist. And this bill would reduce the wait for our families to receive the compensation they deserve and desperately need.

I thank my colleague Senator GRASSLEY for his strong leadership and his amazing advocacy, and I urge all my colleagues here to support this bill. Let's fix the Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program. Let's take care of these families—the families of our public safety officers—and let's do the right thing.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from New York for working together on this very important issue to get justice for some of our police officers and their families who have been burdened by too much redtape. She and I have worked together on so many things, and I appreciate this one as well.

In 1962, President John F. Kennedy signed a proclamation designating this week as National Police Week. As part of that tradition, tens of thousands of law enforcement officers have gathered in our Nation's Capital to honor those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice to the service of this Nation.

I rise to join these officers in thanking the men and women who have dedicated their lives to protecting our communities. We must never take their sacrifice for granted, and we need to appreciate that their surviving families have suffered real loss.

In recognition of this truth, Congress passed the Public Safety Officers' Benefits Act in 1976. The goal of the law was to provide death benefits to survivors of officers who die in the line of duty. Over the years, the law has been amended to provide disability and education benefits and to expand the pool of officers who are eligible for these benefits.

Looking at the 40-year history of this law, the overall intent of Congress is very clear: Families of fallen officers deserve a fair and timely consideration of their application for these benefits, and the word ''timely'' is what isn't being carried out right now.

If we were in these officers' shoes, we would like to see an answer—either yes or no—not years of limbo and lingering uncertainty. Unfortunately, that is precisely what too many families have had to endure since at least 2003, all because bureaucrats in the Justice Department failed to do their job and do it on time.

Three weeks ago, I chaired a Judiciary Committee hearing to examine this problem on the lack of timeliness. What we found was troubling. The Justice Department has a goal of processing these claims within 1 year of filing. However, according to the most recent data, the Justice Department is failing to meet its own 1-year deadline in 61 percent of the 693 pending death benefit claims. Those are 423 families who have been waiting for more than 1 year. That rate is unacceptable for a program designed to support families of fallen officers.

Somehow, the delays have gone from bad to worse. The failure rate was 27 percent for claims that were filed between 2008 and 2013. So it is very difficult to understand how that could happen.

For 13 years and counting, since 2003, the delays have persisted despite a 2004

Attorney General memorandum, despite a 2007 Judiciary Committee hearing, and despite three independent audits recommending corrective action. Not surprisingly, there have been periodic improvements in timeliness whenever Congress or watchdogs shine light into these delays. However, these improvements have been very short-lived. For example, in 2007, the Justice Department more than doubled its monthly rate of processing claims in the first 2 months following a Judiciary Committee hearing. However, in the ensuing 5 years, the inspector general found not only significant delays but also a serious lack of documentation and data.

I began looking into this program last January after constituents informed me that families in Iowa waited more than 3 years to get a decision, but the Justice Department's response to my oversight letters confirmed that these delays persist on a nationwide scale. For instance, there are currently 175 pending death and disability claims that were filed on behalf of officers who lost their lives as a result of their September 11 response efforts. That is why I have written six letters to the Justice Department in the last 1½ years asking for status updates on all pending claims. Initially, after I sent my first letters, the number of pending claims went down at a steady pace. However, more recently the Justice Department has simply failed to respond to my letters.

At last month's Judiciary Committee hearing, a claimant from my State of Iowa testified about having waited 3½ years without an answer from the Justice Department, but just 2 days after that hearing, that claimant got a phone call from the Department saying the claim had been approved. What was the Justice Department doing for the past 3½ years on that claim? And what about the 692 other families who are waiting for a decision? Families of fallen officers and advocacy groups agree, transparency leads to accountability, and the Justice Department should be held accountable for its handling of these claims. So based on this 13-year record, I have concluded that the best way to ensure timeliness in these claims is to permanently increase the level of transparency surrounding this program.

Today the Senator from New York, just speaking, and I are introducing a bill that would do just that. It is called the Public Safety Officers' Benefits Improvement Act. This bill would require the Justice Department to post on its Web site weekly status updates for all pending claims. This way the public can evaluate how well the Department is performing under its goal of processing claims within the 1-year filing deadline they have. The Justice Department is already posting weekly statistics with respect to the September 11th Victims Compensation Fund, which is a similar program. So the Department should be able to do the same with respect to pending public safety officers' benefits claims by posting weekly statistics.

In addition, our bill would require the Justice Department to report to Congress other aggregate statistics regarding these claims at least twice a year, and the bill would make it easier for the Justice Department to process these claims in other ways; for example, by allowing the Department to rely on other Federal regulatory standards and to give substantial weight to findings of fact of State, local, and other Federal agencies.

In short, this is a simple bipartisan bill with narrowly tailored provisions. Each provision is targeted to specific problems that have been identified over the past 13 years by independent audits, by committee hearings, by advocacy groups, and, of course, as we would expect, by families of fallen officers who wonder what is going on at the Department of Justice.

So I thank Senator GILLIBRAND for working with me to develop this commonsense legislation. I urge my colleagues to stand with us in support of these officers and their families and help us get this bill done as our way of saying thank you to these men and women, particularly as we honor them in this particular season we call National Police Week.

By Mr. BOOKER (for himself and Ms. MIKULSKI):

S. 2946. A bill to amend title 5, United States Code, to include certain Federal positions within the definition of law enforcement officer for retirement purposes, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, today I wish to introduce the Law Enforcement Officers' Equity Act, a common sense bill that would fix a loophole in Federal law that denies many Federal law enforcement officers Federal benefits. This week, as our Nation pauses to honor the sacrifices and services of our men and women in law enforcement, I am glad to introduce legislation to accord them with the benefits they so deeply deserve.

This legislation has been introduced in past Congresses by my friend and colleague, Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI. I am grateful to her for allowing me to introduce this bill, and I am glad to have her support as an original cosponsor of this legislation.

Law enforcement officers have one of the toughest jobs in America. Twenty-four hours a day and 365 days a year, they work to keep our communities safe and uphold the rule of law. During my tenure as mayor of Newark, I spent countless hours with police officers patrolling the streets, and I saw firsthand how difficult and dangerous their jobs can be. These brave men and women apprehend violent criminals and arrest drug kingpins, which carries with it immense pressure and stress.

The legislation I am introducing today would fix a loophole in our Federal law. Due to the level of training required and greater danger present in their profession, Congress determined years ago that individuals in Federal law enforcement should receive higher salaries and enhanced retirement benefits compared to other Federal employees. Unfortunately, approximately 30,000 Federal law enforcement officers are classified in a way that precludes them for receiving the enhanced retirement benefits they deserve.

As a result of this loophole, certain officers who work for Federal agencies—such as the Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs, U.S. Postal Service, U.S. Mint, National Institute of Health, and many more—receive lower pensions as compared to other law enforcement officers with similar duties and responsibilities. This problem must be fixed. Correcting this error is not only dictated by fairness, but it is a matter of public safety because of the value of recruiting and retaining experienced and highly trained law enforcement officers is immeasurable.

The Law Enforcement Officers' Equity Act would expand the definition of ''law enforcement office'' for retirement purposes to include all Federal law enforcement officers. The change would grant law enforcement officer status to the follow individuals: employees who are authorized to carry a firearm and whose duties include the investigation and/or apprehension of suspected criminals; employees of the Internal Revenue Service whose duties are primarily the collection of delinquent taxes and securing delinquent returns; employees of the U.S Postal Inspection Service; and employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs who are Department police offices. These officers face the same risks and challenges as the men and women currenly classified properly under Federal law as law enforcement officers, and they deserve the same benefits.

The Law Enforcement Officers' Equity Act would allow incumbent law enforcement officers' Federal service after the enactment of the act to be considered service performed as a law enforcement officer for retirement purposes.

This legislation has the support of numerous law enforcement groups, including the Fraternal Order of Police, Postal Police Officers Association, National Association of Police Officers, the Federal Law Enforcement Officers' Association, and the National Treasury Employees Union.

According to the Postal Police Officers Association, ''These officers face the same risks and challenges as their federal law enforcement colleagues who currently receive [law enforcement officer] retirement status. This bill will ensure that officers across the country, who put their lives on the line each and every day to protect us, earn the benefits that they deserve.''

And the National Association of Police Organizations has said, ''This bill

will ensure that officers across the country, who put their lives on the line each and every day to protect us, earn the benefits that they deserve.''

Fundamental fairness demands that we close this loophole in Federal law and give all Federal law enforcement officers the retirement benefits they deserve. I ask my colleagues to support the Law Enforcement Officers' Equity Act, and I urge its speedy passage.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 469—COMMEMORATING THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1916 EASTER RISING, A SEMINAL MOMENT IN THE JOURNEY OF IRELAND TO INDEPENDENCE

Mr. LEAHY (for himself, Mr. MCCONNELL, and Mr. MARKEY) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 469

Whereas the 100th anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising has a particular resonance in the United States;

Whereas since the founding of the United States, Irish people and the millions of United States citizens of Irish descent have helped to shape the history of the United States;

Whereas, in the words of President John F. Kennedy, ''No people ever believed more deeply in the cause of Irish freedom than the people of the United States'';

Whereas 5 of the 7 signatories of the 1916 Proclamation of Independence spent periods of time in the United States that significantly influenced the thinking and actions of those signatories;

Whereas the United States is the only foreign country specifically mentioned in the 1916 Proclamation of Independence;

Whereas the contemporary ties between the United States and Ireland are of extraordinary depth and breadth;

Whereas continued United States engagement in the Northern Ireland peace process is vital to safeguarding the gains made since the Good Friday Agreement;

Whereas the 100th anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising offers an opportunity for remembrance, reconciliation, and reimagining of the future;

Whereas, on May 17 and 18, 2016, the Taoiseach, the Prime Minister of Ireland, will visit Washington, D.C., for events commemorating the 100th anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising; and

Whereas more than 200 other commemorative events will take place across the United States to mark the 100th anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) recalls the special ties between Ireland and the United States, continually sustained and strengthened throughout the intertwined history of both countries;

(2) welcomes the program of commemorations in the United States marking the 100th anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising of Ireland, including the events taking place in Washington, D.C.; and

(3) recognizes the importance of nurturing and renewing the unique relationship between the United States and Ireland, and the people of the United States and Ireland, into the future.

SENATE RESOLUTION 470—RECOGNIZING THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PORTLAND CEMENT ASSOCIATION, THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR THE CEMENT MANUFACTURING AND CONCRETE INDUSTRY

Mr. MORAN (for himself and Mr. MANCHIN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 470

Whereas the first concrete road in the United States was built in 1890, and a portion of the original pavement of that road is still in use as of May 2016;

Whereas, in 1916—

(1) the Portland Cement Association was established as the national organization for the cement manufacturing and concrete industry; and

(2) Congress passed the first Federal-aid highway legislation, setting in motion the development of a network of national highways;

Whereas, in 1921, the Portland Cement Association joined the Bureau of Public Roads and various State agencies to determine the best ways to design and build concrete roads, resulting in the Illinois Division of Highways Bates Test Road, a landmark project that established the most economical design for concrete pavements;

Whereas the Portland Cement Association participated in design and testing for the Hoover Dam, the Grand Coulee Dam, and many other concrete projects;

Whereas 60 percent of the 41,000-mile highway system authorized under the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 (70 Stat. 374), which established the Highway Trust Fund, was constructed using concrete, based on research and performance data identifying the significance of using concrete throughout the interstate highway system;

Whereas due to new and increasing uses of concrete that required specialized research, the Portland Cement Association added 2 new laboratory facilities in 1958, a structural laboratory and a fire research center, which resulted in the development of more durable and economical buildings and improvements in fire safety for concrete structures and transportation facilities;

Whereas 2016 marks the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Portland Cement Association; and

Whereas the Portland Cement Association advocates in support of sustainability, resiliency, economic growth, infrastructure investment, and overall innovation and excellence in construction throughout the United States: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes the 100th anniversary of the Portland Cement Association;

(2) commends the Portland Cement Association for its work and dedication to—

(A) the infrastructure of the United States; and

(B) innovative developments;

(3) recognizes the strong initiatives of the Portland Cement Association to improve the state of the cement industry; and

(4) recognizes the members of the Portland Cement Association and all cement manufacturers on the centennial celebration of the establishment of the Portland Cement Association.

SENATE RESOLUTION 471—DESIGNATING THE WEEK OF MAY 15 THROUGH MAY 21, 2016, AS ''NATIONAL PUBLIC WORKS WEEK''

Mr. INHOFE (for himself and Mrs. BOXER) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 471

Whereas public works infrastructure, facilities, and services are of vital importance to the health, safety, and well-being of the people of the United States;

Whereas the public works infrastructure, facilities, and services could not be provided without the dedicated efforts of public works professionals, including engineers and administrators, who represent State and local governments throughout the United States;

Whereas public works professionals design, build, operate, and maintain the transportation systems, water infrastructure, sewage and refuse disposal systems, public buildings, and other structures and facilities that are vital to the people and communities of the United States; and

Whereas understanding the role that public infrastructure plays in protecting the environment, improving public health and safety, contributing to economic vitality, and enhancing the quality of life of every community of the United States is in the interest of the people of the United States: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates the week of May 15 through May 21, 2016, as ''National Public Works Week'';

(2) recognizes and celebrates the important contributions that public works professionals make every day to improve—

(A) the public infrastructure of the United States; and

(B) the communities that public works professionals serve; and

(3) urges individuals and communities throughout the United States to join with representatives of the Federal Government and the American Public Works Association in activities and ceremonies that are designed—

(A) to pay tribute to the public works professionals of the United States; and

(B) to recognize the substantial contributions that public works professionals make to the United States.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 4005. Mr. HELLER submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

SA 4006. Mr. VITTER submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4007. Mr. PAUL submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4008. Mr. DAINES (for himself and Mr. TESTER) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK,

Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra.

SA 4009. Mr. UDALL (for himself and Mr. HEINRICH) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4010. Mr. DAINES submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4011. Mr. NELSON submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra.

SA 4012. Mr. TOOMEY (for himself, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. VITTER, Mr. COTTON, and Mr. INHOFE) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4013. Mr. SESSIONS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3900 proposed by Mr. MCCONNELL (for Mr. BLUNT (for himself, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. COCHRAN, Mrs. MURRAY, and Mr. LEAHY)) to the amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4014. Ms. MURKOWSKI submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4015. Mr. BLUMENTHAL submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4016. Ms. BALDWIN (for herself and Mr. JOHNSON) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4017. Mrs. ERNST submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4018. Mrs. ERNST submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4019. Mrs. ERNST submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4020. Mrs. ERNST submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4021. Mrs. ERNST submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4022. Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself and Mr. TILLIS) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4023. Mr. SASSE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra.

SA 4024. Mr. ISAKSON submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra.

SA 4025. Ms. BALDWIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4026. Ms. BALDWIN (for herself, Mr. MORAN, and Mr. TILLIS) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4027. Mr. WARNER (for himself and Mr. BLUNT) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4028. Mr. PERDUE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4029. Mr. DURBIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra.

SA 4030. Ms. MIKULSKI submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra.

SA 4031. Mr. CARDIN (for himself and Mr. MCCAIN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 2943, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2017 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4032. Mr. BLUMENTHAL submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4033. Mr. BLUMENTHAL (for himself and Mr. MARKEY) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4034. Mr. BLUMENTHAL (for himself and Mr. MARKEY) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4035. Mr. PAUL submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577 , supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4036. Mr. FLAKE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4037. Mr. PORTMAN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4038. Mr. FLAKE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra.

SA 4039. Mr. MCCAIN (for himself, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, and Mr. BURR) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra.

SA 4040. Mr. CARDIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4041. Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself, Mrs. SHAHEEN, and Mr. PETERS) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4042. Mr. WARNER (for himself and Mr. KAINE) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra.

SA 4043. Mr. MANCHIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra.

SA 4044. Mr. DURBIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4045. Mr. ROUNDS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4046. Mr. PETERS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4047. Mr. INHOFE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4048. Mr. WARNER submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4049. Mr. FLAKE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4050. Mr. RUBIO submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4051. Mr. WARNER (for himself and Mr. BENNET) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 4039 submitted by Mr. MCCAIN (for himself, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, and Mr. BURR) to the amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4052. Mr. WARNER (for himself and Mr. BENNET) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 4039 submitted by Mr. MCCAIN (for himself, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, and Mr. BURR) to the amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4053. Mr. LEE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4054. Mr. LEE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4055. Mr. LEE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4056. Mr. LEE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4057. Mr. LEE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4058. Mr. LEE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4059. Mr. LEE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4060. Mr. LEE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4061. Ms. COLLINS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3897 proposed by Mr. MCCONNELL (for Mr. LEE (for himself, Mr. VITTER, Mr. COTTON, and Mr. SHELBY)) to the amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 4005. Mr. HELLER submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; as follows:

At the end of title II of division B, add the following:

SEC. 251. Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives a report that contains an update on the progress of the Department of Veterans Affairs in completing the Rural Veterans Burial Initiative and the expected timeline for completion of such initiative.

SA 4006. Mr. VITTER submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of title II of division B, add the following:

SEC. 251. None of the funds made available in this Act shall be used to pay any bonus to an individual in a Senior Executive position (as defined in section 3132(a) of title 5, United States Code) in the Department of Veterans Affairs who is employed within Veterans Integrated Service Network 16.

SA 4007. Mr. PAUL submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

In division A, on page 41, after line 25, add the following:

SEC. 127. (a) All of the unobligated balances of the amounts appropriated for fiscal year 2016 under the headings ''MULTILATERAL ASSISTANCE'' and ''BILATERAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE'' in titles III and V of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2016 (division K of Public Law 114–113), including funds designated by Congress for Overseas Contingency Operations/Global War on Terrorism pursuant to section 251(b)(2)(A)(ii) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (2 U.S.C. 901(b)(2)(A)(ii)) are rescinded.

(b) In addition to the amount made available under the heading ''FEDERAL-AID HIGHWAYS''in this title, an amount equal to the amount rescinded pursuant to subsection (a) shall be made available for the implementation or execution of Federal-aid highway, bridge construction, and highway safety construction programs authorized under titles 23 and 49, United States Code.

SA 4008. Mr. DAINES (for himself and Mr. TESTER) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; as follows:

At the appropriate place in title I of division B, insert the following:

SEC. ____. Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall conduct a study and submit to Congress a report on the use of defense access road funding to build alternate routes for military equipment traveling to missile launch facilities, taking into consideration the location of local populations, security risks, safety, and impacts of weather.

SA 4009. Mr. UDALL (for himself and Mr. HEINRICH) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 102, strike lines 3 through 16 and insert the following:

would otherwise receive: *Provided further*, That grant amounts not allocated to a recipient pursuant to the previous proviso shall be allocated under the need component of the formula proportionately among all other Indian tribes not subject to an adjustment under such proviso: *Provided further*, That the second proviso shall not apply to any Indian tribe that would otherwise receive a formula allocation of less than $8,000,000: *Provided further*, That to take effect, the 3 previous provisos do not

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SA 4010. Mr. DAINES submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of title II in division B, add the following:

SEC. 251. None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available in this title shall be used in a manner that would interfere with removal by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs of employees who have committed felony or misdemeanor offenses, regardless of whether the offense occurred while the employee was at work.

SA 4011. Mr. NELSON submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; as follows:

In division A, strike section 225 and insert the following:

SEC. 225. (a) Any entity receiving housing assistance payments shall maintain decent, safe, and sanitary conditions, as determined by the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (in this section referred to as the ''Secretary''), and comply with any standards under applicable State or local laws, rules, ordinances, or regulations relating to the physical condition of any property covered under a housing assistance payment contract.

(b) The Secretary shall take action under subsection (c) when a multifamily housing project with a section 8 contract or contract for similar project-based assistance—

(1) receives a Uniform Physical Condition Standards (UPCS) score of 30 or less;

(2) fails to certify in writing to the Secretary within 3 days that all Exigent Health and Safety deficiencies identified by the inspector at the project have been corrected; or

(3) receives a UPCS score between 31 and 59 and has received consecutive scores of less than 60 on UPCS inspections.

Such requirements shall apply to insured and noninsured projects with assistance attached to the units under section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f), but do not apply to such units assisted under section 8(o)(13) (42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)(13)) or to public housing units assisted with capital or operating funds under section 9 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437g).

(c)(1) The Secretary shall notify the owner and provide an opportunity for response within 15 days after the results of the UPCS inspection are issued. If the violations remain, the Secretary shall develop a plan to bring the property into compliance within 30 days after the results of the UPCS inspection are issued and must provide the owner with a Notice of Default with a specified timetable, determined by the Secretary, for correcting all deficiencies. The Secretary must also provide a copy of the Notice of Default to the tenants, the local government, any mortgagees, and any contract administrator. If the owner's appeal results in a UPCS score of 60 or above, the Secretary may withdraw the Notice of Default.

(2) At the end of the time period for correcting all deficiencies specified in the Notice of Default, if the owner fails to fully correct such deficiencies, the Secretary may—

(A) require immediate replacement of project management with a management agent approved by the Secretary;

(B) impose civil money penalties, which shall be used solely for the purpose of supporting safe and sanitary conditions at applicable properties, as designated by the Secretary, with priority given to the tenants of the property affected by the penalty;

(C) abate the section 8 contract, including partial abatement, as determined by the Secretary, until all deficiencies have been corrected;

(D) pursue transfer of the project to an owner, approved by the Secretary under established procedures, which will be obligated to promptly make all required repairs and to accept renewal of the assistance contract as long as such renewal is offered;

(E) transfer the existing section 8 contract to another project or projects and owner or owners;

(F) pursue exclusionary sanctions, including suspensions or debarments from Federal programs;

(G) seek judicial appointment of a receiver to manage the property and cure all project deficiencies or seek a judicial order of specific performance requiring the owner to cure all project deficiencies;

(H) work with the owner, lender, or other related party to stabilize the property in an attempt to preserve the property through compliance, transfer of ownership, or an infusion of capital provided by a third-party that requires time to effectuate; or

(I) take any other regulatory or contractual remedies available as deemed necessary and appropriate by the Secretary.

(d) The Secretary shall also take appropriate steps to ensure that project-based contracts remain in effect, subject to the exercise of contractual abatement remedies to assist relocation of tenants for major threats to health and safety after written notice to and informed consent of the affected tenants and use of other remedies set forth above. To the extent the Secretary determines, in consultation with the tenants and the local government, that the property is not feasible for continued rental assistance payments under such section 8 or other programs, based on consideration of (1) the costs of rehabilitating and operating the property and all available Federal, State, and local resources, including rent adjustments under section 524 of the Multifamily Assisted Housing Reform and Affordability Act of 1997 (''MAHRAA'') and (2) environmental conditions that cannot be remedied in a cost-effective fashion, the Secretary may, in consultation with the tenants of that property, contract for project-based rental assistance payments with an owner or owners of other existing housing properties, or provide other rental assistance.

(e) The Secretary shall report quarterly on all properties covered by this section that are assessed through the Real Estate Assessment Center and have UPCS physical inspection scores of less than 60 or have received an unsatisfactory management and occupancy review within the past 36 months. The report shall include—

(1) the enforcement actions being taken to address such conditions, including imposition of civil money penalties and termination of subsidies, and identify properties that have such conditions multiple times;

(2) actions that the Department of Housing and Urban Development is taking to protect tenants of such identified properties; and

(3) any administrative or legislative recommendations to further improve the living conditions at properties covered under a housing assistance payment contract.

SA 4012. Mr. TOOMEY (for himself, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. VITTER, Mr. COTTON, and Mr. INHOFE) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

In division A, on page 108, line 7, strike the period at the end and insert the following:

: *Provided further*, That none of the funds made available under this heading may be obligated or expended for any State, or any political subdivision of a State—

(1) that has in effect a statute, ordinance, policy, or practice that prohibits or restricts any government entity or official—

(A) from sending, receiving, maintaining, or exchanging with any Federal, State, or local government entity information regarding the citizenship or immigration status (lawful or unlawful) of any individual other than an individual who comes forward as a victim or a witness to a criminal offense; or

(B) from complying with a request lawfully made by the Department of Homeland Security under section 236 or 287 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1226 and 1357) to comply with a detainer for, or notify about the release of, an individual other than an individual who comes forward as a victim or a witness to a criminal offense; or

(2) whose law enforcement officers and other employees, contractors, and agents are not certified by the Department of Homeland Security (whether under section 287(g) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1357(g)) or other authority and whether through a memorandum of understanding, regulations, or otherwise) to be acting as agents of the Department of Homeland Security with all the authority available to employees of the Department of Homeland Security when they take actions to comply with a detainer issued by the Department of Homeland Security under section 236 or 287 of such Act.

SA 4013. Mr. SESSIONS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3900 proposed by Mr. MCCONNELL (for Mr. BLUNT (for himself, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. COCHRAN, Mrs. MURRAY, and Mr. LEAHY)) to the amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end, add the following:

CHAPTER 4—REVENUE PROVISIONS

ELIGIBILITY FOR CHILD TAX CREDIT

SEC. _____. (a) Subsection (e) of section 24 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended to read as follows:

''(e) IDENTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—No credit shall be allowed under this section to any taxpayer unless—

''(A) such taxpayer includes the taxpayer's valid identification number on the return of tax for the taxable year, and

''(B) with respect to any qualifying child, the taxpayer includes the name and valid identification number of such qualifying child on such return of tax.

''(2) VALID IDENTIFICATION NUMBER.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—For purposes of this subsection, the term 'valid identification number' means a social security number issued to an individual by the Social Security Administration. Such term shall not include a TIN issued by the Internal Revenue Service.

''(B) DATE OF ISSUANCE.—No credit shall be allowed under this section if the valid identifying number of the taxpayer was issued after the due date for filing the return for the taxable year.''.

(b) The amendment made by this section shall apply to taxable years beginning after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SA 4014. Ms. MURKOWSKI submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place in division A, insert the following:

SEC. ____. Notwithstanding any other provision of law or regulation, including section 41713 of title 49, United States Code, the State of Alaska or the State of Hawaii may enact or enforce a law, regulation, or other provision having the force and effect of law that regulates the price, route, or service of an air carrier that provides air ambulance service in that State.

SA 4015. Mr. BLUMENTHAL submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place in division A, insert the following:

SEC. ____. (a) The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall require each public housing agency that administers public housing (as defined in section 3 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437a)) or housing assisted under section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f) to remove and replace, in each dwelling unit in which a child under the age of 9 resides, window coverings with accessible cords exceeding 8 inches in length and window coverings with continuous loops or beads.

(b) The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall require public housing agencies to phase out window coverings with accessible cords exceeding 8 inches in length and window coverings with continuous loops or beads that do not contain a cord tension device that prohibits operation when not anchored to a wall from dwelling units in public housing (as defined in section 3 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437a)) and housing assisted under section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f) not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act.

SA 4016. Ms. BALDWIN (for herself and Mr. JOHNSON) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of title I in division A, add the following:

SEC. _____. Section 127 of title 23, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(u) PILOT PROGRAM.—

''(1) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

''(A) PILOT PROGRAM.—The term 'pilot program' means the pilot program established by paragraph (2).

''(B) STATE.—The term 'State' means the State of Wisconsin.

''(2) ESTABLISHMENT.—Notwithstanding subsection (a) the State may participate in a pilot program relating to certain exceptions to certain vehicle weight limitations applicable to the Interstate System in accordance with this subsection.

''(3) PROGRAM.—Under the pilot program, the State may authorize a vehicle with a maximum gross weight, including all enforcement tolerances, that exceeds the maximum gross weight otherwise applicable under subsection (a) to operate on Interstate System routes in the State, if—

''(A) the vehicle is equipped with at least 6 axles;

''(B) the weight of any single axle on the vehicle does not exceed 20,000 pounds, including enforcement tolerances;

''(C) the weight of any tandem axle on the vehicle does not exceed 34,000 pounds, including enforcement tolerances;

''(D) the weight of any group of 3 or more axles on the vehicle does not exceed 51,000 pounds, including enforcement tolerances;

''(E) the gross weight of the vehicle does not exceed 91,000 pounds, including enforcement tolerances; and

''(F) the vehicle complies with the bridge formula under subsection (a)(2).

''(4) SPECIAL RULES.—

''(A) OTHER EXCEPTIONS NOT AFFECTED.—This subsection shall not restrict—

''(i) a vehicle that may operate under any other provision of this section, or another Federal law; or

''(ii) the authority of the State with respect to a vehicle described in clause (i).

''(B) MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION.—The State may implement this subsection by any means, including statute or rule of general applicability, by special permit, or otherwise.

''(5) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—

''(A) REPORT.—If the State participates in the pilot program, after the pilot program terminates in accordance with paragraph (10), the State shall submit to the Secretary a report that includes—

''(i) the number of fatalities that occurred in the State involving crashes on the Interstate System in the State of vehicles authorized to operate on that system under the pilot program;

''(ii) the estimated vehicle miles traveled by vehicles described in clause (i) on the Interstate System in the State; and

''(iii) the estimated gross vehicle weight and number of axles of vehicles described in clause (i) at the time of a crash described in clause (i).

''(B) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.—The Secretary shall make all information required under subparagraph (A) available to the public.

''(6) TERMINATION AS TO ROUTE SEGMENT.—The Secretary may terminate the operation of vehicles authorized by the State under the pilot program on a specific Interstate System route segment if, after the effective date of a decision of the State to allow vehicles to operate under the pilot program, the Secretary determines that operation poses an unreasonable safety risk based on an engineering analysis of the route segment or an analysis of safety or other applicable data from the route segment.

''(7) WAIVER OF HIGHWAY FUNDING REDUCTION.—Notwithstanding subsection (a), the total amount of funds apportioned to the State under section 104(b)(1) for any period may not be reduced under subsection (a) if the State authorizes a vehicle described in paragraph (3) to operate on the Interstate System in the State under the pilot program.

''(8) PRESERVING STATE AND LOCAL AUTHORITY REGARDING NON-INTERSTATE SYSTEM HIGHWAYS.—Subsection (b) shall not apply to motor vehicles operating on the Interstate System solely under the pilot program.

''(9) SAVINGS PROVISION.—The pilot program shall not affect the operation of any vehicle that, as of the date of enactment of this subsection, is permitted under Federal and State law to have a gross vehicle weight of greater than 91,000 pounds, including under subsections (f), (j), and (o).

''(10) TERMINATION.—The pilot program shall terminate on the date that is 1 year after the date of enactment of this subsection.''.

SA 4017. Mrs. ERNST submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of title II of division B, add the following:

SEC. 251. None of the funds made available in this title may be used to pay a bonus to an individual in a Senior Executive position (as defined in section 3132(a) of title 5, United States Code) or leadership position within the Office of Construction and Facilities Management of the Department of Veterans Affairs until the Secretary of Veterans Affairs submits to Congress a report detailing how the Department intends to reduce the designation of the Department by the Government Accountability Office as ''high-risk'' in Federal real property portfolios due to longstanding problems with excess and underutilized property and overreliance on leasing.

SA 4018. Mrs. ERNST submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of title II of division B, add the following:

SEC. 251. None of the funds made available in this title may be used to pay a bonus to an individual in a Senior Executive position (as defined in section 3132(a) of title 5, United States Code) or leadership position in the Department of Veterans Affairs until the Secretary of Veterans Affairs submits to Congress a report detailing a plan to address the report by the Government Accountability Office in 2012 concerning savings estimates by the Department that were flawed or lacked analytic support.

SA 4019. Mrs. ERNST submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of title II of division B, add the following:

SEC. 251. None of the funds made available in this title may be used to provide administrative leave to an employee of the Department of Veterans Affairs unless the immediate supervisor of the employee specifies

that the administrative leave complies with the guidelines issued by the Office of Personnel Management with respect to administrative leave.

SA 4020. Mrs. ERNST submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of title II of division B, add the following:

SEC. 251. None of the funds made available in this title may be used for the procurement of artwork, including in new construction by the Department of Veterans Affairs, until the Secretary of Veterans Affairs notifies Congress that the appointment backlog for veterans seeking primary care appointments from the Department has been eliminated.

SA 4021. Mrs. ERNST submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of title II of division B, add the following:

SEC. 251. Funds made available in this Act for purposes of paying bonuses or relocation benefits to individuals in Senior Executive positions (as defined in section 3132(a) of title 5, United States Code) at the Department of Veterans Affairs shall be used, in lieu of paying such bonuses or benefits, to reduce the backlog of appeals of disability claims under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

SA 4022. Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself and Mr. TILLIS) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of title II of division B, add the following:

SEC. 251. ESTABLISHMENT OF CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN PREVENTION, DIAGNOSIS, MITIGATION, TREATMENT, AND REHABILITATION OF HEALTH CONDITIONS RELATING TO EXPOSURE TO BURN PITS AND OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL EXPOSURES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 73 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 7330B. Center of excellence in prevention, diagnosis, mitigation, treatment, and rehabilitation of health conditions relating to exposure to burn pits and other environmental exposures

''(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—(1) The Secretary shall establish within the Department a center of excellence in the prevention, diagnosis, mitigation, treatment, and rehabilitation of health conditions relating to exposure to burn pits and other environmental exposures to carry out the responsibilities specified in subsection (d).

''(2) The Secretary shall establish the center of excellence under paragraph (1) through the use of—

''(A) the directives and policies of the Department in effect as of the date of the enactment of this section;

''(B) the recommendations of the Comptroller General of the United States and Inspector General of the Department in effect as of such date; and

''(C) guidance issued by the Secretary of Defense under section 313 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013 (Public Law 112–239; 10 U.S.C. 1074 note).

''(b) SELECTION OF SITE.—In selecting the site for the center of excellence established under subsection (a), the Secretary shall consider entities that—

''(1) are equipped with the specialized equipment needed to study, diagnose, and treat health conditions relating to exposure to burn pits and other environmental exposures;

''(2) have a track record of publishing information relating to post-deployment health exposures among veterans who served in the Armed Forces in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom;

''(3) have developed animal models and in vitro models of dust immunology and lung injury consistent with the injuries of members of the Armed Forces who served in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom; and

''(4) have expertise in allergy and immunology, pulmonary diseases, and industrial and management engineering.

''(c) COLLABORATION.—The Secretary shall ensure that the center of excellence collaborates, to the maximum extent practicable, with the Secretary of Defense, institutions of higher education, and other appropriate public and private entities (including international entities) to carry out the responsibilities specified in subsection (d).

''(d) RESPONSIBILITIES.—The center of excellence shall have the following responsibilities:

''(1) To provide for the development, testing, and dissemination within the Department of best practices for the treatment of health conditions relating to exposure to burn pits and other environmental exposures.

''(2) To provide guidance for the health systems of the Department and the Department of Defense in determining the personnel required to provide quality health care for members of the Armed Forces and veterans with health conditions relating to exposure to burn pits and other environmental exposures.

''(3) To establish, implement, and oversee a comprehensive program to train health professionals of the Department and the Department of Defense in the treatment of health conditions relating to exposure to burn pits and other environmental exposures.

''(4) To facilitate advancements in the study of the short-term and long-term effects of exposure to burn pits and other environmental exposures.

''(5) To disseminate within medical facilities of the Department best practices for training health professionals with respect to health conditions relating to exposure to burn pits and other environmental exposures.

''(6) To conduct basic science and translational research on health conditions relating to exposure to burn pits and other environmental exposures for the purposes of understanding the etiology of such conditions and developing preventive interventions and new treatments.

''(7) To provide medical treatment to all veterans identified as part of the open burn pit registry established under section 201 of the Dignified Burial and Other Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 2012 (Public Law 112–260; 38 U.S.C. 527 note).

''(e) USE OF BURN PITS REGISTRY DATA.—In carrying out its responsibilities under subsection (d), the center shall have access to and make use of the data accumulated by the burn pits registry established under section 201 of the Dignified Burial and Other Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 2012 (Public Law 112–260; 38 U.S.C. 527 note).

''(f) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

''(1) The term 'burn pit' means an area of land located in Afghanistan or Iraq that—

''(A) is designated by the Secretary of Defense to be used for disposing solid waste by burning in the outdoor air; and

''(B) does not contain a commercially manufactured incinerator or other equipment specifically designed and manufactured for the burning of solid waste.

''(2) The term 'other environmental exposures' means exposure to environmental hazards, including burn pits, dust or sand, hazardous materials, and waste at any site in Afghanistan or Iraq that emits smoke containing pollutants present in the environment or smoke from fires or explosions.

''(g) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section $30,000,000 for each of the first five fiscal years beginning after the date of the enactment of this section.''.

(b) USE OF FUNDS.—In carrying out section 7330B of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs may use amounts appropriated or otherwise made available to the Department of Veterans Affairs for any other purpose.

(c) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 73 of such title is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 7330A the following new item:

''7330B. Center of excellence in prevention, diagnosis, mitigation, treatment, and rehabilitation of health conditions relating to exposure to burn pits and other environmental exposures.''.

SA 4023. Mr. SASSE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; as follows:

At the end of title II of division B, add the following:

SEC. 251. None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available in this title may be used by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to enter into an agreement related to resolving a dispute or claim with an individual that would restrict in any way the individual from speaking to members of Congress or

their staff on any topic not otherwise prohibited from disclosure by Federal law.

SA 4024. Mr. ISAKSON submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; as follows:

In division A, on page 49, between lines 6 and 7, insert the following:

SEC. 142. Not later than 6 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Transportation shall issue a final rule requiring the use of speed limiting devices on trucks with a gross vehicle weight rating in excess of 26,000 pounds.

SA 4025. Ms. BALDWIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of title II of division B, add the following:

DISCONTINUATION BY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS OF USE OF SOCIAL SECURITY ACCOUNT NUMBERS TO IDENTIFY VETERANS

SEC. 251. (a) Except as provided in subsection (b), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Labor, shall discontinue using Social Security account numbers to identify individuals in all information systems of the Department of Veterans Affairs as follows:

(1) For all veterans submitting to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs new claims for benefits under laws administered by the Secretary, not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(2) For all individuals not described in paragraph (1), not later than five years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(b) The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may use a Social Security account number to identify an individual in an information system of the Department of Veterans Affairs if and only if the use of such number is required to obtain information the Secretary requires from an information system that is not under the jurisdiction of the Secretary.

SA 4026. Ms. BALDWIN (for herself, Mr. MORAN, and Mr. TILLIS) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of title II of division B, add the following:

SEC. 251. PREVENTION OF CERTAIN HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS FROM PROVIDING NON-DEPARTMENT HEALTH CARE SERVICES TO VETERANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall deny or revoke the eligibility of a health care provider to provide non-Department health care services to veterans if the Secretary determines that—

(1) the health care provider was removed from employment with the Department of Veterans Affairs due to conduct that violated a policy of the Department relating to the delivery of safe and appropriate patient care;

(2) the health care provider violated the requirements of a medical license of the health care provider;

(3) the health care provider had a Department credential revoked and the Secretary determines that the grounds for such revocation impacts the ability of the health care provider to deliver safe and appropriate care; or

(4) the health care provider violated a law for which a term of imprisonment of more than one year may be imposed.

(b) PERMISSIVE ACTION.—The Secretary may deny, revoke, or suspend the eligibility of a health care provider to provide non-Department health care services if the Secretary has reasonable belief that such action is necessary to immediately protect the health, safety, or welfare of veterans and—

(1) the health care provider is under investigation by the medical licensing board of a State in which the health care provider is licensed or practices;

(2) the health care provider has entered into a settlement agreement for a disciplinary charge relating to the practice of medicine by the health care provider; or

(3) the Secretary otherwise determines that such action is appropriate under the circumstances.

(c) SUSPENSION.—The Secretary shall suspend the eligibility of a health care provider to provide non-Department health care services to veterans if the health care provider is suspended from serving as a health care provider of the Department.

(d) REPORT REQUIRED.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to Congress a report on the implementation by the Secretary of this section, including the following:

(1) The aggregate number of health care providers denied or suspended under this section from participation in providing non-Department health care services.

(2) An evaluation of any impact on access to care for patients or staffing shortages in programs of the Department providing non-Department health care services.

(3) An explanation of the coordination of the Department with the medical licensing boards of States in implementing this section, the amount of involvement of such boards in such implementation, and efforts by the Department to address any concerns raised by such boards with respect to such implementation.

(4) Such recommendations as the Comptroller General considers appropriate regarding harmonizing eligibility criteria between health care providers of the Department and health care providers eligible to provide non-Department health care services.

(e) NON-DEPARTMENT HEALTH CARE SERVICES DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''non-Department health care services'' means—

(1) services provided under subchapter I of chapter 17 of title 38, United States Code, at non-Department facilities (as defined in section 1701 of such title);

(2) services provided under section 101 of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (Public Law 113–146; 38 U.S.C. 1701 note);

(3) services purchased through the Medical Community Care account of the Department; or

(4) services purchased with amounts deposited in the Veterans Choice Fund under section 802 of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014.

SA 4027. Mr. WARNER (for himself and Mr. BLUNT) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

DIVISION ___—BUILDING AND RENEWING INFRASTRUCTURE FOR DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH IN EMPLOYMENT

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This division may be cited as the ''Building and Renewing Infrastructure for Development and Growth in Employment Act'' or the ''BRIDGE Act''.

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this division is as follows:

SEC. 2. PURPOSE.

The purpose of this division is to facilitate investment in, and the long-term financing of, economically viable eligible infrastructure projects of regional or national significance that are in the public interest in a manner that complements existing Federal, State, local, and private funding sources for

these projects and introduces a merit-based system for financing those projects, in order to mobilize significant private sector investment, create long-term jobs, and ensure United States competitiveness through a self-sustaining institution that limits the need for ongoing Federal funding.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this division:

(1) BLIND TRUST.—The term ''blind trust'' means a trust in which the beneficiary has no knowledge of the specific holdings and no rights over how those holdings are managed by the fiduciary of the trust prior to the dissolution of the trust.

(2) BOARD OF DIRECTORS.—The term ''Board of Directors'' means the Board of Directors of IFA.

(3) CHAIRPERSON.—The term ''Chairperson'' means the Chairperson of the Board of Directors of IFA.

(4) CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER.—The term ''Chief Executive Officer'' means the chief executive officer of IFA, appointed under section 103.

(5) COST.—The term ''cost'' has the meaning given the term in section 502 of the Federal Credit Reform Act of 1990 (2 U.S.C. 661a).

(6) DIRECT LOAN.—The term ''direct loan'' has the meaning given the term in section 502 of the Federal Credit Reform Act of 1990 (2 U.S.C. 661a).

(7) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term ''eligible entity'' means—

(A) an individual;

(B) a corporation;

(C) a partnership, including a public-private partnership;

(D) a joint venture;

(E) a trust;

(F) a State or any other governmental entity, including a political subdivision or any other instrumentality of a State; or

(G) a revolving fund.

(8) ELIGIBLE INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The term ''eligible infrastructure project'' means the construction, consolidation, alteration, or repair of the following sectors:

(i) Intercity passenger or freight rail lines, intercity passenger rail facilities or equipment, and intercity freight rail facilities or equipment.

(ii) Intercity passenger bus facilities or equipment.

(iii) Public transportation facilities or equipment.

(iv) Highway facilities, including bridges and tunnels.

(v) Airports and air traffic control systems.

(vi) Port or marine terminal facilities, including approaches to marine terminal facilities or inland port facilities, and port or marine equipment, including fixed equipment to serve approaches to marine terminals or inland ports.

(vii) Transmission or distribution pipelines.

(viii) Inland waterways.

(ix) Intermodal facilities or equipment related to 2 or more of the sectors described in clauses (i) through (viii).

(x) Water treatment and solid waste disposal facilities.

(xi) Storm water management systems.

(xii) Dams and levees.

(xiii) Facilities or equipment for energy transmission, distribution or storage.

(B) AUTHORITY OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS TO MODIFY SECTORS.—The Board of Directors may make modifications, at the discretion of the Board, to any of the sectors described in subparagraph (A) by a vote of not fewer than 5 of the voting members of the Board of Directors.

(9) IFA.—The term ''IFA'' means the Infrastructure Financing Authority established under section 101.

(10) INVESTMENT-GRADE RATING.—The term ''investment-grade rating'' means a rating of BBB minus, Baa3, or higher assigned to an eligible infrastructure project by a ratings agency.

(11) LOAN GUARANTEE.—The term ''loan guarantee'' has the meaning given the term in section 502 of the Federal Credit Reform Act of 1990 (2 U.S.C. 661a).

(12) OTRA.—The term ''OTRA'' means the Office of Technical and Rural Assistance created pursuant to section 106.

(13) PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP.—The term ''public-private partnership'' means any eligible entity—

(A)(i) that is undertaking the development of all or part of an eligible infrastructure project that will have a measurable public benefit, pursuant to requirements established in 1 or more contracts between the entity and a State or an instrumentality of a State; or

(ii) the activities of which, with respect to such an eligible infrastructure project, are subject to regulation by a State or any instrumentality of a State;

(B) that owns, leases, or operates or will own, lease, or operate, the project in whole or in part; and

(C) the participants in which include not fewer than 1 nongovernmental entity with significant investment and some control over the project or entity sponsoring the project vehicle.

(14) RATING AGENCY.—The term ''rating agency'' means a credit rating agency registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission as a nationally recognized statistical rating organization (as defined in section 3(a) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 (15 U.S.C. 78c(a))).

(15) REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE ACCELERATOR.—The term ''regional infrastructure accelerator'' means an organization created by public sector agencies through a multi-jurisdictional or multi-state agreement to provide technical assistance to local jurisdictions that will facilitate the implementation of innovative financing and procurement models to public infrastructure projects.

(16) RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT.—The term ''rural infrastructure project''—

(A) has the same meaning given the term in section 601(15) of title 23, United States Code; and

(B) includes any eligible infrastructure project sector described in clauses (i) through (xvii) of paragraph (8)(A) located in any area other than a city with a population of more than 250,000 inhabitants within the city limits.

(17) SECRETARY.—The term ''Secretary'' means the Secretary of the Treasury or the designee of the Secretary of the Treasury.

(18) SENIOR MANAGEMENT.—The term ''senior management'' means the chief financial officer, chief risk officer, chief compliance officer, general counsel, chief lending officer, and chief operations officer of IFA, and such other officers as the Board of Directors may, by majority vote, add to senior management.

(19) STATE.—The term ''State'' means—

(A) each of the several States of the United States; and

(B) the District of Columbia.

TITLE I—INFRASTRUCTURE FINANCING AUTHORITY

SEC. 101. ESTABLISHMENT AND GENERAL AUTHORITY OF IFA.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT OF IFA.—The Infrastructure Financing Authority is established as a wholly owned Government corporation.

(b) GENERAL AUTHORITY OF IFA.—IFA shall—

(1) provide direct loans and loan guarantees to facilitate eligible infrastructure projects that are economically viable, in the public interest, and of regional or national significance; and

(2) carry out any other activities and duties authorized under this division.

(c) INCORPORATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Board of Directors first appointed shall be deemed the incorporator of IFA, and the incorporation shall be held to have been effected from the date of the first meeting of the Board of Directors.

(2) CORPORATE OFFICE.—IFA shall—

(A) maintain an office in Washington, DC; and

(B) for purposes of venue in civil actions, be considered to be a resident of Washington, DC.

(d) RESPONSIBILITY OF THE SECRETARY.—The Secretary shall take such action as may be necessary to assist in implementing IFA and in carrying out the purpose of this division.

(e) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Chapter 91 of title 31, United States Code, does not apply to IFA, unless otherwise specifically provided in this division.

SEC. 102. VOTING MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

(a) VOTING MEMBERSHIP OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—IFA shall have a Board of Directors consisting of 7 voting members appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, not more than 4 of whom shall be from the same political party.

(2) CHAIRPERSON.—One of the voting members of the Board of Directors shall be designated by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, to serve as Chairperson of the Board of Directors.

(3) CONGRESSIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS.—Not later than 30 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the majority leader of the Senate, the minority leader of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the minority leader of the House of Representatives shall each submit a recommendation to the President for appointment of a member of the Board of Directors, after consultation with the appropriate committees of Congress.

(4) SPECIAL CONSIDERATION OF RURAL INTERESTS AND GEOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY.—In making an appointment under this subsection, the President shall give consideration to the geographic areas of the United States in which the members of the Board of Directors live and work, particularly to ensure that the infrastructure priorities and concerns of each region of the country, including rural areas and small communities, are represented on the Board of Directors.

(b) VOTING RIGHTS.—Each voting member of the Board of Directors shall have an equal vote in all decisions of the Board of Directors.

(c) QUALIFICATIONS OF VOTING MEMBERS.—Each voting member of the Board of Directors shall—

(1) be a citizen of the United States; and

(2) have significant demonstrated expertise in—

(A) the management and administration of a financial institution relevant to the operation of IFA; or

(B) the financing, development, or operation of infrastructure projects, including in the evaluation and selection of eligible infrastructure projects based on the purposes, goals, and objectives of this division.

(d) TERMS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as otherwise provided in this division, each voting member of the Board of Directors shall be appointed for a term of 5 years.

(2) INITIAL STAGGERED TERMS.—Of the voting members first appointed to the Board of Directors—

(A) the initial Chairperson and 3 of the other voting members shall each be appointed for a term of 5 years; and

(B) the remaining 3 voting members shall each be appointed for a term of 2 years.

(3) DATE OF INITIAL NOMINATIONS.—The initial nominations for the appointment of all voting members of the Board of Directors shall be made not later than 60 days after the date of enactment of this Act.

(4) BEGINNING OF TERM.—The term of each of the initial voting members appointed under this section shall commence immediately upon the date of appointment, except that, for purposes of calculating the term limits specified in this subsection, the initial terms shall each be construed as beginning on January 22 of the year following the date of the initial appointment.

(5) VACANCIES.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—A vacancy in the position of a voting member of the Board of Directors shall be filled by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate.

(B) TERM.—A member appointed to fill a vacancy on the Board of Directors occurring before the expiration of the term for which the predecessor was appointed shall be appointed only for the remainder of that term.

(e) MEETINGS.—

(1) OPEN TO THE PUBLIC; NOTICE.—Except as provided in paragraph (3), all meetings of the Board of Directors shall be—

(A) open to the public; and

(B) preceded by reasonable public notice.

(2) FREQUENCY.—The Board of Directors shall meet—

(A) not later than 60 days after the date on which all members of the Board of Directors are first appointed;

(B) at least quarterly after the date described in subparagraph (A); and

(C) at the call of the Chairperson or 3 voting members of the Board of Directors.

(3) EXCEPTION FOR CLOSED MEETINGS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The voting members of the Board of Directors may, by majority vote, close a meeting to the public if, during the meeting to be closed, there is likely to be disclosed proprietary or sensitive information regarding an eligible infrastructure project under consideration for assistance under this division.

(B) AVAILABILITY OF MINUTES.—The Board of Directors shall prepare minutes of any meeting that is closed to the public, which minutes shall be made available as soon as practicable, but not later than 1 year after the date of the closed meeting, with any necessary redactions to protect any proprietary or sensitive information.

(4) QUORUM.—For purposes of meetings of the Board of Directors, 5 voting members of the Board of Directors shall constitute a quorum.

(f) COMPENSATION OF MEMBERS.—Each voting member of the Board of Directors shall be compensated at a rate equal to the daily equivalent of the annual rate of basic pay prescribed for level III of the Executive Schedule under section 5314 of title 5, United States Code, for each day (including travel time) during which the member is engaged in the performance of the duties of the Board of Directors.

(g) CONFLICTS OF INTEREST.—A voting member of the Board of Directors may not participate in any review or decision affecting an eligible infrastructure project under consideration for assistance under this division, if the member has or is affiliated with an entity who has a financial interest in that project.

SEC. 103. CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Chief Executive Officer shall—

(1) be a nonvoting member of the Board of Directors;

(2) be responsible for all activities of IFA; and

(3) support the Board of Directors in accordance with this division and as the Board of Directors determines to be necessary.

(b) APPOINTMENT AND TENURE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The President shall appoint the Chief Executive Officer, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate.

(2) TERM.—The Chief Executive Officer shall be appointed for a term of 6 years.

(3) VACANCIES.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Any vacancy in the office of the Chief Executive Officer shall be filled by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate.

(B) TERM.—The person appointed to fill a vacancy in the Chief Executive Officer position that occurs before the expiration of the term for which the predecessor was appointed shall be appointed only for the remainder of that term.

(c) QUALIFICATIONS.—The Chief Executive Officer—

(1) shall have significant expertise in management and administration of a financial institution, or significant expertise in the financing and development of infrastructure projects; and

(2) may not—

(A) hold any other public office;

(B) have any financial interest in an eligible infrastructure project then being considered by the Board of Directors, unless that interest is placed in a blind trust; or

(C) have any financial interest in an investment institution or its affiliates or any other entity seeking or likely to seek financial assistance for any eligible infrastructure project from IFA, unless any such interest is placed in a blind trust for the tenure of the service of the Chief Executive Officer plus 2 additional years.

(d) RESPONSIBILITIES.—The Chief Executive Officer shall have such executive functions, powers, and duties as may be prescribed by this division, the bylaws of IFA, or the Board of Directors, including—

(1) responsibility for the development and implementation of the strategy of IFA, including—

(A) the development and submission to the Board of Directors of the annual business plans and budget;

(B) the development and submission to the Board of Directors of a long-term strategic plan; and

(C) the development, revision, and submission to the Board of Directors of internal policies; and

(2) responsibility for the management and oversight of the daily activities, decisions, operations, and personnel of IFA.

(e) COMPENSATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Any compensation assessment or recommendation by the Chief Executive Officer under this section shall be without regard to the provisions of chapter 51 or subchapter III of chapter 53 of title 5, United States Code.

(2) CONSIDERATIONS.—The compensation assessment or recommendation required under this subsection shall take into account merit principles, where applicable, as well as the education, experience, level of responsibility, geographic differences, and retention and recruitment needs in determining compensation of personnel.

SEC. 104. POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

The Board of Directors shall—

(1) as soon as practicable after the date on which all members are appointed, approve or disapprove senior management appointed by the Chief Executive Officer;

(2) not later than 180 days after the date on which all members are appointed—

(A) develop and approve the bylaws of IFA, including bylaws for the regulation of the affairs and conduct of the business of IFA, consistent with the purpose, goals, objectives, and policies set forth in this division;

(B) establish subcommittees, including an audit committee that is composed solely of members of the Board of Directors, other than the Chief Executive Officer;

(C) develop and approve, in consultation with senior management, a conflict-of-interest policy for the Board of Directors and for senior management;

(D) approve or disapprove internal policies that the Chief Executive Officer shall submit to the Board of Directors, including—

(i) policies regarding the loan application and approval process, including application procedures and project approval processes; and

(ii) operational guidelines; and

(E) approve or disapprove a 1-year business plan and budget for IFA;

(3) ensure that IFA is at all times operated in a manner that is consistent with this division, by—

(A) monitoring and assessing the effectiveness of IFA in achieving its strategic goals;

(B) reviewing and approving internal policies, annual business plans, annual budgets, and long-term strategies submitted by the Chief Executive Officer;

(C) reviewing and approving annual reports submitted by the Chief Executive Officer;

(D) engaging 1 or more external auditors, as set forth in this division; and

(E) reviewing and approving all changes to the organization of senior management;

(4) appoint and fix, by a vote of not less than 5 of the 7 voting members of the Board of Directors, and without regard to the provisions of chapter 51 or subchapter III of chapter 53 of title 5, United States Code, the compensation and adjustments to compensation of all IFA personnel, provided that in appointing and fixing any compensation or adjustments to compensation under this paragraph, the Board shall—

(A) consult with, and seek to maintain comparability with, other comparable Federal personnel, as the Board of Directors may determine to be appropriate;

(B) consult with the Office of Personnel Management; and

(C) carry out those duties consistent with merit principles, where applicable, as well as the education, experience, level of responsibility, geographic differences, comparability to private sector positions, and retention and recruitment needs in determining compensation of personnel;

(5) serve as the primary liaison for IFA in interactions with Congress, the Secretary of Transportation and other executive branch officials, and State and local governments, and to represent the interests of IFA in those interactions and others;

(6) approve by a vote of not less than 5 of the 7 voting members of the Board of Directors any changes to the bylaws or internal policies of IFA;

(7) have the authority and responsibility—

(A) to oversee entering into and carrying out such contracts, leases, cooperative agreements, or other transactions as are necessary to carry out this division;

(B) to approve of the acquisition, lease, pledge, exchange, and disposal of real and personal property by IFA and otherwise approve the exercise by IFA of all of the usual

incidents of ownership of property, to the extent that the exercise of those powers is appropriate to and consistent with the purposes of IFA;

(C) to determine the character of, and the necessity for, the obligations and expenditures of IFA, and the manner in which the obligations and expenditures will be incurred, allowed, and paid, subject to this division and other Federal law specifically applicable to wholly owned Federal corporations;

(D) to execute, in accordance with applicable bylaws and regulations, appropriate instruments;

(E) to approve other forms of credit enhancement that IFA may provide to eligible projects, as long as the forms of credit enhancements are consistent with the purposes of this division and terms set forth in title II;

(F) to exercise all other lawful powers which are necessary or appropriate to carry out, and are consistent with, the purposes of IFA;

(G) to sue or be sued in the corporate capacity of IFA in any court of competent jurisdiction;

(H) to indemnify the members of the Board of Directors and officers of IFA for any liabilities arising out of the actions of the members and officers in that capacity, in accordance with, and subject to the limitations contained in this division;

(I) to review all financial assistance packages to all eligible infrastructure projects, as submitted by the Chief Executive Officer and to approve, postpone, or deny the same by majority vote;

(J) to review all restructuring proposals submitted by the Chief Executive Officer, including assignation, pledging, or disposal of the interest of IFA in a project, including payment or income from any interest owned or held by IFA, and to approve, postpone, or deny the same by majority vote;

(K) to enter into binding commitments, as specified in approved financial assistance packages;

(L) to determine whether—

(i) to obtain a lien on the assets of an eligible entity that receives assistance under this division; and

(ii) to subordinate a lien under clause (i) to any other lien securing project obligations; and

(M) to ensure a measurable public benefit in the selection of eligible infrastructure projects and to provide for reasonable public input in the selection of such projects;

(8) delegate to the Chief Executive Officer those duties that the Board of Directors determines to be appropriate, to better carry out the powers and purposes of the Board of Directors under this section; and

(9) to approve a maximum aggregate amount of principal exposure of IFA at any given time.

SEC. 105. SENIOR MANAGEMENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Senior management shall support the Chief Executive Officer in the discharge of the responsibilities of the Chief Executive Officer.

(b) APPOINTMENT OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT.—The Chief Executive Officer shall appoint such senior managers as are necessary to carry out the purposes of IFA, as approved by a majority vote of the voting members of the Board of Directors, including a chief compliance officer, general counsel, chief operating officer, chief lending officer, and other positions as determined to be appropriate by the Chief Executive Officer and the Board of Directors.

(c) TERM.—Each member of senior management shall serve at the pleasure of the Chief Executive Officer and the Board of Directors.

(d) REMOVAL OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT.—Any member of senior management may be removed—

(1) by a majority of the voting members of the Board of Directors at the request of the Chief Executive Officer; or

(2) by a vote of not fewer than 5 voting members of the Board of Directors.

(e) SENIOR MANAGEMENT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Each member of senior management shall report directly to the Chief Executive Officer, other than the chief risk officer, who shall report directly to the Board of Directors.

(2) CHIEF RISK OFFICER.—The chief risk officer shall be responsible for all functions of IFA relating to—

(A) the creation of financial, credit, and operational risk management guidelines and policies;

(B) the establishment of guidelines to ensure diversification of lending activities by region, infrastructure project type, and project size;

(C) the creation of conforming standards for infrastructure finance agreements;

(D) the monitoring of the financial, credit, and operational exposure of IFA; and

(E) risk management and mitigation actions, including by reporting those actions, or recommendations of actions to be taken, directly to the Board of Directors.

(f) CONFLICTS OF INTEREST.—No individual appointed to senior management may—

(1) hold any other public office;

(2) have any financial interest in an eligible infrastructure project then being considered by the Board of Directors, unless that interest is placed in a blind trust; or

(3) have any financial interest in an investment institution or its affiliates, IFA or its affiliates, or other entity then seeking or likely to seek financial assistance for any eligible infrastructure project from IFA, unless any such interest is placed in a blind trust during the term of service of that individual in a senior management position, and for a period of 2 years thereafter.

SEC. 106. OFFICE OF TECHNICAL AND RURAL ASSISTANCE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Chief Executive Officer shall create and manage, within IFA, the ''Office of Technical and Rural Assistance''.

(b) DUTIES.—The OTRA shall—

(1) in consultation with the Secretary of Transportation and the heads of other relevant Federal agencies, as determined by the Chief Executive Officer, provide technical assistance to State and local governments and parties in public-private partnerships in the development and financing of eligible infrastructure projects, including rural infrastructure projects;

(2) assist the entities described in paragraph (1) with coordinating loan and loan guarantee programs available through Federal agencies, including the Department of Transportation and other Federal agencies, as appropriate;

(3) work with the entities described in paragraph (1) to identify and develop a pipeline of projects suitable for financing through innovative project financing and performance based project delivery, including those projects with the potential for financing through IFA; and

(4) establish a regional infrastructure accelerator demonstration program to assist the entities described in paragraph (1) in developing improved infrastructure priorities and financing strategies, for the accelerated development of covered infrastructure projects, including those projects with the potential for financing through IFA.

(c) DESIGNATION OF REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE ACCELERATORS.—In carrying out the program established pursuant to subsection (b)(3), the OTRA is authorized to designate regional infrastructure accelerators that will—

(1) serve a defined geographic area; and

(2) act as a resource in such area to entities described in subsection (b)(1), in accordance with this subsection.

(d) APPLICATION PROCESS.—To be eligible for a designation under subsection (c), regional infrastructure accelerators shall submit a proposal to the OTRA at such time, in such form, and containing such information as the OTRA determines is appropriate.

(e) CONSIDERATIONS.—In evaluating proposals submitted pursuant to subsection (d), the OTRA shall consider—

(1) the need for geographic diversity among regional infrastructure accelerators; and

(2) promoting investment in covered infrastructure projects, which shall include a plan—

(A) to evaluate and promote innovative financing methods for local projects, including the use of IFA;

(B) to build capacity of governments to evaluate and structure projects involving the investment of private capital;

(C) to provide technical assistance and information on best practices with respect to financing such projects;

(D) to increase transparency with respect to infrastructure project analysis and utilizing innovative financing for public infrastructure projects;

(E) to deploy predevelopment capital programs designed to facilitate the creation of a pipeline of infrastructure projects available for investment;

(F) to bundle smaller-scale and rural projects into larger proposals that may be more attractive for investment; and

(G) to reduce transaction costs for public project sponsors.

(f) ANNUAL REPORT.—The OTRA shall submit an annual report to Congress that describes the findings and effectiveness of the infrastructure accelerator demonstration program.

SEC. 107. SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR IFA.

(a) IN GENERAL.—

(1) INITIAL PERIOD.—During the 5-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act, the Inspector General of the Department of the Treasury shall serve as the Special Inspector General for IFA in addition to the existing duties of the Inspector General of the Department of the Treasury.

(2) OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL.—Beginning on the day that is 5 years after the date of the enactment of this Act, there is established the Office of the Special Inspector General for IFA.

(b) APPOINTMENT OF INSPECTOR GENERAL; REMOVAL.—

(1) HEAD OF OFFICE.—The head of the Office of the Special Inspector General for IFA shall be the Special Inspector General for IFA (referred to in this division as the ''Special Inspector General''), who shall be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate.

(2) BASIS OF APPOINTMENT.—The appointment of the Special Inspector General shall be made on the basis of integrity and demonstrated ability in accounting, auditing, financial analysis, law, management analysis, public administration, or investigations.

(3) TIMING OF NOMINATION.—The nomination of an individual as Special Inspector General shall be made as soon as practicable after the date of enactment of this Act.

(4) REMOVAL.—The Special Inspector General shall be removable from office in accordance with the provisions of section 3(b) of the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.).

(5) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—For purposes of section 7324 of title 5, United States Code,

the Special Inspector General shall not be considered an employee who determines policies to be pursued by the United States in the nationwide administration of Federal law.

(6) RATE OF PAY.—The annual rate of basic pay of the Special Inspector General shall be the annual rate of basic pay for an Inspector General under section 3(e) of the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.).

(c) DUTIES.—The Special Inspector General shall—

(1) conduct, supervise, and coordinate audits and investigations of the business activities of IFA;

(2) establish, maintain, and oversee such systems, procedures, and controls as the Special Inspector General considers appropriate to discharge the duty under paragraph (1); and

(3) carry out any other duties and responsibilities of inspectors general under the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.).

(d) POWERS AND AUTHORITIES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out the duties specified in subsection (c), the Special Inspector General shall have the authorities provided in section 6 of the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.).

(2) ADDITIONAL AUTHORITY.—The Special Inspector General shall carry out the duties specified in subsection (c)(1) in accordance with section 4(b)(1) of the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.).

(e) PERSONNEL, FACILITIES, AND OTHER RESOURCES.—

(1) ADDITIONAL OFFICERS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Special Inspector General may select, appoint, and employ such officers and employees as may be necessary for carrying out the duties of the Special Inspector General, subject to the provisions of title 5, United States Code, governing appointments in the competitive service, and the provisions of chapter 51 and subchapter III of chapter 53 of such title, relating to classification and General Schedule pay rates.

(B) EMPLOYMENT AND COMPENSATION.—The Special Inspector General may exercise the authorities of subsections (b) through (i) of section 3161 of title 5, United States Code (without regard to subsection (a) of that section).

(2) RETENTION OF SERVICES.—The Special Inspector General may obtain services as authorized by section 3109 of title 5, United States Code, at daily rates not to exceed the equivalent rate prescribed for grade GS–15 of the General Schedule by section 5332 of such title.

(3) ABILITY TO CONTRACT FOR AUDITS, STUDIES, AND OTHER SERVICES.—The Special Inspector General may enter into contracts and other arrangements for audits, studies, analyses, and other services with public agencies and with private persons, and make such payments as may be necessary to carry out the duties of the Special Inspector General.

(4) REQUEST FOR INFORMATION.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Upon request of the Special Inspector General for information or assistance from any department, agency, or other entity of the Federal Government, the head of that entity shall, insofar as is practicable and not in contravention of any existing law, furnish the information or assistance to the Special Inspector General or an authorized designee.

(B) REFUSAL TO COMPLY.—If information or assistance requested by the Special Inspector General is, in the judgment of the Special Inspector General, unreasonably refused or not provided, the Special Inspector General shall report the circumstances to the Secretary, without delay.

(f) REPORTS.—

(1) ANNUAL REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the date on which the Special Inspector General is confirmed, and every calendar year thereafter, the Special Inspector General shall submit to the President and appropriate committees of Congress a report summarizing the activities of the Special Inspector General during the previous 1-year period ending on the date of that report.

(2) PUBLIC DISCLOSURES.—Nothing in this subsection authorizes the public disclosure of information that is—

(A) specifically prohibited from disclosure by any other provision of law;

(B) specifically required by Executive order to be protected from disclosure in the interest of national defense or national security or in the conduct of foreign affairs; or

(C) a part of an ongoing criminal investigation.

SEC. 108. OTHER PERSONNEL.

(a) APPOINTMENT, REMOVAL, AND DEFINITION OF DUTIES.—Except as otherwise provided in the bylaws of IFA, the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Board of Directors, shall appoint, remove, and define the duties of such qualified personnel as are necessary to carry out the powers, duties, and purpose of IFA, other than senior management, who shall be appointed in accordance with section 105.

(b) COORDINATION IN IDENTIFYING QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERTISE.—In appointing qualified personnel pursuant to subsection (a), the Chief Executive Officer shall coordinate with, and seek assistance from, the Secretary of Transportation in identifying the appropriate qualifications and expertise in infrastructure project finance.

SEC. 109. COMPLIANCE.

The provision of assistance by IFA pursuant to this division does not supersede any provision of State law or regulation otherwise applicable to an eligible infrastructure project.

TITLE II—TERMS AND LIMITATIONS ON DIRECT LOANS AND LOAN GUARANTEES

SEC. 201. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR ASSISTANCE FROM IFA AND TERMS AND LIMITATIONS OF LOANS.

(a) PUBLIC BENEFIT; FINANCEABILITY.—A project is not be eligible for financial assistance from IFA under this division if—

(1) the use or purpose of such project is private or such project does not create a public benefit, as determined by the Board of Directors; or

(2) the applicant is unable to demonstrate, to the satisfaction of the Board of Directors, a sufficient revenue stream to finance the loan that will be used to pay for such project.

(b) FINANCIAL CRITERIA.—If the project meets the requirements under subsection (a), an applicant for financial assistance under this division shall demonstrate, to the satisfaction of the Board of Directors, that—

(1) for public-private partnerships, the project has received contributed capital or commitments for contributed capital equal to not less than 10 percent of the total cost of the eligible infrastructure project for which assistance is being sought if such contributed capital includes—

(A) equity;

(B) deeply subordinate loans or other credit and debt instruments, which shall be junior to any IFA assistance provided for the project;

(C) appropriated funds or grants from governmental sources other than the Federal Government; or

(D) irrevocable private contributions of funds, grants, property (including rights-of-way), and other assets that directly reduce or offset project costs; and

(2) the eligible infrastructure project for which assistance is being sought—

(A) is not for the refinancing of an existing infrastructure project; and

(B) meets—

(i) any pertinent requirements set forth in this division;

(ii) any criteria established by the Board of Directors under subsection (c) or by the Chief Executive Officer in accordance with this division; and

(iii) the definition of an eligible infrastructure project.

(c) CONSIDERATIONS.—The criteria established by the Board of Directors under this subsection shall provide adequate consideration of—

(1) the economic, financial, technical, environmental, and public benefits and costs of each eligible infrastructure project under consideration for financial assistance under this division, prioritizing eligible infrastructure projects that—

(A) demonstrate a clear and measurable public benefit;

(B) offer value for money to taxpayers;

(C) contribute to regional or national economic growth;

(D) lead to long-term job creation; and

(E) mitigate environmental concerns;

(2) the means by which development of the eligible infrastructure project under consideration is being financed, including—

(A) the terms, conditions, and structure of the proposed financing;

(B) the creditworthiness and standing of the project sponsors, providers of equity, and cofinanciers;

(C) the financial assumptions and projections on which the eligible infrastructure project is based; and

(D) whether there is sufficient State or municipal political support for the successful completion of the eligible infrastructure project;

(3) the likelihood that the provision of assistance by IFA will cause the development to proceed more promptly and with lower costs for financing than would be the case without IFA assistance;

(4) the extent to which the provision of assistance by IFA maximizes the level of private investment in the eligible infrastructure project or supports a public-private partnership, while providing a significant public benefit;

(5) the extent to which the provision of assistance by IFA can mobilize the participation of other financing partners in the eligible infrastructure project;

(6) the technical and operational viability of the eligible infrastructure project;

(7) the proportion of financial assistance from IFA;

(8) the geographical location of the project, prioritizing geographical diversity of projects funded by IFA;

(9) the size of the project and the impact of the project on the resources of IFA; and

(10) the infrastructure sector of the project, prioritizing projects from more than 1 sector funded by IFA.

(d) APPLICATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Any eligible entity seeking assistance from IFA under this division for an eligible infrastructure project shall submit an application to IFA at such time, in such manner, and containing such information as the Board of Directors or the Chief Executive Officer may require.

(2) REVIEW OF APPLICATIONS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—IFA shall review applications for assistance under this division on an ongoing basis.

(B) PREPARATION.—The Chief Executive Officer, in cooperation with the senior management, shall prepare eligible infrastructure projects for review and approval by the Board of Directors.

(3) DEDICATED REVENUE SOURCES.—The Federal credit instrument shall be repayable, in whole or in part, from tolls, user fees, or other dedicated revenue sources derived from users or beneficiaries that also secure the eligible infrastructure project obligations.

(e) ELIGIBLE INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT COSTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in paragraph (2), to be eligible for assistance under this division, an eligible infrastructure project shall have project costs that are reasonably anticipated to equal or exceed $50,000,000.

(2) RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS.—To be eligible for assistance under this division a rural infrastructure project shall have project costs that are reasonably anticipated to equal or exceed $10,000,000.

(f) LOAN ELIGIBILITY AND MAXIMUM AMOUNTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The amount of a direct loan or loan guarantee under this division shall not exceed the lesser of—

(A) 49 percent of the reasonably anticipated eligible infrastructure project costs; and

(B) the amount of the senior project obligations, if the direct loan or loan guarantee does not receive an investment grade rating.

(2) MAXIMUM ANNUAL LOAN AND LOAN GUARANTEE VOLUME.—The aggregate amount of direct loans and loan guarantees made by IFA shall not exceed—

(A) during the first 2 fiscal years of the operations of IFA, $10,000,000,000 per year;

(B) during fiscal years 3 through 9 of the operations of IFA, $20,000,000,000 per year; and

(C) during any fiscal year thereafter, $50,000,000,000.

SEC. 202. LOAN TERMS AND REPAYMENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—A direct loan or loan guarantee under this division with respect to an eligible infrastructure project shall be on such terms, subject to such conditions, and contain such covenants, representations, warranties, and requirements (including requirements for audits) as the Chief Executive Officer determines appropriate.

(b) TERMS.—A direct loan or loan guarantee under this division—

(1) shall—

(A) be payable, in whole or in part, from tolls, user fees, or other dedicated revenue sources derived from users or beneficiaries; and

(B) include a rate covenant, coverage requirement, or similar security feature supporting the project obligations; and

(2) may be secured by a lien—

(A) on the assets of the obligor, including revenues described in paragraph (1); and

(B) which may be subordinated to any other lien securing project obligations.

(c) BASE INTEREST RATE.—The base interest rate on a direct loan under this division shall be not less than the yield on Treasury obligations of a similar maturity to the maturity of the direct loan on the date of execution of the loan agreement.

(d) RISK ASSESSMENT.—Before entering into an agreement for assistance under this division, the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Director of the Office of Management and Budget and each rating agency providing a preliminary rating opinion letter under this section, shall determine an appropriate Federal credit subsidy amount for each direct loan and loan guarantee, taking into account that preliminary rating opinion letter, as well as any comparable market rates available for such a loan or loan guarantee, should any exist.

(e) CREDIT FEE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—With respect to each agreement for assistance under this division, the Chief Executive Officer shall charge a credit fee to the recipient of that assistance to pay for, over time, all or a portion of the Federal credit subsidy determined under subsection (d), with the remainder paid by the account established for IFA.

(2) DIRECT LOANS.—In the case of a direct loan, the credit fee described in paragraph (1) shall be in addition to the base interest rate established under subsection (c).

(f) MATURITY DATE.—The final maturity date of a direct loan or loan guaranteed by IFA under this division shall be not later than 35 years after the date of substantial completion of the eligible infrastructure project, as determined by the Chief Executive Officer.

(g) PRELIMINARY RATING OPINION LETTER.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Chief Executive Officer shall require each applicant for assistance under this division to provide a preliminary rating opinion letter from at least 1 rating agency, indicating that the senior obligations of the eligible infrastructure project, which may be the Federal credit instrument, have the potential to achieve an investment-grade rating.

(2) RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS.—With respect to a rural infrastructure project, a rating agency opinion letter described in paragraph (1) shall not be required, except that the loan or loan guarantee shall receive an internal rating score, using methods similar to the rating agencies generated by IFA, measuring the proposed direct loan or loan guarantee against comparable direct loans or loan guarantees of similar credit quality in a similar sector.

(h) INVESTMENT-GRADE RATING REQUIREMENT.—

(1) LOANS AND LOAN GUARANTEES.—The execution of a direct loan or loan guarantee under this division shall be contingent on the senior obligations of the eligible infrastructure project receiving an investment-grade rating.

(2) RATING OF IFA OVERALL PORTFOLIO.—The average rating of the overall portfolio of IFA shall be not less than investment grade after 5 years of operation.

(i) TERMS AND REPAYMENT OF DIRECT LOANS.—

(1) SCHEDULE.—The Chief Executive Officer shall establish a repayment schedule for each direct loan under this division, based on the projected cash flow from eligible infrastructure project revenues and other repayment sources.

(2) COMMENCEMENT.—Scheduled loan repayments of principal or interest on a direct loan under this division shall commence not later than 5 years after the date of substantial completion of the eligible infrastructure project, as determined by the Chief Executive Officer of IFA.

(3) DEFERRED PAYMENTS OF DIRECT LOANS.—

(A) AUTHORIZATION.—If, at any time after the date of substantial completion of an eligible infrastructure project assisted under this division, the eligible infrastructure project is unable to generate sufficient revenues to pay the scheduled loan repayments of principal and interest on the direct loan under this division, the Chief Executive Officer may allow the obligor to add unpaid principal and interest to the outstanding balance of the direct loan, if the result would benefit the taxpayer.

(B) INTEREST.—Any payment deferred under subparagraph (A) shall—

(i) continue to accrue interest, in accordance with the terms of the obligation, until fully repaid; and

(ii) be scheduled to be amortized over the remaining term of the loan.

(C) CRITERIA.—

(i) IN GENERAL.—Any payment deferral under subparagraph (A) shall be contingent on the eligible infrastructure project meeting criteria established by the Board of Directors.

(ii) REPAYMENT STANDARDS.—The criteria established under clause (i) shall include standards for reasonable assurance of repayment.

(4) PREPAYMENT OF DIRECT LOANS.—

(A) USE OF EXCESS REVENUES.—Any excess revenues that remain after satisfying scheduled debt service requirements on the eligible infrastructure project obligations and direct loan and all deposit requirements under the terms of any trust agreement, bond resolution, or similar agreement securing project obligations under this division may be applied annually to prepay the direct loan, without penalty.

(B) USE OF PROCEEDS OF REFINANCING.—A direct loan under this division may be prepaid at any time, without penalty, from the proceeds of refinancing from non-Federal funding sources.

(j) LOAN GUARANTEES.—The terms of a loan guaranteed by IFA under this division shall be consistent with the terms set forth in this section for a direct loan, except that the rate on the guaranteed loan and any payment, prepayment, or refinancing features shall be negotiated between the obligor and the lender (as defined in section 601(a) of title 23, United States Code) with the consent of the Chief Executive Officer.

(k) COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL CREDIT REFORM ACT OF 1990.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in paragraph (2), direct loans and loan guarantees authorized by this division shall be subject to the provisions of the Federal Credit Reform Act of 1990 (2 U.S.C. 661 et seq.).

(2) EXCEPTION.—Section 504(b) of the Federal Credit Reform Act of 1990 (2 U.S.C. 661c(b)) shall not apply to a loan or loan guarantee under this division.

(l) POLICY OF CONGRESS.—It is the policy of Congress that IFA shall only make a direct loan or loan guarantee under this division if IFA determines that IFA is reasonably expected to recover the full amount of the direct loan or loan guarantee.

SEC. 203. ENVIRONMENTAL PERMITTING PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS.

(a) INTERAGENCY COORDINATION.—As soon as practicable after IFA approves financing for a proposed project under this title, the President shall convene a meeting of representatives of all relevant and appropriate permitting agencies—

(1) to establish or update a permitting timetable for the proposed project;

(2) to coordinate concurrent permitting reviews by all necessary agencies; and

(3) to coordinate with relevant State agencies and regional infrastructure development agencies to ensure—

(A) adequate participation; and

(B) the timely provision of necessary documentation to allow any State review to proceed without delay.

(b) GOAL.—The permitting timetable for each proposed project established pursuant to subsection (a)(1) shall ensure that the environmental review process is completed as soon as practicable.

(c) EARLIER.—The President may carry out the functions set forth in subsection (a) with respect to a proposed project before the IFA has approved financing for such project upon the request of the Chief Executive Officer.

(d) CONCURRENT REVIEWS.—Each agency, to the greatest extent permitted by law, shall—

(1) carry out the obligations of the agency under other applicable law concurrently, and in conjunction with other reviews being conducted by other participating agencies, including environmental reviews required under the National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), unless such concurrent reviews would impair the ability of

the agency to carry out its statutory obligations; and

(2) formulate and implement administrative, policy, and procedural mechanisms to enable the agency to ensure the completion of the environmental review process in a timely, coordinated, and environmentally responsible manner.

SEC. 204. COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT.

(a) CREDIT AGREEMENT.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, each eligible entity that receives assistance under this division shall enter into a credit agreement that requires such entity to comply with all applicable policies and procedures of IFA, in addition to all other provisions of the loan agreement.

(b) APPLICABILITY OF FEDERAL LAWS.—Each eligible entity that receives assistance under this division shall provide written assurance, in such form and manner and containing such terms as are to be prescribed by IFA, that the eligible infrastructure project will be performed in compliance with the requirements of all Federal laws that would otherwise apply to similar projects to which the United States is a party, or financed in whole or in part from Federal funds or in accordance with guarantees of a Federal agency or financed from funds obtained by pledge of any contract of a Federal agency to make a loan, grant, or annual contribution (except where a different meaning is expressly indicated).

(c) IFA AUTHORITY ON NONCOMPLIANCE.—In any case in which an eligible entity that receives assistance under this division is materially out of compliance with the loan agreement, or any applicable policy or procedure of IFA, the Board of Directors may take action—

(1) to cancel unused loan amounts; or

(2) to accelerate the repayment terms of any outstanding obligation.

SEC. 205. AUDITS; REPORTS TO THE PRESIDENT AND CONGRESS.

(a) ACCOUNTING.—The books of account of IFA shall be—

(1) maintained in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles; and

(2) subject to an annual audit by independent public accountants of nationally recognized standing appointed by the Board of Directors.

(b) REPORTS.—

(1) BOARD OF DIRECTORS.—Not later than 90 days after the last day of each fiscal year, the Board of Directors shall submit to the President and Congress a complete and detailed report with respect to the preceding fiscal year, setting forth—

(A) a summary of the operations of IFA for that fiscal year;

(B) a schedule of the obligations of IFA and capital securities outstanding at the end of that fiscal year, with a statement of the amounts issued and redeemed or paid during that fiscal year;

(C) the status of eligible infrastructure projects receiving funding or other assistance pursuant to this division during that fiscal year, including—

(i) all nonperforming loans; and

(ii) disclosure of all entities with a development, ownership, or operational interest in those eligible infrastructure projects;

(D) a description of the successes and challenges encountered in lending to rural communities, including the role of the Office of Technical and Rural Assistance established under this division; and

(E) an assessment of the risks of the portfolio of IFA, which shall be prepared by an independent source.

(2) GAO.—Not later than 5 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall conduct an evaluation of, and submit to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate and to the Committees on Transportation and Infrastructure and Energy and Commerce of the House of Representatives a report on the activities of IFA for the fiscal years covered by the report that includes—

(A) an assessment of the impact and benefits of each funded eligible infrastructure project, including a review of how effectively each eligible infrastructure project accomplished the goals prioritized by the eligible infrastructure project criteria of IFA; and

(B) an evaluation of the effectiveness of, and challenges facing, loan programs at the Department of Transportation and Department of Energy, and an analysis of the advisability of consolidating those programs within IFA.

(c) BOOKS AND RECORDS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—IFA shall maintain adequate books and records to support the financial transactions of IFA, with a description of financial transactions and eligible infrastructure projects receiving funding, and the amount of funding for each project maintained on a publically accessible database.

(2) AUDITS BY THE SECRETARY AND GAO.—The books and records of IFA shall at all times be open to inspection by the Secretary, the Special Inspector General, and the Comptroller General of the United States.

SEC. 206. EFFECT ON OTHER LAWS.

Nothing in this division may be construed to affect or alter the responsibility of an eligible entity that receives assistance under this division to comply with applicable Federal and State laws (including regulations) relating to an eligible infrastructure project.

TITLE III—FUNDING OF IFA

SEC. 301. FEES.

The Chief Executive Officer shall establish fees with respect to loans and loan guarantees under this division that—

(1) are sufficient to cover all the administrative costs to the Federal Government for the operations of IFA;

(2) may be in the form of an application or transaction fee, or interest rate adjustment; and

(3) may be based on the risk premium associated with the loan or loan guarantee, taking into consideration—

(A) the price of Treasury obligations of a similar maturity;

(B) prevailing market conditions;

(C) the ability of the eligible infrastructure project to support the loan or loan guarantee; and

(D) the total amount of the loan or loan guarantee.

SEC. 302. SELF-SUFFICIENCY OF IFA.

The Chief Executive Officer shall, to the extent practicable, take actions consistent with this division to make IFA a self-sustaining entity, with administrative costs and Federal credit subsidy costs fully funded by fees and risk premiums on loans and loan guarantees.

SEC. 303. FUNDING.

(a) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to be appropriated to IFA to make direct loans and loan guarantees under this division $10,000,000,000, which shall remain available until expended.

(2) ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.—Of the amounts appropriated pursuant to paragraph (1), the IFA may expend, for administrative costs, not more than—

(A) $25,000,000 for each of the fiscal years 2016 and 2017; and

(B) not more than $50,000,000 for fiscal year 2018.

(b) INTEREST.—The amounts made available to IFA pursuant to subsection (a) shall be placed in interest-bearing accounts.

(c) RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS.—Of the amounts made available to IFA under this section, not less than 5 percent shall be used to offset subsidy costs associated with rural infrastructure projects.

SEC. 304. CONTRACT AUTHORITY.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, approval by the Board of Directors of a Federal credit instrument that uses funds made available under this division shall impose upon the United States a contractual obligation to fund the Federal credit investment.

SEC. 305. LIMITATION ON AUTHORITY.

IFA shall not have the authority to issue debt in its own name.

TITLE IV—TAX EXEMPTION REQUIREMENTS FOR STATE AND LOCAL BONDS

SEC. 401. NATIONAL LIMITATION ON AMOUNT OF TAX-EXEMPT FINANCING FOR FACILITIES.

Section 142(m)(2)(A) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by striking ''$15,000,000,000'' and inserting ''$16,000,000,000''.

TITLE V—BUDGETARY EFFECTS

SEC. 501. BUDGETARY EFFECTS.

The budgetary effects of this division, for the purpose of complying with the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010, shall be determined by reference to the latest statement titled ''Budgetary Effects of PAYGO Legislation'' for this division, submitted for printing in the Congressional Record by the Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, provided that such statement has been submitted prior to the vote on passage.

SA 4028. Mr. PERDUE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place in division A, insert the following:

SEC. ____. Notwithstanding any other provision in this Act—

(1) the total amount made available on October 1, 2016 under the heading ''TENANT-BASED RENTAL ASSISTANCE'' under the heading ''PUBLIC AND INDIAN HOUSING'' under the heading ''DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT'' shall be $15,740,696,000; and

(2) the amount made available for renewals of expiring section 8 tenant-based annual contributions contracts under the heading ''TENANT-BASED RENTAL ASSISTANCE'' under the heading ''PUBLIC AND INDIAN HOUSING'' under the heading ''DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT'' shall be $17,664,000,000.

SA 4029. Mr. DURBIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; as follows:

At the end of title II of division B, add the following:

SEC. 251. Of the funds made available in this title for fiscal year 2017 for medical support and compliance, not less than $21,000,000 shall be made available to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to hire Medical Center Directors and employees for other management and clinical positions that are critical to the Department of Veterans Affairs in order to fill vacancies in such positions.

SA 4030. Ms. MIKULSKI submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; as follows:

On page 217, line 4 of title 2 in division B, strike the period and insert ": *Provided further*, That the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall provide access to therapeutic listening devices to veterans struggling with mental health related problems, substance abuse, or traumatic brain injury.''

SA 4031. Mr. CARDIN (for himself and Mr. MCCAIN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 2943, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2017 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of title XII, add the following:

Subtitle ____—Human Rights Sanctions

SEC. ___01. SHORT TITLE.

This subtitle may be cited as the ''Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act''.

SEC. ___02. DEFINITIONS.

In this subtitle:

(1) FOREIGN PERSON.—The term ''foreign person'' means a person that is not a United States person.

(2) PERSON.—The term ''person'' means an individual or entity.

(3) UNITED STATES PERSON.—The term ''United States person'' means—

(A) a United States citizen or an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence to the United States; or

(B) an entity organized under the laws of the United States or of any jurisdiction within the United States, including a foreign branch of such an entity.

SEC. ___03. AUTHORIZATION OF IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The President may impose the sanctions described in subsection (b) with respect to any foreign person the President determines, based on credible evidence—

(1) is responsible for extrajudicial killings, torture, or other gross violations of internationally recognized human rights committed against individuals in any foreign country who seek—

(A) to expose illegal activity carried out by government officials; or

(B) to obtain, exercise, defend, or promote internationally recognized human rights and freedoms, such as the freedoms of religion, expression, association, and assembly, and the rights to a fair trial and democratic elections;

(2) acted as an agent of or on behalf of a foreign person in a matter relating to an activity described in paragraph (1);

(3) is a government official, or a senior associate of such an official, that is responsible for, or complicit in, ordering, controlling, or otherwise directing, acts of significant corruption, including the expropriation of private or public assets for personal gain, corruption related to government contracts or the extraction of natural resources, bribery, or the facilitation or transfer of the proceeds of corruption to foreign jurisdictions; or

(4) has materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services in support of, an activity described in paragraph (3).

(b) SANCTIONS DESCRIBED.—The sanctions described in this subsection are the following:

(1) INADMISSIBILITY TO UNITED STATES.—In the case of a foreign person who is an individual—

(A) ineligibility to receive a visa to enter the United States or to be admitted to the United States; or

(B) if the individual has been issued a visa or other documentation, revocation, in accordance with section 221(i) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1201(i)), of the visa or other documentation.

(2) BLOCKING OF PROPERTY.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The blocking, in accordance with the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.), of all transactions in all property and interests in property of a foreign person if such property and interests in property are in the United States, come within the United States, or are or come within the possession or control of a United States person.

(B) INAPPLICABILITY OF NATIONAL EMERGENCY REQUIREMENT.—The requirements of section 202 of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701) shall not apply for purposes of this section.

(C) EXCEPTION RELATING TO IMPORTATION OF GOODS.—

(i) IN GENERAL.—The authority to block and prohibit all transactions in all property and interests in property under subparagraph (A) shall not include the authority to impose sanctions on the importation of goods.

(ii) GOOD.—In this subparagraph, the term ''good'' has the meaning given that term in section 16 of the Export Administration Act of 1979 (50 U.S.C. 4618) (as continued in effect pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.)).

(c) CONSIDERATION OF CERTAIN INFORMATION IN IMPOSING SANCTIONS.—In determining whether to impose sanctions under subsection (a), the President shall consider—

(1) information provided by the chairperson and ranking member of each of the appropriate congressional committees; and

(2) credible information obtained by other countries and nongovernmental organizations that monitor violations of human rights.

(d) REQUESTS BY CHAIRPERSON AND RANKING MEMBER OF APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—Not later than 120 days after receiving a written request from the chairperson and ranking member of one of the appropriate congressional committees with respect to whether a foreign person has engaged in an activity described in subsection (a), the President shall—

(1) determine if that person has engaged in such an activity; and

(2) submit a report to the chairperson and ranking member of that committee with respect to that determination that includes—

(A) a statement of whether or not the President imposed or intends to impose sanctions with respect to the person; and

(B) if the President imposed or intends to impose sanctions, a description of those sanctions.

(e) EXCEPTION TO COMPLY WITH UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS AGREEMENT AND LAW ENFORCEMENT OBJECTIVES.—Sanctions under subsection (b)(1) shall not apply to an individual if admitting the individual into the United States would further important law enforcement objectives or is necessary to permit the United States to comply with the Agreement regarding the Headquarters of the United Nations, signed at Lake Success June 26, 1947, and entered into force November 21, 1947, between the United Nations and the United States, or other applicable international obligations of the United States.

(f) ENFORCEMENT OF BLOCKING OF PROPERTY.—A person that violates, attempts to violate, conspires to violate, or causes a violation of subsection (b)(2) or any regulation, license, or order issued to carry out subsection (b)(2) shall be subject to the penalties set forth in subsections (b) and (c) of section 206 of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1705) to the same extent as a person that commits an unlawful act described in subsection (a) of that section.

(g) TERMINATION OF SANCTIONS.—The President may terminate the application of sanctions under this section with respect to a person if the President determines and reports to the appropriate congressional committees not later than 15 days before the termination of the sanctions that—

(1) credible information exists that the person did not engage in the activity for which sanctions were imposed;

(2) the person has been prosecuted appropriately for the activity for which sanctions were imposed;

(3) the person has credibly demonstrated a significant change in behavior, has paid an appropriate consequence for the activity for which sanctions were imposed, and has credibly committed to not engage in an activity described in subsection (a) in the future; or

(4) the termination of the sanctions is in the vital national security interests of the United States.

(h) REGULATORY AUTHORITY.—The President shall issue such regulations, licenses, and orders as are necessary to carry out this section.

(i) IDENTIFICATION OF SANCTIONABLE FOREIGN PERSONS.—The Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, in consultation with the Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs and other bureaus of the Department of State, as appropriate, is authorized to submit to the Secretary of State, for review and consideration, the names of foreign persons who may meet the criteria described in subsection (a).

(j) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''appropriate congressional committees'' means—

(1) the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate; and

(2) the Committee on Financial Services and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives.

SEC. ___04. REPORTS TO CONGRESS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The President shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees, in accordance with subsection (b), a report that includes—

(1) a list of each foreign person with respect to which the President imposed sanctions pursuant to section ____03 during the year preceding the submission of the report;

(2) a description of the type of sanctions imposed with respect to each such person;

(3) the number of foreign persons with respect to which the President—

(A) imposed sanctions under section ____03(a) during that year; and

(B) terminated sanctions under section ____03(g) during that year;

(4) the dates on which such sanctions were imposed or terminated, as the case may be;

(5) the reasons for imposing or terminating such sanctions; and

(6) a description of the efforts of the President to encourage the governments of other countries to impose sanctions that are similar to the sanctions authorized by section ____03.

(b) DATES FOR SUBMISSION.—

(1) INITIAL REPORT.—The President shall submit the initial report under subsection (a) not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(2) SUBSEQUENT REPORTS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The President shall submit a subsequent report under subsection (a) on December 10, or the first day thereafter on which both Houses of Congress are in session, of—

(i) the calendar year in which the initial report is submitted if the initial report is submitted before December 10 of that calendar year; and

(ii) each calendar year thereafter.

(B) CONGRESSIONAL STATEMENT.—Congress notes that December 10 of each calendar year has been recognized in the United States and internationally since 1950 as ''Human Rights Day''.

(c) FORM OF REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Each report required by subsection (a) shall be submitted in unclassified form, but may include a classified annex.

(2) EXCEPTION.—The name of a foreign person to be included in the list required by subsection (a)(1) may be submitted in the classified annex authorized by paragraph (1) only if the President—

(A) determines that it is vital for the national security interests of the United States to do so;

(B) uses the annex in a manner consistent with congressional intent and the purposes of this subtitle; and

(C) not later than 15 days before submitting the name in a classified annex, provides to the appropriate congressional committees notice of, and a justification for, including the name in the classified annex despite any publicly available credible information indicating that the person engaged in an activity described in section ____03(a).

(d) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The unclassified portion of the report required by subsection (a) shall be made available to the public, including through publication in the Federal Register.

(2) NONAPPLICABILITY OF CONFIDENTIALITY REQUIREMENT WITH RESPECT TO VISA RECORDS.—The President shall publish the list required by subsection (a)(1) without regard to the requirements of section 222(f) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1202(f)) with respect to confidentiality of records pertaining to the issuance or refusal of visas or permits to enter the United States.

(e) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''appropriate congressional committees'' means—

(1) the Committee on Appropriations, the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, the Committee on Foreign Relations, and the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate; and

(2) the Committee on Appropriations, the Committee on Financial Services, the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives.

SA 4032. Mr. BLUMENTHAL submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place in division A, insert the following:

SEC. ____. (a) The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall require each public housing agency that administers public housing (as defined in section 3 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437a)) or housing assisted under section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f)—

(1) to allow, in each unfurnished dwelling unit, residents to anchor furniture, televisions, and large appliances to the wall without incurring a penalty or obligation to repair the wall upon vacating the dwelling unit; and

(2) to securely anchor to the wall all provided clothing storage units covered by the Standard Safety Specification for Clothing Storage Units (ASTM F2057–14) or any successor standard, bookcases, televisions, and large appliances in each furnished dwelling unit in which a child under the age of 6 resides or is a frequent visitor.

(b) The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall require public housing agencies to securely anchor all provided clothing storage units covered by the Standard Safety Specification for Clothing Storage Units (ASTM F2057–14) or any successor standard, bookcases, televisions, and large appliances in furnished dwelling units in public housing (as defined in section 3 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437a)) and housing assisted under section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f) not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act.

(c) The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall use such sums as are necessary to carry out this section.

SA 4033. Mr. BLUMENTHAL (for himself and Mr. MARKEY) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

In division A, on page 49, between lines 6 and 7, insert the following:

SEC. 142. (a) From amounts made available to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration under this title, the Administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration shall use such sums as may be necessary—

(1) to modify the labeling and owner's manual information requirements under section 571.208 of title 49, Code of Federal Regulations, to require the owner's manual for any vehicle sold in the United States to include warning language similar to the following: ''If possible, children should be placed behind unoccupied front seats in a rear seating position, as appropriate based on the child's age and size. In rear end crashes, the backs of occupied front seats are prone to collapse under the weight of their occupants. If this occurs, the seat backs and their occupants can strike children in rear seats and cause severe or fatal injuries.''; and

(2) to modify the child restraint systems requirements under section 571.213 of title 49, Code of Federal Regulations, to require that the label on rear facing child seats depicted in Figure 10 of such section include the following statement: ''Place behind an unoccupied front seat whenever possible.''.

(b) Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration shall—

(1) include data in the Crash Investigation Sampling System and the Fatality Analysis Reporting System regarding the presence, location, and consequences of seatback failure or seatback collapse caused by a vehicle crash; and

(2) determine whether local police crash investigators should include photographs of vehicles involved in crashes and the surrounding crash scene in the databases listed in paragraph (1) to provide the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration a better basis for selecting crashes for further investigation.

(c) The Administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration shall conduct a study to identify the structural adjustments that would be necessary to prevent a seatback from collapsing in a rear end crash based on the rear impact test procedure under section 571.301 of title 49, Code of Federal Regulations.

(d) Not later than 3 years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration shall issue a rule that updates section 571.207 of title 49, Code of Federal Regulations (or a successor regulation), relating to standards for motor vehicle seating systems based on the findings of the study conducted under subsection (c).

SA 4034. Mr. BLUMENTHAL (for himself and Mr. MARKEY) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place in division A, insert the following:

SEC. ____. (a) Section 30120 of title 49, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(k) LIMITATION ON SALE OR LEASE OF USED PASSENGER MOTOR VEHICLES.—(1) A dealer may not sell or lease a used passenger motor vehicle until any defect or noncompliance determined under section 30118 with respect to the vehicle has been remedied.

''(2) Paragraph (1) shall not apply if—

''(A) the recall information regarding a used passenger motor vehicle was not accessible at the time of sale or lease using the means established by the Secretary under section 31301 of the Moving Ahead for

Progress in the 21st Century Act (49 U.S.C. 30166 note); or

''(B) notification of the defect or noncompliance is required under section 30118(b), but enforcement of the order is set aside in a civil action to which 30121(d) applies.

''(3) Notwithstanding section 30102(a)(1), in this subsection—

''(A) the term 'dealer' means a person that has sold at least 10 motor vehicles to 1 or more consumers during the most recent 12-month period; and

''(B) the term 'used passenger motor vehicle' means a motor vehicle that has previously been purchased other than for resale.

''(4) By rule, the Secretary may exempt the auctioning of a used passenger motor vehicle from the requirements under paragraph (1) to the extent that the exemption does not harm public safety.''.

(b) This section shall take effect on that date that is 18 months after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SA 4035. Mr. PAUL submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of title II of division B, add the following:

EXTENSION OF VETERANS CHOICE PROGRAM

SEC. 251. (a) IN GENERAL.—The Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (Public Law 113–146; 38 U.S.C. 1701 note) is amended—

(1) in section 101(p)(2), by striking ''3 years'' and inserting ''6 years''; and

(2) in section 802(d)(1), by striking ''$10,000,000,000'' and inserting ''$17,500,000,000''.

(b) RESCISSION OF CERTAIN UNOBLIGATED BALANCES.—All of the unobligated balances of the amounts appropriated for fiscal year 2016 under the headings ''OPERATING EXPENSES'' and ''MULTILATERAL ASSISTANCE'' in titles II and V of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2016 (division K of Public Law 114–113), including funds designated by Congress for Overseas Contingency Operations/Global War on Terrorism pursuant to section 251(b)(2)(A)(ii) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (2 U.S.C. 901(b)(2)(A)(ii)) are rescinded.

SA 4036. Mr. FLAKE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place in division A, insert the following:

SEC. ____. The Federal Communications Commission shall extend the comment period for the proposed rule entitled ''Protecting the Privacy of Customers of Broadband and Other Telecommunications Services'' (81 Fed. Reg. 23359 (April 20, 2016)) by 60 days.

SA 4037. Mr. PORTMAN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

In the matter under the heading ''HOMELESS ASSISTANCE GRANTS'' under the heading ''COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT'' in title II of division A, insert before the period at the end the following: ''*Provided further*, That for purposes of this heading, the term 'recovery housing' means housing where the use of alcohol and the unlawful use of drugs by residents is prohibited, and where residents participate in programming that uses peer support to promote sobriety, health, and positive community involvement''.

SA 4038. Mr. FLAKE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; as follows:

At the end of title II of division B, add the following:

SEC. 251. Not later than September 30, 2017, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall—

(1) provide for the conduct by the Office of Inspector General of the Department of Veterans Affairs of an inspection or audit of the use of Federal award GU1103 in the amount of $3,265,487 that was awarded in 2013 to renovate a veteran's cemetery in Guam under the Veterans Cemetery Grants Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs, including—

(A) an itemized accounting of the use of such award; or

(B) if no such itemized accounting is possible, an explanation of why any amounts in connection with such award are unaccounted for;

(2) submit to the Committee on Appropriations and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Appropriations and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the results on the inspection or audit conducted under paragraph (1); and

(3) publish the results on the inspection or audit conducted under paragraph (1) on a publicly available Internet website of the Department.

SA 4039. Mr. MCCAIN (for himself, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, and Mr. BURR) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; as follows:

At the end of title II of division B, add the following:

EXTENSION AND EXPANSION OF VETERANS CHOICE PROGRAM

SEC. 251. (a) EXTENSION.—The Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (Public Law 113–146; 38 U.S.C. 1701 note) is amended—

(1) in section 101(p)(2), by striking ''3 years'' and inserting ''6 years''; and

(2) in section 802(d)(1), by striking ''$10,000,000,000'' and inserting ''$17,500,000,000''.

(b) EXPANSION OF ELIGIBILITY.—Subsection (b)(2) of section 101 of such Act is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (C)(ii), by striking ''; or'' and inserting a semicolon;

(2) in subparagraph (D)(ii)(II)(dd), by striking the period at the end and inserting ''; or''; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(E) has received health services under the pilot program under section 403 of the Veterans' Mental Health and Other Care Improvements Act of 2008 (Public Law 110–387; 38 U.S.C. 1703 note) and resides in a location described in section (b)(2) of such section.''.

(c) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—(1) Subsection (g)(3) of such section is amended by striking ''or (D)'' and inserting ''(D), or (E)''.

(2) Subsection (q)(2)(A) of such section is amended—

(A) in clause (iii), by striking ''; and'' and inserting a semicolon;

(B) in clause (iv), by striking the period at the end and inserting ''; and''; and

(C) by adding at the end the following new clause:

''(v) eligible veterans described in subsection (b)(2)(E).''.

(d) EMERGENCY REQUIREMENT.—The amounts made available under the amendments made by subsection (a) are designated by the Congress as an emergency requirement pursuant to section 251(b)(2)(A)(i) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (2 U.S.C. 901(b)(2)(A)(i)).

(e) QUARTERLY REPORT.—Not less frequently than quarterly until all amounts deposited in the Veterans Choice Fund under section 802 of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (Public Law 113–146; 38 U.S.C. 1701 note) are exhausted, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Appropriations and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Appropriations and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives an update on the expenditures made from such Fund to carry out section 101 of such Act during the quarter covered by the report.

ESTABLISHMENT OF CRITERIA FOR PROVISION OF SERVICES UNDER MEDICAL COMMUNITY CARE ACCOUNT

SEC. 252. In using amounts made available in this title for the Medical Community Care account of the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish consistent criteria and standards—

(1) for purposes of determining eligibility of non-Department health care providers to provide health care under the laws administered by the Secretary, including standards relating to education, certification, licensure, training, and employment history; and

(2) for the reimbursement of such health care providers for care or services provided under the laws administered by the Secretary, which to the extent practicable shall—

(A) use rates for reimbursement that are not more than the rates paid by the United States to a provider of services (as defined in section 1861(u) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395x(u))) under the Medicare program

under title XVIII of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395 et seq.) for the same care or services;

(B) incorporate the use of value-based reimbursement models to promote the provision of high-quality care to improve health outcomes and the experience of care for veterans; and

(C) be consistent with prompt payment standards required of Federal agencies under chapter 39 of title 31, United States Code.

SA 4040. Mr. CARDIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place in division A, insert the following:

SEC. ____. Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and every 90 days thereafter, the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration shall submit to Congress a report on the implementation of the policies contained in the update to the Community Involvement Manual of the Federal Aviation Administration required under the heading ''OPERATIONS'' under the heading ''FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION'' in title I of the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2016 (division L of Public Law 114–113; 129 Stat. 2840).

SA 4041. Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself, Mrs. SHAHEEN, and Mr. PETERS) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of title II of division B, add the following:

CERTAIN SERVICE DEEMED TO BE ACTIVE MILITARY SERVICE

SEC. 251. (a) IN GENERAL.—For purposes of section 401(a)(1)(A) of the GI Bill Improvement Act of 1977 (38 U.S.C. 106 note), the Secretary of Defense is deemed to have determined that qualified service of an individual constituted active military service.

(b) DETERMINATION OF DISCHARGE STATUS.—The Secretary of Defense shall issue an honorable discharge under section 401(a)(1)(B) of the GI Bill Improvement Act of 1977 to each person whose qualified service warrants an honorable discharge. Such discharge shall be issued before the end of the one-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act.

(c) PROHIBITION OF RETROACTIVE BENEFITS.—No benefits may be paid to any individual as a result of the enactment of this section for any period before the date of the enactment of this Act.

(d) QUALIFIED SERVICE DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''qualified service'' means service of an individual as a member of the organization known as the United States Cadet Nurse Corps during the period beginning on July 1, 1943, and ending on December 15, 1945.

SA 4042. Mr. WARNER (for himself and Mr. KAINE) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; as follows:

On page 37, between lines 17 and 18, insert the following:

SEC. 122. (a) TRANSFER OF AMOUNTS.—

(1) STATE OF VIRGINIA.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Of the total amount apportioned to the State of Virginia under section 104 of title 23, United States Code, for fiscal year 2017, the Secretary of Transportation shall, by the later of November 30, 2016, or 30 days after the enactment of this Act, transfer to the National Park Service—

(i) an amount equal to—

(I) $30,000,000; multiplied by

(II) the ratio that—

(aa) the amount apportioned to the State of Virginia under such section 104; bears to

(bb) the combined amount apportioned to the State of Virginia and the District of Columbia under such section 104; and

(ii) an amount of obligation limitation equal to the amount calculated under clause (i).

(B) SOURCE AND AMOUNT.—For purpose of the transfer under subparagraph (A), the State of Virginia shall select at the discretion of the State—

(i) the programs (among those for which funding is apportioned as described in that subparagraph) from which to transfer the amount specified in that subparagraph; and

(ii) the amount to transfer from each of those programs (equal in aggregate to the amount calculated under subparagraph (A)(i)).

(2) DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Of the total amount apportioned to the District of Columbia under section 104 of title 23, United States Code, for fiscal year 2017, the Secretary of Transportation shall, by the later of November 30, 2016, or 30 days after the enactment of this Act, transfer to the National Park Service—

(i) an amount equal to—

(I) $30,000,000; multiplied by

(II) the ratio that—

(aa) the amount apportioned to the District of Columbia under such section 104; bears to

(bb) the combined amount apportioned to the State of Virginia and the District of Columbia under such section 104; and

(ii) an amount of obligation limitation equal to the amount calculated under clause (i).

(B) SOURCE AND AMOUNT.—For purpose of the transfer under subparagraph (A), the District of Columbia shall select at the discretion of the District—

(i) the programs (among those for which funding is apportioned as described in that subparagraph) from which to transfer the amount specified in that subparagraph; and

(ii) the amount to transfer from each of those programs (equal in aggregate to the amount calculated under subparagraph (A)(i)).

(3) FEDERAL LANDS TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM.—Of the amounts otherwise made available to the National Park Service under section 203 of title 23, United States Code, not less than 10 percent shall be set aside for purposes of this section.

(b) ELIGIBILITY AND FEDERAL SHARE.—The amounts under subsection (a) shall be—

(1) available to the National Park Service only for projects that—

(A) are eligible under section 203 of title 23, United States Code;

(B) are located on bridges on the National Highway System that were originally constructed before 1945 and are in poor condition; and

(C) each have an estimated total project cost of not less than $150,000,000; and

(2) subject to the Federal share described in section 201(b)(7)(A) of title 23, United States Code.

(c) OTHER FUNDS AND OBLIGATION LIMITATION.—Any funds and obligation limitation transferred under subsection (a) shall be in addition to funds or obligation limitation otherwise made available to the National Park Service under sections 203 and 204 of title 23, United States Code.

SA 4043. Mr. MANCHIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; as follows:

At the end of title II of division B, add the following:

SEC. 251. (a) The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may use amounts appropriated or otherwise made available in this title to ensure that the ratio of veterans to full-time employment equivalents within any program of rehabilitation conducted under chapter 31 of title 38, United States Code, does not exceed 125 veterans to one full-time employment equivalent.

(b) Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on the programs of rehabilitation conducted under chapter 31 of title 38, United States Code, including—

(1) an assessment of the veteran-to-staff ratio for each such program; and

(2) recommendations for such action as the Secretary considers necessary to reduce the veteran-to-staff ratio for each such program.

SA 4044. Mr. DURBIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 215, line 5, strike ''2018.'' and insert ''2018: *Provided further*, That, of the funds made available under this heading, not to exceed $100,000, shall be used to expand procedures related to any online consumer tool offered or supported by the Department of Veterans Affairs that provides information to veterans regarding specific postsecondary educational institutions, such as the GI Bill Comparison Tool or any successor or similar program, to ensure for each such institution an accounting of pending investigations and civil or criminal actions against the institution by Federal agencies and State attorneys general, to the extent such information is publicly available.''.

SA 4045. Mr. ROUNDS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of title II of division B, add the following:

SEC. 251. ESTABLISHMENT OF GRANT PROGRAM TO IMPROVE MONITORING OF MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT PROGRAMS OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Commencing not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish a grant program to improve the monitoring of mental health and substance abuse treatment programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(b) GRANTS.—

(1) MAIN GRANT.—

(A) AWARD.—In carrying out subsection (a), the Secretary shall award grants to four protection and advocacy systems under which each protection and advocacy system shall carry out a demonstration project to investigate and monitor the care and treatment of veterans provided under chapter 17 of title 38, United States Code, for mental illness or substance abuse issues at medical facilities of the Department.

(B) MINIMUM AMOUNT.—Each grant awarded under subparagraph (A) to a protection and advocacy system shall be in an amount that is not less than $105,000 for each year that the protection and advocacy system carries out a demonstration project described in such subparagraph under the grant program.

(2) COLLABORATION GRANT.—

(A) AWARD.—During each year in which a protection and advocacy system carries out a demonstration project under paragraph (1)(A), the Secretary shall award a joint grant to a national organization with extensive knowledge of the protection and advocacy system and a veterans service organization in the amount of $80,000.

(B) COLLABORATION.—Each national organization and veterans service organization that is awarded a joint grant under subparagraph (A) shall use the amount of the grant to facilitate the collaboration between the national organization and the veterans service organization to—

(i) coordinate training and technical assistance for the protection and advocacy systems awarded grants under paragraph (1)(A); and

(ii) provide for data collection, reporting, and analysis in carrying out such paragraph.

(3) AUTHORITY.—In carrying out a demonstration project under paragraph (1)(A), a protection and advocacy system shall have the authorities specified in section 105(a) of the Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness Act (42 U.S.C. 10805(a)) with respect to medical facilities of the Department.

(c) SELECTION.—In selecting the four protection and advocacy systems to receive grants under subsection (b)(1)(A), the Secretary shall consider the following criteria:

(1) Whether the protection and advocacy system has demonstrated monitoring and investigation experience, along with knowledge of the issues facing veterans with disabilities.

(2) Whether the State in which the protection and advocacy system operates—

(A) has low aggregated scores in the domains of mental health, performance, and access as rated by the Strategic Analytics Improvement and Learning database system (commonly referred to as ''SAIL''); and

(B) to the extent practicable, is representative of both urban and rural States.

(d) REPORTS.—The Secretary shall ensure that each protection and advocacy system participating in the grant program submits to the Secretary reports developed by the protection and advocacy system relating to investigations or monitoring conducted pursuant to subsection (b)(1)(A). The Secretary shall designate an office of the Department of Veterans Affairs to receive each such report.

(e) DURATION; TERMINATION.—

(1) DURATION.—The Secretary shall carry out the grant program established under subsection (a) for a period of five years beginning on the date of commencement of the grant program.

(2) TERMINATION OF DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS.—The Secretary may terminate a demonstration project under subsection (b)(1)(A) before the end of the five-year period described in paragraph (1) if the Secretary determines there is good cause for such termination. If the Secretary carries out such a termination, the Secretary shall award grants under such subsection to a new protection and advocacy system for the remaining duration of the grant program.

(f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary to carry out the grant program under subsection (a) $500,000 for each of fiscal years 2017 through 2021.

(g) TRANSFER OF FUNDS.—Of the funds made available to the Department of Defense in title I of division B of this Act for the Department of Defense Base Closure Account, $500,000 shall be transferred to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out this section in fiscal year 2017.

(h) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) The term ''protection and advocacy system'' has the meaning given the term ''eligible system'' in section 102(2) of the Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness Act (42 U.S.C. 10802(2)).

(2) The term ''State'' means each of the several States, territories, and possessions of the United States, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

(3) The term ''veterans service organization'' means any organization recognized by the Secretary for the representation of veterans under section 5902 of title 38, United States Code.

SA 4046. Mr. PETERS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

In division A, on page 46, beginning on line 2, strike ''$160,075,000'' and all that follows through line 4, and insert the following: ''$163,075,000, of which $20,000,000 shall remain available through September 30, 2018: *Provided*, That not less than $9,600,000 of the amount provided under this heading shall be expended on vehicle electronics and emerging technology research for autonomous vehicles: *Provided further*, That the amount appropriated under this title for necessary expenses of the Office of the Secretary shall be reduced by $3,000,000.''.

SA 4047. Mr. INHOFE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 15, line 25, strike ''airport'' and insert the following: ''airport: *Provided further*, That an amount not to exceed $2,000,000 shall be available for use to revise existing third class medical certification regulations such that a general aviation pilot is authorized to operate an aircraft authorized under Federal law to carry not more than 6 occupants and with a maximum certificated takeoff weight of not more than 6,000 pounds if the pilot has held a third class medical certificate issued by the Federal Aviation Administration in the preceding 10 years, has completed an online medical education course in the preceding 2 years, has received a medical examination by a State-licensed physician in the preceding 4 years, and is under the care and treatment of a physician as directed, as provided for in the report of the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate accompanying S. 571, 114th Congress (Senate Report 114–198)''.

SA 4048. Mr. WARNER submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place in division A, insert the following:

SEC. ___. (a) The Secretary of Transportation shall establish a program to evaluate unmanned aircraft system detection and mitigation technologies that—

(1) may be used by airports to locate and track unmanned aircraft systems and the operators of such systems;

(2) do not interfere with existing airport operations, navigation, or communications systems;

(3) cannot be disabled or overridden by the owner or operator of an unmanned aircraft system;

(4) do not rely on the compliance of the manufacturer, owner, or operator of an unmanned aircraft system.

(b) The Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration shall—

(1) not later than 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, submit to Congress a report on the program required by subsection (a);

(2) establish pilot programs at not more than 3 airports to deploy and test the most promising technology identified in the report required by paragraph (1); and

(3) not later than 90 days after such date of enactment, submit to Congress a report that includes—

(A) the results of the pilot programs established under paragraph (2); and

(B) recommendations for national unmanned aircraft system detection and mitigation protocols at airports in the United States.

(c) Of amounts in the Airport and Airway Trust Fund established under section 9502 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, not more than $5,000,000 shall be available to carry out the pilot programs required by subsection (b)(2).

SA 4049. Mr. FLAKE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place in division A, insert the following:

SEC. ____. It is the sense of Congress that, during the pending summer travel season, the Transportation Security Administration should use all existing resources and technology to increase the efficiency of security screening at airports while preserving a high level of security, including by—

(1) redeploying behavior detection officers to staff the travel document checker position and putting the travel document checkers at screening checkpoints to perform screening functions;

(2) redeploying divest officers to screening checkpoints to perform screening functions and accepting the voluntary assistance of airports or air carriers with queuing and encouraging passengers to properly divest;

(3) providing Federal security directors the ability to make local decisions about manpower resource allocation without having to consult with Transportation Security Administration headquarters;

(4) immediately disseminating to airports and Federal security directors the best practices developed during the optimization team visits;

(5) using passenger screening canines to their greatest benefit in terms of both volume and mitigating excessive screening checkpoint wait times;

(6) conducting local training of transportation security officers until after the busy summer travel season;

(7) ensuring predictable and consistent operating hours for the PreCheck program and immediately initiating a marketing blitz highlighting the program and its benefits in coordination with airports;

(8) reassigning all available administrative and regulatory personnel to support passenger and baggage screening operations;

(9) moving available part-time screeners to full-time for the summer; and

(10) adopting an online enrollment process for the PreCheck program.

SA 4050. Mr. RUBIO submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 85, line 6, insert ''*Provided further*, That the Secretary may provide section 8 rental assistance from amounts made available under this paragraph for units assisted under a project-based subsidy contract funded under the 'Project-Based Rental Assistance' heading under this title where the owner has received a Notice of Default and the units pose an imminent health and safety risk to residents: *Provided further*, That to the extent that the Secretary determines that such units are not feasible for continued rental assistance payments or transfer of the subsidy contract associated with such units to another project or projects and owner or owners, any remaining amounts associated with such units under such contract shall be recaptured and used to reimburse amounts used under this paragraph for rental assistance under the preceding proviso:'' before ''*Provided further*,''.

SA 4051. Mr. WARNER (for himself and Mr. BENNET) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 4039 submitted by Mr. MCCAIN (for himself, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, and Mr. BURR) to the amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end, add the following:

AUTHORIZATION OF CERTAIN MAJOR MEDICAL FACILITY LEASES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

SEC. 253. (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may carry out the following major medical facility leases at the locations specified and in an amount for each lease not to exceed the amount specified for such location (not including any estimated cancellation costs):

(1) For an outpatient clinic, Ann Arbor, Michigan, an amount not to exceed $17,093,000.

(2) For an outpatient mental health clinic, Birmingham, Alabama, an amount not to exceed $6,971,000.

(3) For an outpatient specialty clinic, Birmingham, Alabama, an amount not to exceed $10,479,000.

(4) For research space, Boston, Massachusetts, an amount not to exceed $5,497,000.

(5) For research space, Charleston, South Carolina, an amount not to exceed $6,581,000.

(6) For an outpatient clinic, Daytona Beach, Florida, an amount not to exceed $12,664,000.

(7) For Chief Business Office Purchased Care office space, Denver, Colorado, an amount not to exceed $17,215,000.

(8) For an outpatient clinic, Gainesville, Florida, an amount not to exceed $4,686,000.

(9) For an outpatient clinic, Hampton Roads, Virginia, an amount not to exceed $18,124,000.

(10) For research space, Mission Bay, California, an amount not to exceed $23,454,000.

(11) For an outpatient clinic, Missoula, Montana, an amount not to exceed $7,130,000.

(12) For an outpatient clinic, Northern Colorado, Colorado, an amount not to exceed $8,776,000.

(13) For an outpatient clinic, Ocala, Florida, an amount not to exceed $5,279,000.

(14) For an outpatient clinic, Oxnard, California, an amount not to exceed $6,297,000.

(15) For an outpatient clinic, Pike County, Georgia, an amount not to exceed $5,757,000.

(16) For an outpatient clinic, Portland, Maine, an amount not to exceed $6,846,000.

(17) For an outpatient clinic, Raleigh, North Carolina, an amount not to exceed $21,607,000.

(18) For an outpatient clinic, Santa Rosa, California, an amount not to exceed $6,498,000.

(19) For a replacement outpatient clinic, Corpus Christi, Texas, an amount not to exceed $7,452,000.

(20) For a replacement outpatient clinic, Jacksonville, Florida, an amount not to exceed $18,136,000.

(21) For a replacement outpatient clinic, Pontiac, Michigan, an amount not to exceed $4,532,000.

(22) For a replacement outpatient clinic, phase II, Rochester, New York, an amount not to exceed $6,901,000.

(23) For a replacement outpatient clinic, Tampa, Florida, an amount not to exceed $10,568,000.

(24) For a replacement outpatient clinic, Terre Haute, Indiana, an amount not to exceed $4,475,000.

(b) EMERGENCY REQUIREMENT.—The amounts made available under subsection (a) are designated by the Congress as an emergency requirement pursuant to section 251(b)(2)(A)(i) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (2 U.S.C. 901(b)(2)(A)(i)).

SA 4052. Mr. WARNER (for himself and Mr. BENNET) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 4039 submitted by Mr. MCCAIN (for himself, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, and Mr. BURR) to the amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end, add the following:

AUTHORIZATION OF CERTAIN MAJOR MEDICAL FACILITY LEASES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

SEC. 253. (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may carry out the following major medical facility leases at the locations specified and in an amount for each lease not to exceed the amount specified for such location (not including any estimated cancellation costs):

(1) For an outpatient clinic, Ann Arbor, Michigan, an amount not to exceed $17,093,000.

(2) For an outpatient mental health clinic, Birmingham, Alabama, an amount not to exceed $6,971,000.

(3) For an outpatient specialty clinic, Birmingham, Alabama, an amount not to exceed $10,479,000.

(4) For research space, Boston, Massachusetts, an amount not to exceed $5,497,000.

(5) For research space, Charleston, South Carolina, an amount not to exceed $6,581,000.

(6) For an outpatient clinic, Daytona Beach, Florida, an amount not to exceed $12,664,000.

(7) For Chief Business Office Purchased Care office space, Denver, Colorado, an amount not to exceed $17,215,000.

(8) For an outpatient clinic, Gainesville, Florida, an amount not to exceed $4,686,000.

(9) For an outpatient clinic, Hampton Roads, Virginia, an amount not to exceed $18,124,000.

(10) For research space, Mission Bay, California, an amount not to exceed $23,454,000.

(11) For an outpatient clinic, Missoula, Montana, an amount not to exceed $7,130,000.

(12) For an outpatient clinic, Northern Colorado, Colorado, an amount not to exceed $8,776,000.
(13) For an outpatient clinic, Ocala, Florida, an amount not to exceed $5,279,000.
(14) For an outpatient clinic, Oxnard, California, an amount not to exceed $6,297,000.
(15) For an outpatient clinic, Pike County, Georgia, an amount not to exceed $5,757,000.
(16) For an outpatient clinic, Portland, Maine, an amount not to exceed $6,846,000.
(17) For an outpatient clinic, Raleigh, North Carolina, an amount not to exceed $21,607,000.
(18) For an outpatient clinic, Santa Rosa, California, an amount not to exceed $6,498,000.
(b) EMERGENCY REQUIREMENT.—The amounts made available under subsection (a) are designated by the Congress as an emergency requirement pursuant to section 251(b)(2)(A)(i) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (2 U.S.C. 901(b)(2)(A)(i)).

SA 4053. Mr. LEE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

In division A, beginning on page 61, strike line 10 and all that follows through page 62, line 4.

SA 4054. Mr. LEE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

In division A, beginning on page 56, strike line 10 and all that follows through page 57, line 12.

SA 4055. Mr. LEE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

In division A, on page 56, strike lines 6 through 9.

SA 4056. Mr. LEE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

In division A, beginning on page 51, strike line 14 and all that follows through page 53, line 3.

SA 4057. Mr. LEE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

In division A, on page 27, strike lines 5 through 12 and insert the following:

Not to exceed $430,795,000, together with advances and reimbursements received by the Federal Highway Administration, shall be obligated for necessary expenses for administration and operation of the Federal Highway Administration.

SA 4058. Mr. LEE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

In division A, beginning on page 10, strike line 16 and all that follows through page 11, line 16.

SA 4059. Mr. LEE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

In division A, on page 28, line 9, strike the period at the end and insert the following: '': *Provided further*, That none of the funds made available under this heading may be used to carry out a project under section 133(h) of title 23, United States Code.''

SA 4060. Mr. LEE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED, and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

In division A, beginning on page 4, strike line 10 and all that follows through page 6, line 18.

SA 4061. Ms. COLLINS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3897 proposed by Mr. MCCONNELL (for Mr. LEE (for himself, Mr. VITTER, Mr. COTTON, and Mr. SHELBY)) to the amendment SA 3896 proposed by Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. REED and Mr. TESTER) to the bill H.R. 2577, making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

In lieu of the matter proposed to be inserted, insert the following:

SEC.____. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used by the Department of Housing and Urban Development to direct a grantee to undertake specific changes to existing zoning laws as part of carrying out the final rule entitled ''Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing'' (80 Fed. Reg. 42272 (July 16, 2015)) or the notice entitled ''Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Assessment Tool'' (79 Fed. Reg. 57949 (September 26, 2014)).

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on May 18, 2016, at 10 a.m., in room SR–253 of the Russell Senate Office Building to conduct a hearing entitled ''The Telephone Consumer Protection Act at 25: Effects on Consumers and Business.''

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

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Environment and Public Works be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on May 18, 2016, at 9:30 a.m., in room SD–406 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

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

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 May 18, 2016, at 10 a.m., in room SD–430 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building to conduct a hearing entitled ''ESSA Implementation: Perspectives from Education Stakeholders.''

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 May 18, 2016, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing entitled ''Assessing the Security of Critical Infrastructure: Threats, Vulnerabilities, and Solutions.''

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

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Indian Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on May 18, 2016, at 2:15 p.m., in room SD–628 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

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

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on May 18, 2016, at 10 a.m., in room SD–226 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled ''Nominations.''

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

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on May 18, 2016, at 2 p.m., in room SR–428A of the Russell Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled ''The Small Business Struggle Under Obamacare.''

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

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME AND TERRORISM

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Crime and Terrorism be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on May 18, 2016, at 3 p.m., in room SD–226 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled ''Ransomware: Understanding the Threat and Exploring Solutions.''

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

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Julia Tierney and Jane Bigham, two detailees with the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, and Charcillea Schaefer, a military fellow in Senator MURRAY's personal office, be granted privileges of the floor for the duration of the 114th Congress.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session for the consideration of Calendar Nos. 547 through 551 and all nominations on the Secretary's desk in the Foreign Service; that the nominations be confirmed en bloc, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order; that any statements related to the nominations be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate then resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The nominations considered and confirmed en bloc are as follows:

IN THE COAST GUARD

The following named officers for appointment in the United States Coast Guard Reserve to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 12203(a):

To be captain

Jennifer K. Grzelak
Andrew R. Sheffield

The following named officers for appointment to the grade indicated in the United States Coast Guard under title 14, U.S.C., section 271(d):

To be rear admiral

Rear Adm. (1h) Meredith L. Austin
Rear Adm. (1h) Peter W. Gautier
Rear Adm. (1h) Michael J. Haycock
Rear Adm. (1h) James M. Heinz
Rear Adm. (1h) Kevin E. Lunday
Rear Adm. (1h) Todd A Sokalzuk
Rear Adm. (lh) Paul F. Thomas

The following named officers for appointment in the grade indicated in the United States Coast Guard as members of the Coast Guard permanent commissioned teaching staff under title 14, U.S.C., section 188:

To be lieutenant

Jonathan P. Tschudy
Matthew B. Williams

The following named officer for appointment as Vice Commandant in the United States Coast Guard and to the grade indicated under title 14, U.S.C., section 47:

To be admiral

Vice Adm. Charles D. Michel

The following named officer for appointment as Deputy Commandant for Operations, a position of importance and responsibility in the United States Coast Guard and to the grade indicated under title 14, U.S.C., section 50:

To be vice admiral

Vice Adm. Charles W. Ray

NOMINATIONS PLACED ON THE SECRETARY'S DESK

IN THE FOREIGN SERVICE

PN230—4 FOREIGN SERVICE nomination of Victoria L Mitchell, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of February 26, 2015.

PN1088 FOREIGN SERVICE nomination of Antonio J. Arroyave, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 19, 2016.

PN1256 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (146) beginning Rian Harker Harris, and ending Jennifer Marie Schuett, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of March 15, 2016.

PN1257 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (173) beginning Melinda L. Crowley, and ending Julie Elizabeth Zinamon, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of March 15, 2016.

PN1371 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (8) beginning Nathan Seifert, and ending Joshua Burke, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of April 14, 2016.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now resume legislative session.

NATIONAL PUBLIC WORKS WEEK

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 471, 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. 471) designating the week of May 15 through May 21, 2016, as ''National Public Works Week.''

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

Ms. COLLINS. 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. 471) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under ''Submitted Resolutions.'')

DANNIE A. CARR VETERANS OUTPATIENT CLINIC

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Veterans' Affairs be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 2814 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2814) to name the Department of Veterans Affairs community-based outpatient clinic in Sevierville, Tennessee, the Dannie A. Carr Veterans Outpatient Clinic.

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

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

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

The bill (H.R. 2814) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

ORDERS FOR THURSDAY, MAY 19, 2016

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 9:30 a.m., Thursday, May 19;

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 then resume consideration of H.R. 2577, with the time until 11:15 a.m. equally divided between the managers or their designees.

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

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:30 A.M. TOMORROW

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

There being no objection, the Senate, at 8:14 p.m., adjourned until Thursday, May 19, 2016, at 9:30 a.m.

NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate:

THE JUDICIARY

FRANCES MARIE TYDINGCO-GATEWOOD, OF GUAM, TO BE JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT COURT OF GUAM FOR THE TERM OF TEN YEARS. (REAPPOINTMENT)

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

CAROLE SCHWARTZ RENDON, OF OHIO, TO BE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF OHIO FOR THE TERM OF FOUR YEARS, VICE STEVEN M . DETTELBACH, RESIGNED.

IN THE ARMY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be major general

BRIG. GEN. DAVID G. BASSETT
BRIG. GEN. WILLARD M. BURLESON III
BRIG. GEN. CHRISTOPHER G. CAVOLI
BRIG. GEN. DAVID C. COBURN
BRIG. GEN. STEPHEN E. FARMEN
BRIG. GEN. BRYAN P. FENTON
BRIG. GEN. MALCOLM B. FROST
BRIG. GEN. PATRICIA A. FROST
BRIG. GEN. DOUGLAS M. GABRAM
BRIG. GEN. PETER A. GALLAGHER
BRIG. GEN. JOHN A. GEORGE
BRIG. GEN. RANDY A. GEORGE
BRIG. GEN. MICHAEL L. HOWARD
BRIG. GEN. SEAN M. JENKINS
BRIG. GEN. JOHN P. JOHNSON
BRIG. GEN. RICHARD G. KAISER
BRIG. GEN. JOHN S. KEM
BRIG. GEN. ROBERT L. MARION
BRIG. GEN. TIMOTHY P. MCGUIRE
BRIG. GEN. DENNIS S. MCKEAN
BRIG. GEN. TERRENCE J. MCKENRICK
BRIG. GEN. CHRISTOPHER P. MCPADDEN
BRIG. GEN. DANIEL G. MITCHELL
BRIG. GEN. FRANK M. MUTH
BRIG. GEN. ERIK C. PETERSON
BRIG. GEN. LEOPOLDO A. QUINTAS, JR.
BRIG. GEN. KURT J. RYAN
BRIG. GEN. MARK C. SCHWARTZ
BRIG. GEN. WILSON A. SHOFFNER, JR.
BRIG. GEN. KURT L. SONNTAG
BRIG. GEN. SCOTT A. SPELLMON
BRIG. GEN. RANDY S. TAYLOR
BRIG. GEN. ROBERT P. WALTERS, JR.
BRIG. GEN. ERIC J. WESLEY

IN THE NAVY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER ARTICLE II, SECTION 2, CLAUSE 2, OF THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION:

To be rear admiral (lower half)

CAPT. RONNY L. JACKSON

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 601:

To be admiral

ADM. MICHELLE J. HOWARD

IN THE AIR FORCE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be lieutenant colonel

ZACHARY P. AUGUSTINE
CHRISTOPHER JAMES BAKER
BRIAN V. BANAS
JEFFREY T. BILLER
OWEN B. BISHOP
MICHAEL P. CARRUTHERS
DAVID ANTHONY COGGIN, JR.
ANTHONY M. DAMIANI
ALLISON CHISOLM DANELS
MATTHEW E. DUNHAM
DARIN C. FAWCETT
CODY P. FOWLER
JOSHUA A. GOINS
ERICA L. HARRIS
ELIZABETH MARIE HERNANDEZ
RYAN D. HILTON
SHAROIHA P. K. JAMESON
RHEA ANN LAGANO
ERIN T. X. LAI
BRETT A. LANDRY
DUSTIN C. LANE
LARISSA N. LANIGAR
JAMES R. LISHER II
DANIEL C. MAMBER
SHELLY STOKES MCNULTY
BRADLEY A. MORRIS
NICOLE M. NAVIN
NINA R. PADALINO
KYLE A. PAYNE
GABRIEL DAVIS PEDRICK
JENNIFER E. POWELL
MICHAEL T. RAKOWSKI
DEREK A. ROWE
RENEE DIANE SALZMANN
DANIEL E. SCHOENI
NATHANIEL H. SEARS
LANCE R. SMITH
LEAH M. SPRECHER
MICHELLE MARIE SUBERLY
MATTHEW D. TALCOTT
MICHAEL L. TOOMER
DANIEL P. TULL
JOHN B. WARNOCK
PILAR G. WENNRICH
BRIAN A. YOUNG

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be colonel

WILLIAM J. FECKE
FREDDIE E. JENKINS
CRAIG A. KEYES
MARK R. LAMEY
ZOYA L. LEE ZERKEL
WILLIAM P. MALLOY
ANN M. MCCAIN
DERRICK J. MCKERCHER
DAVID A. SCHLEVENSKY
GIGI A. SIMKO
JAMES S. SMITH
MARY E. STEWART
PAUL J. TOTH, JR.
JANET K. URBANSKI

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be colonel

WALTER W. BEAN
DAVID LEWIS BUTTRICK
ALAN CHOUEST
RANDALL W. ERWIN
MICHAEL W. HUSFELT
SCOTT L. RUMMAGE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be lieutenant colonel

JENNIFER D. BANKSTON
BENJAMIN BERZINIS
JANET L. BLANCHARD
DENISE D. CARCAMO
ROBERT L. CHAPLIN, JR.
STEPHANIE CHIRICO
KRISTA L. CHRISTIANSON
JUVELYN T. CHUA
PENNY H. CUNNINGHAM
PATRICIA J. DALTON
RENAE R. DENELSBECK
MICHELLE D. DIMOFF
JON D. EARLES
MARION L. FOREMAN, JR.
SUZANNE M. GREEN
KRISTA D. GREY
JULIE L. HANSON
DALE E. HARRELL
JAMALE R. HART
LYNN M. HAY
JO ANN M. HENDERSON
DAVID P. HERNANDEZ
RONALD K. HODGEN
LONNIE W. HODGES
DAWNKIMBERLY Y. HOPKINS
STEPHANIE ISAACFRANCIS
JENNIFER LEA JAMISON GINES
AMANDA C. KRBEC
ANGELA M. LACEK
SCOTT A. LEBLANC
TAMARA A. LEITAKERMYERS
ROY L. LOUQUE
AMY F. MACIAS
LAURIE A. MIGLIORE
SANDRA R. NESTOR
SINA M. NICHOLS
DAVID S. NORWOOD
ADELEKE A. OYEMADE
MATTHEW L. PFEIFFER
NISA T. PISTONE
SUSAN P. RHEA
DWAYNE ROLNIAK
HEATHER N. ROSCISZEWSKI
SCOTT F. SANDERS
AMANDA L. SIANGCO
ERIKA T. SMITH
JAMES A. SMITH II
WANDA K. STAUFFER
SARAH E. STRANSKE
KIMBERLY NOVACK TRNKA
CLINTON K. WAHL
JAMES K. WEBB
WILLIAM F. WOLFE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be major

MICHAEL CHRISTOPHER AHL
JOEL RYAN ANDREASON
JOHANNA K. BERNSTEIN
KEVIN MICHAEL BODEN
ROSS ANDREW BROWN
JASMINE NATASHA CANDELARIO
CAROLYN G. CARMODY
LINDSAY ANN COLLINS
ADAM JONES CUMBERWORTH
BENJAMIN HARRIS DEYOUNG
SETH WOODRUFF DILWORTH
SARAH MARTINO DINGIVAN
MICAH WAYNE ELGGREN
JANE A. ELZEFTAWY
JAMES PETER FERRELL
ANTONIO FORNASIER
DAVID LINDSTROM FOX
CASEY JOHN GROHER
KEVIN CHARLES HAKALA
PETER FITZGERALD HAVERN
VALYNCIA S. HILL
ANDREA MARIE HUNWICK
KENNETH JAMES HYLE III
BRETT AUSTIN JOHNSON
TIFFANY A. JOHNSON
ANDREW JOHN KASMAN
JOHN F. KNOX
DUSTIN B. KOUBA
CHRISTOPHER R. LANKS
DANIEL SOONGHYUN LEE
JOHNATHAN DAVID LEGG
MATTHEW PATRICK LYNCH
RACHEL SARA LYONS
CHRISTOPHER KIRK MANGELS
SEAN C. MCGARVEY
JARETT FREDRIC MERK
CHRISTINE L. MEYLING
JEREMY LEE MOONEY
ADAM GREGORY MUDGE
RYAN ADAM MUELLER
VY S. NGUYEN
TRENTON ALLEN NORMAN
PHILLIP NORMAN PADDEN
KYRA LINDSAY PALMER
DAYLE PAMELA PERCLE
NICHOLAS DAVID PETERSON
MICHAEL ADAM PIERSON
BRADLEY L. PORONSKY
DANKO PRINCIP
MICHAEL JOSEPH RAMING
SARA MARIE RATHGEBER
RYAN MARCUS REED
JOHN STEWART REID
LAUREN E. ROSENBLATT
JAZMINE ABADIA RUSSELL
AMANDA KAY SNIPES
STEVEN LUTHER SPENCER II
TAREN E. WELLMAN
EMILY MARIE WILSON
CRYSTAL LOUISE WONG
LISA MARIE WOTKOWICZ

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be major

TIMOTHY JAMES ANDERSON
JESSICA L. ANGELES
CHEICK A. BAH
NEIL ADAM BOOTS
RODNEY PAUL BOTTOMS
MICHAEL A. BOWER
LIZETH CAMERON
JAMIE TERRELL CLARK
MELODIE M. CROSS
PATRICK JAMES DAUGHERTY, JR.
AMANDA M. DAVIS
WENDY M. DUNLAP
BOYD H. FRITZSCHE
DANIEL J. GILARDI
NATHAN TRAVIS GREEN
TYLER A. GRUNEWALD
KATHERINE S. HASS
MARIE F. JOHN
MATTHEW B. KESTI
CANDACE F. LUCAS
MOLLY A. MATTHEWS NEU
RYAN C. MCCRAE
BENJAMIN E. MEIGHAN
MISTI NICHOLE NEILL

BRYANT C. NELSON
TAMARA A. OPALINSKI
JONATHAN D. PENTEL
JAMES N. PFOTENHAUER
JOHN MORRISON RABOLD
XIAO CHEN REN
NATHAN REYNOLDS
THOMAS S. SHADD
SHANE EUGENE SLADE
CHRISTOPHER E. STEWART
CORINNE M. STEWART
AMANDA T. TERRY
MARIO E. TORRES
CHRISTOPHER KENNETH WEBER
CHAD M. WHITSON
BENJAMIN J. WILSON
JUSTIN L. WOLTHUIZEN

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be major

VICTORIA D. ABLES
KRISTEN A. ALBERT
LAWANDA M. AMATO
JORGE A. ARIZPE
LESLIE L. BALCAZAR
MONIQUE NATASHA BATTLE
SARA R. BITTIKER
RHETT A. BLUE
JAMES F. BOCCHICCHIO
BRENT HARRIS BURHITE
LYN L. CABIGAS
SAMANTHA K. CAMPBELL
STEPHANIE J. CAMPOS
REBEKAH J. CARLISLE
LEWIS J. CARVER, JR.
MIN CHOI
NELANETTE V. CLEMMONS
JASMINE D. COOK
DENISE R. COVERT
CARLA S. COX
ANNA M. DANZ
LISA M. DEEP
JILL A. DIXON
EDWARD S. EAST
JESSICA F. ELLIS
MICAH T. EMERSON
ADAM C. FALTERSACK
REBECCA A. FARMER
AMANDA M. FULMER
FALANA C. GIDEON
KELLEY E. GIVENS
JENNIFER L. GREEN
SHELLY S. HANSON
DION J. HATTRUP
MELISSA HENDRICKS
RANDALL S. HICKS
MATHEW B. HILL
RACHEL E. HODGE
CANDICE R. HOLBROOK
DIANA HORTON
LISA S. HOWARD
ANTHONY INTERRANTE III
SARA A. JANSCH
CAROL A. KELLY
BRIAN R. KENNEDY
BROOKE N. KIEFFER
LEIGH E. KIMMELL
EDWARD R. KISSAM
LEAH M. LIN
NINA M. LINNEHAN
JESSICA LINTON
SHEILA L. LLANDERAL
CHRISTINA FAYE LOVE
ROMMEL B. LUBANG
MATTHEW S. LUNDH
MICHELLE L. LUTTRELL
ANGELA D. MAASS
MARTI T. MACTAGGART
RAY P. MAMUAD
LEON MAPP, JR.
LINDSEY N. MARQUEZ
THERESA A. MAVITY
BRENDAN E. MCQUOWN
DANIELLE N. MERRITT
SHANA R. MILLER
CHANEL N. MITCHELL
JENNIFER LEIGH MITCHUM
PATRICK J. MOSER
PAUL R. PADILLA
ALEXANDRA D. PARKER
JASON W. PARKINSON
ANDREW J. PHILLIPS
JAMES B. PUTNAM
KIRSTAN J. PYLE
STEPHANIE J. RAPS
NICHOLAS PATRICK REEDER
CECILIA Y. RIOS
JAMILIA D. ROBINSON
ADRIAN C. RODRIGUEZ
CHAD T. SANDMANN
CHRISTINE C. SARGENT TROJAN
DOUGLAS J. SAVEY
DEBRA M. SIZEMORE
JACQUELYN P. SMITH
JENNIFER D. SMITH
KENNETH D. SMITH
DAWN M. SOUZA
FAIZ M. TAQI
SYDNE M. B. TOBIAS
PAIGE A. WARREN
DEBRA L. WHITT
LENA MARIE WILLIAMS COX
ALEXANDER C. WILSON
HEATH WILSON
DAWN M. WINTER
JESSICA L. WYCHE
NICHOLE M. YOUNG
ANN M. ZENOBIA
MATTHEW G. ZINN

IN THE ARMY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY MEDICAL SPECIALIST CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 624 AND 3064:

To be lieutenant colonel

DANIEL P. FISHER

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be colonel

DARIN J. BLATT

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be colonel

ZOLTAN L. KROMPECHER

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be lieutenant colonel

JOHN D. WINGEART

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be lieutenant colonel

JANELLE V. KUTTER

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be lieutenant colonel

KEVIN T. REEVES

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be major

SHAWN R. LYNCH

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY MEDICAL CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C. SECTIONS 624 AND 3064:

To be major

ANKITA B. PATEL

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR REGULAR APPOINTMENT IN THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY MEDICAL CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 531 AND 3064:

To be major

RITA A. KOSTECKE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY MEDICAL CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 531 AND 3064:

To be major

HELEN H. BRANDABUR

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE RESERVE OF THE ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be colonel

BARRY K. WILLIAMS

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY MEDICAL CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 624 AND 3064:

To be colonel

MARSHALL H. SMITH

FOREIGN SERVICE

THE FOLLOWING-NAMED MEMBERS OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE FOR APPOINTMENT AS A FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER, A CONSULAR OFFICER, AND A SECRETARY IN THE DIPLOMATIC SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

AMANDA R. AHLERS, OF CALIFORNIA
ALEXIS J. ALEXANDER, OF TEXAS
MOSES AN, OF CALIFORNIA
ANDREW J. AYLWARD, OF CALIFORNIA
JAMES C. BENNETT, OF WISCONSIN
LITTANE D. BIEN-AIME, OF MASSACHUSETTS
KEONDRA S. BILLS, OF NEW YORK
RYAN P. BLANTON, OF TEXAS
JACKSON N. BLOOM, OF CALIFORNIA
PREN-TSILYA BOA-GUEHE, OF MARYLAND
PATRICK T. BRANCO, OF HAWAII
PAUL R. BULLARD, OF NEW YORK
AARON P. BURGE, OF FLORIDA
ALLISON S. BYBEE, OF ALASKA
VIRGIL W. CARSTENS, OF TEXAS
MARK R. CARTER, OF WASHINGTON
RYAN W. CASSELBERRY, OF FLORIDA
MARIYAM A. CEMENTWALA, OF CALIFORNIA
SHILIANG THOMAS CHEN, OF NEW YORK
KRISTOFER L. CLARK, OF FLORIDA
PAM S. COBB, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PATRICK F. COLLINS, OF ILLINOIS
MARLO S. CROSS-DURRANT, OF MICHIGAN
DANIEL R. DEMING, OF TENNESSEE
KRISTIE J. DI LASCIO, OF FLORIDA
ANDREW J. DILBERT, OF FLORIDA
REBECCA A. DOFFING, OF MINNESOTA
ELISABETH F. EL-KHODARY, OF MARYLAND
JOHN V. FAZIO, OF ILLINOIS
NICOLE M. FINNEMANN, OF MICHIGAN
PAUL I. FISHBEIN, OF CALIFORNIA
KARINA G. GARCIA, OF CALIFORNIA
COURTNEY L. GATES, OF CALIFORNIA
JENNIFER L. GOLDSTEIN, OF CALIFORNIA
JOHN H. GRAY, OF CALIFORNIA
MARIANNA GRAYSON, OF TEXAS
NATHANIEL S.D. HAFT, OF MARYLAND
ALLYSON R. HAMILTON–MCINTIRE, OF KENTUCKY
MILES C. HANSEN, OF TEXAS
KAYLEA J. HAPPELL, OF NEW YORK
KIMBERLY R. HARMON, OF SOUTH CAROLINA
BYRON C. HARTMAN, OF VIRGINIA
COURTNEY W. HO, OF NEW JERSEY
NOAH B. HOGAN, OF INDIANA
DANIELA S. IONOVA–SWIDER, OF VIRGINIA
JOHN P. JENKS, OF VIRGINIA
LISA S. JEWELL, OF ILLINOIS
NILE J. JOHNSON, OF GEORGIA
DEREK R. KELLY, OF NEW YORK
YUKI KONDO–SHAH, OF ARIZONA
LAURIE A. KURIAKOSE, OF WISCONSIN
JESSIE M. KUYKENDALL, OF OKLAHOMA
FRANK A. LAVOIE, OF NEVADA
JAIME F. LEBLANC–HADLEY, OF TEXAS
ALEX V. LITICHEVSKY, OF NEW JERSEY
SUTTON A. MEAGHER, OF MISSOURI
CAMERON S. MILLARD, OF WASHINGTON
JARED R. MILTON, OF VIRGINIA
WILLIAM J. MISKELLY, OF INDIANA
EMMA M. NAGY, OF CALIFORNIA
CARLY S. NASEHI, OF FLORIDA
TOBIN H. NELSON, OF CALIFORNIA
KATHERINE A. NTIAMOAH, OF INDIANA
BENJAMIN J. OVERBY, OF TEXAS
RYAN L. PALSROK, OF NEW YORK
JANE JIHYE PARK, OF VIRGINIA
JULIANNE N. PARKER, OF FLORIDA
GREGORY M. PEARMAN, OF CALIFORNIA
RYAN E. PETERSON, OF VIRGINIA
KAKOLI RAY, OF VIRGINIA
MICHAEL C. RILEY, OF NORTH CAROLINA
VANESSA N. ROZIER, OF CONNECTICUT
AHMED A. SHAMA, OF NEW YORK
ANDREW T. SHEPARD, OF FLORIDA
NOOSHIN SOLTANI, OF TEXAS
ALESIA L. SOURINE, OF MICHIGAN
MAX J. STEINER, OF CALIFORNIA
REBECCA J. STEWART, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
ALEXANDRA J. TAYLOR, OF PENNSYLVANIA
MARKUS A. THOMI, OF NEW YORK
MATTHEW A. THOMPSON, OF WASHINGTON
LEAH M. THORSTENSON, OF TEXAS
ELIZABETH B. THRELKELD, OF OKLAHOMA
NICHOLAS JACKSON UNGER, OF CALIFORNIA
TODD W. UNTERSEHER, OF LOUISIANA
JENNIFER L. VAN WINKLE, OF IOWA
VANESSA L. VIDAL–SAMMOUD, OF CALIFORNIA
GEORGE B. WARD, OF MARYLAND
ANN MARIE WARMENHOVEN, OF FLORIDA
LEE V. WILBUR, OF SOUTH DAKOTA

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate May 18, 2016:

IN THE COAST GUARD

COAST GUARD NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH JENNIFER K. GRZELAK AND ENDING WITH ANDREW R. SHEFFIELD, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON DECEMBER 14, 2015.

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD UNDER TITLE 14, U.S.C., SECTION 271(D):

To be rear admiral

REAR ADM. (LH) MEREDITH L. AUSTIN
REAR ADM. (LH) PETER W. GAUTIER
REAR ADM. (LH) MICHAEL J. HAYCOCK
REAR ADM. (LH) JAMES M. HEINZ
REAR ADM. (LH) KEVIN E. LUNDAY
REAR ADM. (LH) TODD A. SOKALZUK
REAR ADM. (LH) PAUL F. THOMAS

COAST GUARD NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH JONATHAN P. TSCHUDY AND ENDING WITH MATTHEW B. WILLIAMS, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON MARCH 17, 2016.

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT AS VICE COMMANDANT IN THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD AND TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 14, U.S.C., SECTION 47:

To be admiral

VICE ADM. CHARLES D. MICHEL

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT AS DEPUTY COMMANDANT FOR OPERATIONS, A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY IN THE UNITED

STATES COAST GUARD AND TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 14, U.S.C., SECTION 50:

To be vice admiral

VICE ADM. CHARLES W. RAY

FOREIGN SERVICE

FOREIGN SERVICE NOMINATION OF VICTORIA L. MITCHELL.

FOREIGN SERVICE NOMINATION OF ANTONIO J. ARROYAVE.

FOREIGN SERVICE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH RIAN HARKER HARRIS AND ENDING WITH JENNIFER MARIE SCHUETT, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON MARCH 15, 2016.

FOREIGN SERVICE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH MELINDA L. CROWLEY AND ENDING WITH JULIE ELIZABETH ZINAMON, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON MARCH 15, 2016.

FOREIGN SERVICE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH NATHAN SEIFERT AND ENDING WITH JOSHUA BURKE, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON APRIL 14, 2016.