WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, MAY 10, 2017

House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Thursday, May 11, 2017, at 2 p.m.

Senate

WEDNESDAY, MAY 10, 2017

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

PROVIDING FOR CONGRESSIONAL DISAPPROVAL OF A RULE OF THE BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to H.J. Res. 36.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. MCCONNELL] moves to proceed to H.J. Res. 36, a joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the final rule of the Bureau of Land Management relating to “Waste Prevention, Production Subject to Royalties, and Resource Conservation.”

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Democratic leader and I be allowed to give our leader remarks at this time.

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

WELCOMING KENTUCKY VETERANS TO OUR NATION’S CAPITAL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, today it is my privilege to welcome a distinguished group of Kentuckians to our Nation’s Capital. Because of the incredible work of the Honor Flight Program, over 80 World War II, Korea, and Vietnam veterans from across my home State will travel to Washington. Here they will see the memorials built to honor their service.

The Bluegrass Chapter Honor Flight has brought hundreds of veterans, most of them Kentuckians, to Washington for this purpose. Despite the significant logistical and financial planning that goes into these trips, Honor Flight works to make sure veterans have the opportunity to travel at no cost to themselves.

The program organizes travel and food for these veterans, many of whom would never be able to visit our Nation’s Capital or see the memorials at all without Honor Flight.

The national monuments built on the Mall pay tribute to those who sacrificed for the cause of freedom. I wish to add my voice to those who welcome these veterans and thank them for their service to our country.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter, I am glad to see many of our Democratic friends here with us today. Yesterday they sent me a letter indicating they want to participate as we work on legislation that can bring relief from ObamaCare. In that letter, they acknowledged the need to “improve and reform the health care system.”

After 8 years of defending this failing law and its higher costs, reduced choices, and dropped coverage, I am glad to see many of our Democratic friends here with us today. Yesterday they sent me a letter indicating they want to participate as we work on legislation that can bring relief from ObamaCare. In that letter, they acknowledged the need to “improve and reform the health care system.”
That is certainly a reality that Senate Republicans entirely agree with. It is why we are working to keep our commitment to the American people to move beyond the failures of ObamaCare. If ObamaCare stands on the other side of the aisle we want to join us in replacing ObamaCare with commonsense reforms, I welcome their input. It is disappointing that it has taken our Democratic colleagues this long to come around to me I look forward to hearing their ideas today, and I look forward to joining in a robust debate on the Senate floor as we pursue smarter healthcare solutions.

As we continue working to address this critical issue, it is important to remember why we need to act in the first place. Across the country, more and more Americans are feeling the pain of ObamaCare. Listen to these recent headlines.

Thousands of ObamaCare Customers Left Without Healthcare

More Insurers Abandon ObamaCare: Who Might Be Next

ObamaCare Choices Could Go From One to Zero in Some Areas

ObamaCare is failing the American people, and it keeps getting worse. Families face skyrocketing premiums, fewer choices, and the risk of losing the doctors or plans they like. Just this week, we saw even more troubling news out of States like Maryland, where one major insurer proposed a premium increase of more than 50 percent, warning that the ObamaCare market is “in the early stages of a death spiral.”

We saw similar stories out of Connecticut too. There, insurers have also requested double-digit increases, which could top out at 52 percent amid worries that the last two insurers on the exchange might leave.

These States aren’t alone. I continue to hear from Kentuckians who are desperate for relief from ObamaCare. Take this Campbellsville woman who purchased insurance on the ObamaCare exchange after researching the best policy to fit her needs. Only then did she find out how hard it would be for her to actually get care. Here is what she had to say:

Today I am making payments for a health care plan that does not cover my doctors, [and] does not cover all my prescriptions. It is almost totally useless.

I am only one person but I’m sure I speak for many people who are finding themselves in this difficult situation.

ObamaCare is a failed law that continues to hurt Americans every single day. It is taking a bigger bite out of their budgets while, as too many have discovered, covering fewer services they actually need.

We have all received letters from our constituents like the one I just shared. These families are the ones shouldering the burdens of ObamaCare. They are the ones putting us on the table to act and move past the failures of ObamaCare. If we don’t, this situation will only get worse.

That is why we continue to engage in productive conversations with each Member of our caucus on the way forward on providing relief from ObamaCare. I look forward to continuing these talks and welcoming our Democratic colleagues to the conversation if they are ready to join us. It certainly is an important step for the entire Democratic caucus to acknowledge that the status quo is failing the American people and that Congress cannot sit by while Americans suffer the consequences of this failed law.

REMOVAL OF JAMES COMEY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, one final matter, whatever one thinks of the manner in which Director James Comey handled the investigation into Secretary Clinton’s unauthorized use of a private server and her mishandling of classified information, it is clear what our Democratic colleagues thought of it—both at that time and consistently thereafter.

Last week a Democratic leader said it appeared to be an “appalling act,” one that he said “goes against the tradition of prosecutors at every level of government,” and the prior Democratic leader, when asked if James Comey should resign given his conduct of the investigation, replied “[of course, yes.”

It is also clear what our Democratic colleagues think of the man who evaluated Mr. Comey’s professional conduct and concluded that the Bureau needed a change in leadership. The Democratic leader just a few weeks ago praised Mr. Rosenstein for his independence and said he had developed a reputation for integrity.

What we have now is our Democratic colleagues complaining about the removal of an FBI Director whom they themselves repeatedly and sharply criticized; that removal being done by a man, Rod Rosenstein, whom they repeatedly praised—when Mr. Rosenstein recommended Mr. Comey’s removal for many of the very reasons they consistently complained about.

Two investigations are currently ongoing: The Senate Intelligence Committee’s review of Russian active measures and intelligence activities and the FBI investigation disclosed by Director Comey.

Today we will no doubt hear calls for a new investigation, which could only serve to impede the current work being done to not only discover what the Russians may have done but also to let this body and the national security community develop the countermeasures and warfighting doctrine to see that it doesn’t occur again. Partisan calls should not delay the considerable work of Chairman Burr and Vice Chairman Warner. Too much is at stake.

Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein was just confirmed on a bipartisan vote, 94 to 6–94 to 6—and that sort of fair consideration should continue when the Senate receives an FBI Director nominee. As I said yesterday, once the Senate receives a nomination to fill this position, we will look forward to a full, fair, and timely confirmation process. This is a critical role that is particularly important as our country continues to face serious threats at home and abroad.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

FIRING OF JAMES COMEY

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, yesterday the President fired the Director of the FBI, Jim Comey, who was leading an active investigation into the Trump campaign’s possible collusion with Russia.

The President provided no reasoning for the firing other than he had the recommendation of his Attorney General—who has already had to recuse himself from the Russia investigation for being too close to the President—and his Deputy Attorney General, Rod Rosenstein.

There is little reason to think Mr. Rosenstein’s letter is the true reason President Trump fired Director Comey. Why? Because if the administration thought the objectionable behavior of the President and his administration—from Acting Attorney General Sally Yates to Preet Bharara and now Jim Comey—were serious enough to warrant a special prosecutor to oversee this investigation, Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein sat in the Judiciary Committee and promised to appoint a special prosecutor at the appropriate time. He said: "I’m willing to appoint a special counsel whenever I determine that it’s appropriate."

My colleague Senator COONS asked him: "Would you agree that it’s vital to the assurance of confidence in our democracy and law enforcement system that any investigation into these matters be fair, free, thorough and politically independent?"

Mr. Rosenstein answered: "Yes, I do."

If there was ever a time when circumstances warranted a special prosecutor, it is right now.

Mr. Rosenstein already expressed concern that Director Comey damaged the integrity of the FBI. The Attorney General has already had to recuse himself from the investigation for being too close to the President.
If Mr. Rosenstein is true to his word, that he believes this investigation must be “fair, free, thorough and politically independent,” as he believes, as I do, that the American people must be able to have faith in the impartiality of this investigation, he must appoint a special prosecutor and get his investigation out of the hands of the FBI and far away from the heavy hand of this administration.

Mr. Rosenstein has the authority to appoint a special prosecutor right now. He may not have congressional authorization. This would simply be a step that he could take, as outlined in the Department of Justice guidelines and in a law passed after Watergate, to get an independently minded prosecutor who would be insulated from various pressures.

A special prosecutor is not subject to day-to-day supervision by the Attorney General or anyone else at the Justice Department. That means the special prosecutor would have much greater latitude in whom he can subpoena, which questions they can ask, and how to conduct an investigation. The special prosecutor can only be removed for good cause, such as misconduct, not to quash an investigation.

Third, there is built-in congressional oversight. Congress is notified whenever a special counsel is appointed, removed, or has finished with the investigation. The appointment of a special prosecutor would be a welcome step in the right direction, but it is not the only action that should be taken.

There are a great many outstanding questions about the circumstances of Director Comey’s dismissal, the status of the executive branch investigation into the Trump campaign ties to Russia, and what the future holds for these investigations.

So I will be requesting that the majority leader call a closed, and if necessary, classified, all-Senators briefing with the Attorney General and the Deputy Attorney General separately, at which they can be asked these questions.

I hope the majority leader agrees with me that we need to get to the bottom of this and get a handle on all the facts so that we can grapple with them.

I remind him and my Republican friends that nothing less is at stake than the American people’s faith in our criminal justice system and the integrity of the executive branch of our government.

I yield the floor.

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

The result was announced—yeas 49, nays 51, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 125 Leg.]

YEAS—49

Alexander  Alexander    Baldwin  Baldwin    Bennet  Bennet
Barrasso  Barasso  Blunt  Blunt    Boozman  Boozman
Burr  Burr    Capito  Capito    Cassidy  Cassidy
Cooper  Cooper    Corker  Corker    Curnyn  Curnyn
Cotton  Cotton    Crapo  Crapo    Cruz  Cruz
Cochran  Cochran    Cornyn  Cornyn    Cotton  Cotton
Crapo  Crapo    Crav  Crav    Daines  Daines
Enzi  Enzi    Ernst  Ernst    Fischer  Fischer
Gillibrand  Gillibrand
Portman  Portman
Risch  Risch    Roberts  Roberts
Grassley  Grassley    Hatch  Hatch    Heller  Heller
Hoeven  Hoeven    Inhofe  Inhofe    Isakson  Isakson
Johnson  Johnson    Kennedy  Kennedy    Lankford  Lankford
Lee  Lee    McCaskill  McCaskill    McSally  McSally
Mark Warner  Mark Warner    Mark Warner  Mark Warner    Mark Warner  Mark Warner
Merkley  Merkley
Portman  Portman
Roberts  Roberts
Sanders  Sanders
Schumer  Schumer
Shaheen  Shaheen
Stabenow  Stabenow
Tester  Tester    Udall  Udall
Van Hollen  Van Hollen
Warner  Warner    Wicker  Wicker
Young  Young

NAYS—51

Alexander  Alexander    Baldwin  Baldwin    Bennet  Bennet
Barrasso  Barasso  Blunt  Blunt    Boozman  Boozman
Burr  Burr    Capito  Capito    Cassidy  Cassidy
Cooper  Cooper    Corker  Corker    Curnyn  Curnyn
Cotton  Cotton    Crapo  Crapo    Cruz  Cruz
Cochran  Cochran    Cornyn  Cornyn    Cotton  Cotton
Crapo  Crapo    Crav  Crav    Daines  Daines
Enzi  Enzi    Ernst  Ernst    Fischer  Fischer
Gillibrand  Gillibrand
Portman  Portman
Risch  Risch    Roberts  Roberts
Grassley  Grassley    Hatch  Hatch    Heller  Heller
Hoeven  Hoeven    Inhofe  Inhofe    Isakson  Isakson
Johnson  Johnson    Kennedy  Kennedy    Lankford  Lankford
Lee  Lee    McCaskill  McCaskill    McSally  McSally
Mark Warner  Mark Warner    Mark Warner  Mark Warner    Mark Warner  Mark Warner
Merkley  Merkley
Portman  Portman
Roberts  Roberts
Sanders  Sanders
Schumer  Schumer
Shaheen  Shaheen
Stabenow  Stabenow
Tester  Tester    Udall  Udall
Van Hollen  Van Hollen
Warner  Warner    Wicker  Wicker
Young  Young

The motion was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 52, Robert Lighthizer to be United States Trade Representative.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I have 13 requests for committees to meet during today’s session of the Senate. They include the Armed Services Committee briefing on capabilities to counter Russian influence in cyberspace, a Banking Committee hearing on North Korea, and a Homeland Security Committee hearing on cyber threats facing America. These committees and all the other committees are doing important work; therefore, I ask unanimous consent that the 13 committees be allowed to meet.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. DURBIN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant Democratic leader.

Mr. DURBIN. Reserving the right to object, because of the decision last night of the President of the United States to terminate the Director of the FBI and the questions that has raised, we gathered together—the Democratic Senators—on the floor and listened as our leader at least suggested a path for us to follow as an institution facing this constitutional question. We believe it is timely, and as a result of that, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Washington.

CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW ACT RESOLUTION

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I come to speak against the Congressional Review Act resolution to overturn an important rule that has been put in place to protect the American taxpayer and to protect the health of American citizens.

For almost 100 years, the Federal Government has regulated undue waste in oil and gas fields. The story of oil and gas waste is as old as the story of oil and gas.

Early oil gushers, like Spindletop in Texas, revealed two things about oil as an emerging source of energy. First, there was a huge amount of it. Second, without rules in place, it could be easily wasted. That is why, way back in 1915, Attorney General Thomas Gregory issued a report to the public about this issue. Gregory wrote that the law at the time allowed oil companies to own and operate tracts of public oil land without restraint upon the quantities of oil produced or the methods of production and
without rendering to the . . . government anything in return.” One can imagine that concern. Gregory went on to point out that “the incentives to speculative occupation, negligent and wasteful operation, and excess production are overwhelming.”

Some of my colleagues who are not on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee may not be familiar with the law Congress passed after Attorney General Gregory put his finger on the waste problem. The Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 established our modern leasing program for oil and natural gas. More than anything else, the leasing act enshrined the principle that the public should benefit from mineral production on public lands. This seems like a no-brainer today, but it took over a decade of debate to pass the leasing act.

One of the main parts of the leasing act was a requirement to avoid wasting oil and gas. There are many environments where we need to avoid wasting our natural resources, but let’s be clear: It was dollar signs that led to the waste provision. Overproduction would glut the market and damage the oil reserves, and wasted oil provided no return to the taxpayers.

The leasing act is still the law, and the law says that oil and gas operators must “use all reasonable precautions to prevent waste of oil or gas developed in the land.” The law says that Federal leases must include a prohibition that such rules “. . . for the prevention of undue waste as may be prescribed by [the] Secretary shall be observed.” The BLM’s methane rule is entirely in keeping with that history. The rule says that the outdated 1970 version of this rule needed to be updated.

The rule was put in place before the fracking took place that revolutionized the industry, before the shale plays opened, and before infrared imaging became commonplace. What has not changed since 1920 is that oil and gas companies cannot waste public resources on public lands.

When equipment is leaky or old, oil and gas producers vent natural gas directly to the sky. If they do capture the gas but have nowhere to send it, the gas just gets burned on site. This venting and flaring causes a big problem. This photograph shows that the gas just gets burned on site. This production just gets burned on site. This is one of the reasons why we need to update this rule.

The past 5 years have been such an outspoken advocate of keeping this rule in place. It is because wasted natural gas is wasted intentionally on Federal lands every year. Over time, the public is losing billions of dollars. Over a decade, the lost royalties that have been calculated by the Government Accountability Office on wasted gas will add up to $230 million. While that amount sounds on the price of natural gas, we cannot afford to give up this revenue.

A vote for disapproving the resolution will let the oil and gas industry roll back the clock to 1979. This resolution was passed to keep operators from giving taxpayers their fair share. It is another example of special interests trumping the public interest.

Even worse than the taxpayer issue, though, is that wasted natural gas harms public health. That is why those States took action. One of the most prevailing problems on this issue is in the Four Corners States, and my colleagues from New Mexico will be talking about this shortly.

When one looks at the entire United States on a map that shows the amounts of waste of natural gas, you can see all of this yellow coloring in the Midwest—in Ohio—and in other States, but one can see the hotspot in the Four Corners area. The Four Corners States have tried to take action—places like Colorado and New Mexico, with, obviously, Arizona and Utah being affected—because wasted natural gas basically releases a volatile organic compound. It creates ozone and smog. It also can make people sick. This pollution worsens asthma, emphysema, and increases the risk of premature death. It releases toxins, like benzene, that cause cancer. And the methane, the main constituent of the natural gas, is 25 times more powerful at trapping heat than carbon dioxide.

That is why a recent analysis by the Clean Air Task Force found that over 9 million people are exposed to these dangerous levels of air pollution from oil and gas production. That is why my colleague Senator BENNET of Colorado has been such an outspoken advocate of keeping this rule in place. It is because that corner of Colorado has faced so many impacts that they want to make sure their citizens are protected.

With the rolling back of this Federal rule, basically what one would be saying is that it is OK to continue this level of pollution—an anathema to what the people of Colorado have been asking for.

Oil and gas pollution can make rural areas seem like the middle of a city. A few years ago, NASA scientists discovered a massive cloud of methane over the Four Corners region. This is the highest concentration of methane in the Nation. After aerial surveys, NASA found that over half of the methane is from natural gas equipment, including tanks, wells, pipelines, and processing units. The region of the Four Corners is almost as bad on some days as in the city of Los Angeles—a city with 300 times as many people.
As bad as methane waste is on Federal land, this rule only targets 10 percent of that wasted by the oil and gas industry because we are targeting Federal land. It only affects a small minority of the oil and gas production. Ninety-five percent of that production is in other areas. But this rule is important to put in place because we cannot ignore the impacts on pollution, and we cannot ignore the costs to our Federal lands.

The Bureau of Land Management compared the costs and benefits of this rule without factoring in the reductions in ozone, particulate matter, or smog, and the BLM ignored the value of reducing carcinogens. We know that this particular conservative analysis shows a net benefit of between $46 million and $204 million each year. This makes economic sense to implement.

Under the very obsolete 1979 regulation that the methane rule replaces, oil and gas operators had to apply to the BLM for permits to vent and flare natural gas. The old rules also had no specific equipment requirements in place.

As I said earlier, the world has changed dramatically since 1979 when it comes to oil and gas production. The new rule takes commonsense approaches to stepping up our efforts to reduce this waste and prohibit the venting, except in emergencies and in some circumstances. They estimate that it will cut the venting by 35 percent. It also sets capture targets for flaring, allowing operators flexibility on how to meet those targets. The BLM estimates they will reduce flaring by 49 percent.

The rule requires operators to inspect their wells and their equipment. People may have heard unbelievable stories from California about a huge methane leakage that caused unbelievable amounts of damage. We know that we want the best detection, that we want a strong rule in place to stop wasting this natural gas, give the taxpayers a fair deal, and protect the American people from harmful levels of pollution. That is why we want this rule to stay in place.

With America’s increased natural gas production, now it is the time to take a very solid rule off the books—a rule that protects the American people. The technology to conduct these inspections already exists. Infrared imaging and other technology has been sold commercially for decades. What we are really saying is that people just do not want to spend the money to implement them.

Fourth, the rule requires operators to replace leaky equipment, like the pneumatic controllers and pumps, and it is trying to make sure that we eliminate the methane waste.

So the final rule is in step with what the Government Accountability Office told us 7 years ago—that about 40 percent of the waste can be captured economically. BLM took those best practices and State examples, as I mentioned, including North Dakota and Colorado, and implemented a new rule. It includes Colorado’s venting and inspection and retrofitting requirements, and regulation 7. It includes North Dakota’s capture targets for flared gas in it, and it includes Wyoming’s venting and inspection requirements in the Upper Green River Basin.

Not only did the Bureau of Land Management adopt the best practices of States, but it also included a variance provision in the final rule. Any State or Tribe with equally effective regulation in place can minimize their methane waste and can apply for a variance from the Department of the Interior. There is a lot of flexibility there, I would say, for States that are trying to lead the way. But based on this careful approach, the final rule and its benefits are estimated, as I said earlier, to bring in 200 million a year.

So the public in these States that are most affected certainly want this rule. As more Americans understand the level of natural gas production and the wasteful venting that continues to take place, they want this rule in place as well.

Passing the resolution just after a few hours of debate and trying to undermine this rule would go against the 330,000 public comments that were collected during the process of establishing this rule. So we certainly don’t want to overturn what was a very long and elaborate process to put this very important rule in place.

Proposing more waste is not going to solve our economic challenges. Proposing more pollution is not a solution. We know that in the most recent annual poll by Colorado College, western voters said that 81 percent of them supported making sure that the Bureau of Land Management had strong methane rules. My colleagues appear not to understand how much the public wants to get this implemented. I hope my colleagues will continue to support the effort to undo this Congressional Review Act resolution and instead keep this very, very important public health and economic taxpayer solution on the books.

As Mark Boling, an executive with Southwestern Energy, a major natural gas producer, said, this resolution and trying to turn back the rule is “a huge mistake.” He pointed out that it could have “unintended consequences for oil and gas technology.”

So I want to make sure this rule stays in place. Let’s keep a strong rule on the books, as I said, for the health of the American people and to make sure that taxpayers get a fair deal with these companies that are producing on Federal land.

I thank the Chair. I yield to my colleague from New Mexico, who has been outspoken on this issue in making sure that Congress addresses the flaring and leakage of natural gas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. YOUNG). The Senator from New Mexico, Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, if I sound a little hoarse, it is because my allergies are acting up, but I feel just fine. Let me start out by thanking Senator CANTWELL. Her leadership on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee is pretty incredible.

For this Congress, I think this is the very first CRA that has been turned down. We have been voting on many of them since the Congress came back in session in January. This is the very first victory we have had on denying the CRA.

When we talk about what a CRA does, it is a very blunt instrument that has only been used once until this Congress, and what it does is just blow out an entire area of the law. So if you talk about this BLM methane rule and you have a part of the law that says the government shall try to prevent waste, well, if you blow that provision of the law out, the agency can do nothing until we get to the point that the Congress acts again, and sometimes we move very slowly.

So I really appreciate the leadership of Senator CANTWELL, and I want to thank her so much and all of the members of her committee, in particular. Senator Heinrich, who serves on that committee and has been very outspoken on this rule, and I believe his leadership has always been acknowledged by Senator CANTWELL as well.

This issue that we are debating and that we had this good vote on is about three things. First of all, it is about the waste of a natural resource that the public and the Tribes own. Let’s talk about the resource here for a second. We are talking about, to start with, natural gas. So when we think of natural gas, as many people know, what we are talking about is when you turn on your stove, and it is a natural gas stove, that is how we cook our food. Many houses run heat on natural gas, and we know now that many of our powerplants are converting over to natural gas because it is a very good fuel in terms of lowering carbon emissions. So natural gas is a big part of our energy economy. It is actually going up as coal is going down.

Look at this photograph which shows more than $330 million of natural gas wasted. This just shows us the huge power of natural gas. What was happening is that natural gas was being flared. This depicts the top at one of these oil and gas operations. They are just burning that up. So rather than that energy being used at home or used in industry, it is just being wasted. On top of that, we know it has a massive climate impact.

This was a very commonsense rule. I think the thing people should understand is that several Western States, including Colorado and Wyoming, passed an almost identical rule to deal with this issue. All BLM tried to do was to use that common sense from the West, where it had already happened in several States, and put it in place for
the Nation. So this is a good, solid rule, and it is a commonsense rule, and I think it prevents waste, just like it was laid out to do.

The second point is that when we talk about this issue, it is about job creation. We are talking about here is, when you have this kind of waste, how do you prevent the waste? Well, the thing we have seen in New Mexico that occurs is that many of these oil and gas industries reach out to people who haven’t been in business, and they say: How do we prevent this waste? Well, actually, we use infrared to focus on the oil and gas operations and all of their pipes, and we can detect the natural gas waste, and then we can go about actually fixing it at all the various fittings and places where that happens. Guess what. A lot of jobs are created in that process. This is growing in New Mexico, growing in Colorado, and with this rule in place, over time, it is going to continue to grow. We are going to create some small businesses. It has already created small businesses, and it is going to be pretty dramatic on that front.

The third thing that we are here about has to do with public health. Obviously, venting all that methane is, and as Senator CANTWELL, showed, you have a methane cloud the size of Delaware over the Four Corners area; so it is really impacting New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, and Arizona—what is the impact in terms of methane? Well, we know there are serious public health impacts. We know that asthma is impacted by this, as well as other respiratory diseases—the kinds of things that occur on a regular basis as we have that kind of methane pollution that goes into the air. As I mentioned just a little bit earlier, methane is a very, very powerful and potent greenhouse gas. So we know that by releasing it—the flaring that we talked about, getting rid of it and not putting that methane into the atmosphere. We are also adding to the greenhouse gases, which are warming the planet and creating, in the Southwest, as we know, catastrophic forest fires, extreme weather events, impacts on water, and impacts on agriculture. So we know that it is here now and that the Western States are in the bull’s-eye.

So let me just say that these are three compelling things that we have done today by asserting this rule. We are preventing waste, we are moving job creation, and we are acting on the part of public health.

When we have a victory like this, there are just so many people that should be congratulated—people that pulled together. First of all, just to start, Senator CANTWELL just finished, and she is our ranking member on the committee. Senator BENNET, I think, was actually the 51st, and I hope he swears he was the 51st, and I hope he swears we were at 50, and it went to 51. So he and all of the Democrats hung together on this—every single one of the Democrats. It just shows that when we get Democratic unity—and with our Independents—we come right up about 48 votes. If we get a couple of Republicans—if we work in a bipartisan way—to come with us, we can have a big impact. What the Republicans were we about to do? They should have been with us? They could have been with us? They called out and congratulated for having courage, for having common sense, and for stepping forward. I would just like to say about my three friends on the Republican side—Senator McCAIN, Senator CORKER, and Senator HAMRICK. Thank you so much for stepping forward and seeing the commonsense nature of this issue and standing to make sure that we didn’t head in the wrong direction on this.

Thinking a little bit about some of the groups that voted with us and worked with us and helped us and advised us out in the field, the groups that stood with us should to shoulder include the Environmental Defense Fund, the Fund for a Secure Energy Future, and the Ceres business group. We had a lot of businesses—understanding that this is a business issue and a job creator—like Taxpayers for Common Sense. We don’t always see them weigh in on regulations like this. The Center for Methane Emissions Solutions, and so many environmental and public health groups, including Earth Justice, the National Parks Association, the League of Conservation Voters, the Sierra Club, and many, many others, including the Western Environmental Law Center, are also a part of that.

I thought we should talk for a second about—in addition to all of those groups—some other groups that joined us, and they are these medical and public health groups that abhor natural gas waste. Look at all of those groups in addition to the ones I mentioned. These are people who have real expertise in public health: Allergy & Asthma Network, American Lung Association, American Public Health Association, Center for Climate Change and Health, and Physicians for Social Responsibility. I have always been impressed by that group. Here you have docs who are stepping up, wanting to be socially responsible on things. There are many wonderful physicians like that in New Mexico and across the Nation, and they have organized themselves as PSR. We also have the Public Health Institute and the National Medical Association.

So we have lot of the social and public health groups that have stepped forward and said: We are not going to waste natural gas. Let me thank them. Also, the Western Environmental Law Center, which is in New Mexico and works on this issue, has been a pretty incredible group, hard-working, headed up by a gentleman by the name of Doug Meiklejohn, and Doug really makes a difference on all of these issues in New Mexico and, in particular, this one issue. I would be remiss if I didn’t mention some of the groups that have pulled together—groups of ranchers, Tribes, and public health groups. We just talked about the public health groups. But there is one rancher in New Mexico whose sole focus has been this issue. His name is Don Schreiber. He appeared at a press conference yesterday here in Washington with Senator BERNSTEIN, and he has been at my own press conference, and more or less as a Senator there, speaking out on methane. I know if Don is ever at a press conference, he is going to say what I would have said on this methane issue, which is this: We need to prevent waste. Don Schreiber is his name. He is a rancher from Northwestern New Mexico. He is actually up under that methane cloud, and he talks about his family and his ranching operation and what the impact is.

I want to congratulate and thank President Begaye of the Navajo Nation. He sent in a very persuasive statement and made a very strong statement against wasting natural gas.

We also had the Western Organization of Resource Councils. This is another group that has been very active in the West. They stepped forward on this natural gas waste issue, and we are incredibly thankful for them.

Also, we never get anything done around here on the Senate floor without our wonderful staff. I want to thank Jonathan Black, who has worked on this issue for many years. Jonathan actually worked for Senator Bingaman on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, so he brought a lot of that expertise. We have a young man from the office sitting here with me on the floor, Sean MacDougal, helping me with these charts. Sean is a congressional fellow in our office on loan from the Bureau of Land Management, and he has brought a lot of knowledge to the table.

Mr. President, to reiterate, I oppose HR 36—the Congressional Review Act resolution to disapprove the Bureau of Land Management’s methane and waste prevention rule. BLM’s rule prevents the unnecessary waste of a public resource and makes sure New Mexicans—and all American taxpayers—get fair value in return for commercial use of that public resource.

The rule requires oil and gas facilities operating on public and Indian lands to prevent unnecessary flaring, venting, and leaking of methane. Rigorous analysis shows that the overall benefits to the American public far outweigh the costs, and technology to implement the rule is readily available and cost-effective to industry. The current BLM rules on natural gas waste are over 35 years old, issued in 1979. Federal watchdog agencies have been issuing reports for almost a decade—recommending that the BLM update its rules and prevent waste wherever possible.

As some technologies like horizontal drilling, the amount of gas wasted in recent years has increased significantly. From 2009 to 2013, the total...
amount of natural gas flared on BLM land doubled. We throw the phrase “common sense” around a lot these days when we talk about laws or regulations we like, but the BLM’s waste prevention rule really is a commonsense rule. Over the past 4 months, Congress has repealed 13 Federal rules using CRA authority. These regulations involved years of work by the agencies and were developed transparently through the public notice and comment process. Congress overturned these rules without public input, hearings, or debate. I understand repeal of “burdensome” Federal regulations is a strong rallying cry, and I wholeheartedly agree that Federal regulations should not be overly burdensome. The BLM’s waste prevention rule is good for the American public, and the cost to industry is de minimus. In fact, there’s benefit to industry from increased production and the resulting increase in revenues. The BLM’s rule is one rule that should not get swept up in the political tide of CRA repeal.

Congress must understand that the BLM has an obligation to prevent waste of oil and gas on public and tribal lands starting with the 1920 Mineral Leasing Act. That act—governing leases on BLM land—requires every lease to contain provisions for “the prevention of undue waste. . . .” Federal law obligates the BLM to make sure the public gets a fair return from profits generated by oil and gas leases on Federal lands. The 1979 Federal Lands Policy and Management Act requires that “the United States receive fair market value of the use of the public lands and their resources. . . .” The 1982 Federal Oil and Gas Royalty Management Act obligates these same oil and gas companies to pay the Federal Government “royalty payments on oil or gas lost or wasted.” Congress has determined that oil and gas companies extract resources on public lands can’t waste the resource, and, if they do, they must pay fair market value to the American public.

Despite Congress’s prohibition against waste, tremendous volumes of oil and gas under BLM lease are wasted each year through flaring, venting, and leaks. Operators do not always use best practices when they flare and vent. Some even abuse the practice. As a result, the BLM has an obligation to prevent waste of oil and gas on public lands.

In 2010, the GAO pointed out what was obvious, that the BLM’s decades-old guidance did not take account of current technology to reduce venting and flaring. The GAO recommended that the BLM update its regulations to address the avoidable loss of gas on public lands. There are other GAO reports, but I will talk about one more. In 2016, the GAO issued a report entitled, “Interior Could Do More to Account for and Manage Natural Gas Emissions.” It detailed the BLM’s highly inconsistent practices approving royalty-free venting and flaring incidents.

Looking at a random sample of operator requests to vent or flare from fiscal year 2014, the GAO found that fully 90 percent were approved, but, despite the bad documentation, the BLM approved 70 percent of the requests, almost half of which were for royalty-free venting or flaring. That is a lot of Federal, State, and tribal royalties lost based on incomplete records. The BLM is charged with helping Congress make sure Federal agencies are doing the best job they can for the American public. We should not disregard repeated GAO recommendations—spanning almost a decade—for the BLM to modernize its oil and gas royalty program.

If we pass this disapproval, the BLM is foreclosed from updating these rules. In the face of the GAO report after another telling us that the BLM must do better, that would be just irresponsible to taxpayers.

Secretary Zinke has been charged to review the BLM rule as part of the President’s “Energy Independence” Executive order. If, after review, the Secretary concludes that the BLM rule should be modified, Congress should allow the DOI review to go forward and not permanently prevent DOI from considering how to prevent unnecessary waste by oil and gas facilities. Let’s not forget that half the royalties from Federal leases go to State treasuries. States use these royalties for schools, roads, and infrastructure projects.

My home State of New Mexico has the second highest number of acres under BLM lease in the country, after Wyoming—over 4.6 million acres—and the second highest number of BLM oil and gas leases—over 8,000.

New Mexico has a lot at stake in the BLM’s waste prevention rule. ICF International estimates that the natural gas in New Mexico that could have been captured and marketed under the BLM’s rule between 2009 and 2015 would have been worth more than $100 million a year and would have produced $43 million in royalty payments for our State.

In New Mexico, those royalty payments are used in part for educational materials in the public schools. That is textbooks, digital materials, science supplies, art supplies, and accessible materials for students with disabilities. That $43 million would have gone a long way for New Mexico schoolkids.

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sources, but researchers have found out this is wrong. They have identified 250 sources—the majority of which are oil and gas operations and include gas wells, storage tanks, pipelines, and processing plants.

Of those sources, only Colorado has robust rules to prevent methane emissions. Colorado’s rules are proving successful, and the BLM incorporated provisions from those rules.

It is important to note my State that the BLM’s waste prevention rule stay on the books. We don’t need that methane hot spot in our backyard and New Mexico sorely needs the royalty payments owed.

The BLM’s rule is also important for states, tribes, and the public. It would be contrary to BLM’s rule. President Begaye held all its trust responsibilities. One of those responsibilities is making sure tribes are entitled to from private oil and gas companies operating on Indian lands.

Tribes receive 100 percent of the royalties from the oil and gas leases on their lands. The BLM estimates tribes will get it for over $1.2 million more in royalties over 10 years under the rule. That is money we have a trust responsibility to make sure tribes get.

The BLM estimates the rule would reduce emissions of volatile organic compounds, or VOCs, by 310,000 tons over 10 years on tribal lands. Reducing VOC emissions means cleaner air for tribes.

The Federal Government will not be upholding its trust responsibility if the BLM rule is repealed.

I have a statement from the Navajo Nation president, Russell Begaye, detailing the reasons the tribe supports the BLM’s rule. President Begaye states, “It is time to hold all the trust responsibilities to allow Navajo Nation resources to be unreasonably wasted, particularly when best practices can be cost-effectively employed and are not overly burdensome to industry.”

A really important co-benefit of the rule is protection of public health. Toxic chemicals like benzene—harmful to the public, carcinogenic—are emitted with methane. Reducing methane emissions will reduce these toxic emissions.

Similarly, other VOCs—that contribute to ozone or smog—are emitted with methane. Reducing methane emissions will reduce smog formation. Smog irritates the respiratory system, reduces lung function, and aggravates asthma—among other public health problems.

Without the Rule, not only do we lose royalties for hospitals, schools, and Navajo people pay more for their hospital visits and healthcare.

Industry arguments against the rule do not hold up.

Industry argues the rule costs too much and will kill jobs.

That is not true. Here are the facts. First, the rule will result in increased production and increased revenues, and the technologies and practices to prevent waste are economically feasible.

In fact, many oil and gas operations will see a net benefit. Like the company in the San Juan Basin that got almost a fivefold return on its investment.

The BLM conducted an exhaustive cost-benefit analysis of the rule. Looking at the average cost to a company to implement the rule, the BLM found it would be reduced by only 0.15 percent, a bit over one-tenth of 1 percent. That is minimal.

That cost does not even count the savings to industry from increased production and increased revenues.

In fact, the BLM found that net economic benefits to industry could be as much as $47 million per year—taking into account the savings from increased production and increased revenues.

If the benefits of reducing methane are included, the overall net benefit is huge—up to $204 million annually.

That number does not even count the public health benefits from reduced compounds and hazardous pollutants.

Opponents have exaggerated the costs to industry, and they have not taken into account the benefits to States, tribes, and the public.

Finally, there is no evidence anywhere that the rule will cost even one job.

In fact, the Bureau of Labor Statistics has recorded 2,700 new jobs since November 2016, while the price of oil has been stagnant. In addition, the Baker Hughes rig count showed 300 more rigs drilling for oil and gas since the BLM rule came into effect. This is an increase in production of over 50 percent.

Colorado issued the most comprehensive rules to date to decrease methane emissions, and not only have no jobs been lost, but jobs have been gained as new companies and technologies focused on inspection, monitoring, and compliance have opened. These are good American jobs.

In New Mexico, we have at least 11 new companies in the methane mitigation business, and I want to see that number grow.

Even if the rule were to force an operator to shut down, that company would be eligible for exemption from the requirements.

So job loss is not an issue.

Second, we hear that the BLM’s rule is duplicative and unnecessary, that the EPA’s methane rule is adequate, and that States are already regulating methane.

Here are the facts.

The EPA’s rule only applies to new and modified oil and gas operations. The BLM’s rule applies also to existing facilities. This is a big difference between the rules. Making sure all current operations prevent waste is critical to making sure taxpayers get the benefit owed.

The BLM’s rule covers areas not covered by other Federal or State rules, like wasteful routine flaring.

We want to create jobs, which is what this BLM methane waste prevention rule does. It creates jobs, and it protects the public health.

I believe we are going to have a couple other speakers. I know Senator Heinrich is going to be here.

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

Not all States have passed methane waste prevention rules. My home State of New Mexico has not. New Mexico needs to reduce methane emissions.

Also, States and tribes may get a variance if they have similar rules that achieve the same result.

The BLM worked with the EPA and States to ensure the rule works for them and does not impose conflicting or redundant requirements.

Just last week, the EPA announced a 90-day delay on its own methane control rule based on industry’s objections to regulation. More concerning, the EPA withdrew its information request from industry that was intended to help EPA determine how to address methane emissions from existing oil and gas sources. These EPA actions mean the BLM rule is needed more than ever to reduce natural gas waste and the proper collection of royalties.

The BLM should not be prevented from making sure the Federal Government meets its obligations to States, tribes, and taxpayers—the obligation not to waste public resources and to make sure the public gets a fair return on the for-profit use of public resources.

For these reasons, I oppose the CRA to disapprove the BLM’s waste prevention rule.
The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

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

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

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET REQUEST

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, all of us, every Member of the U.S. Senate, all 100 of us, whether we are Republicans or Democrats, want the U.S. Senate to function. We ought to want the Senate to be able to accomplish its work. It is a challenge all the time but learning what transpired this morning on the Senate floor, in my view, reaches another low for the Senate.

It is hard to explain, but it takes unanimous consent for committees to meet while the Senate is in session, and that is a request that is made on an ongoing basis when the Senate convenes, and it happened again this morning without exception, but it is routine. The rules require that 2 hours after the Senate convenes, no committee can then meet unless there is agreement. So the majority leader today requested that the unanimous consent be granted, just like in almost every other day of the Senate, but what was different today was an objection was raised by the minority whip, and apparently the explanation is it is because of the firing of the Director of the FBI last night.

Now, how the Senate is functioning or not functioning seems to me to be unrelated to what transpired last night relating to the Director of the FBI. So in this place, where we are trying to do the people's work and make decisions and do good for America, the spillover over partisan politics, the spillover about playing a political game, highlight a point has now caused the Senate to not be able to conduct hearings today. In fact, the minority Members of the Senate were instructed, requested, on their own volition—all left the hearings that were already being conducted this morning in protest over what transpired last night.

I am of a view that this is a diverse country. I am of a view that people of the U.S. Senate represent folks from across the country with different philosophies, different political parties, different people, different backgrounds. We all bring to the Senate a set of challenges we are different from each other, but I have great regard and respect for every Senator's point of view, and I would say that every Senator ought to have the ability to express their views on behalf of their constituents, but we can only do that if we allow the Senate to function. It was on the Senate floor not long ago praising the fact that we finally were successful in the appropriations process; that we passed the fiscal year 2017 appropriations bill. For too long, the appropriations process has been broken down, and we have conducted business in the United States by continuing resolution. I thought we were back on a path in which there was enough agreement, respect among Members, enough setting aside of partisan differences to actually accomplish legislation. I was pleased that we did that, but today we fall back into the pattern of what something happens, we want to make a political point. We then obstruct the ability of others in the Senate to conduct their work, to express their opinion, to gather the information they need.

This is the attention—what transpired today—because this afternoon at 2:30 was scheduled a hearing by the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. That hearing has absolutely nothing to do with the FBI. We have the new Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs scheduled to testify about the Department's plan for modifications to a program called Choice that is important to me, my constituents, and to the veterans of Kansas. I was so pleased the hearing had been scheduled, and I was forward to the questioning and having a conversation with the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs about how to make this system of Choice work for veterans who live in Kansas, from the rural side of our State to the suburban and urban side of our State, but because of a pique of anger, political posturing, and partisanship, the hearing is apparently no longer able to take place. The hearing this morning, which would only last for an hour and a half, and I believe the minority Members walked out—seemed to me, at least sounded like, to be things that would be very important for us to pursue.

The Armed Services Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities was to have a closed briefing this morning. The Homeland Security Committee was to examine cyber threats facing America, focusing on an overview of the cyber threat landscape. The list is significant in the things that we ought to be paying attention to, and yet, because of an objection, those hearings will not take place or were shortened or disrupted by only one party's participation.

I am not here trying to create further partisanship between Republicans and Democrats. I am here trying to remind ourselves that there is value in allowing cooperation between the minority and the majority that benefits but for the benefit of the country and the citizens we represent. Everything does not have to be political. Everything does not have to be partisan.

Today we see the Senate sliding back into the habit of making things that we have really nothing to do with and weren't the cause of taking place—apparently to make a political point and perhaps to score votes for support in a political way. We ought to all, as U.S. Senators, respect the opinions, values, and the positions of others, but we do that in a setting in which we all come together, not in which we cancel meetings as a result of a political statement.

I appreciate the opportunity to express my concerns about what has transpired and to ask for us to go back to the time in which we worked together as a daily function and we don't use an excuse to shut down the committee hearing process.

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

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

AMERICAN HEALTH CARE ACT

Mr. KING. Mr. President, I rise to speak briefly about the American Health Care Act that was voted on last week in the House of Representatives. I thought a lot about this bill over the past few days and over the weekend. I talked to friends, I read about it, and I did as much analysis as I possibly could, given the fact that we don't have a Congressional Budget Office analysis of this complicated and important piece of legislation. I have concluded that it is the most ill-conceived, damaging, and downright cruel piece of legislation that I have ever seen a legislation passed in my adult life.

It drastically cuts support for Americans' ability to obtain health insurance. In Maine—again, as near as we can tell, because we don't have the final analysis—the preliminary numbers are this. Maine, under the Affordable Care Act, through the payments to individuals and other support, is receiving about $354 million a year coming via the Affordable Care Act. After this bill, it appears that the number is $52 million a year—$304 million to $20 million. That is almost an 80-percent cut. No one can tell me the people of Maine are going to have better healthcare with an 80-percent cut in the funds going to support their ability to do so. It just doesn't make sense.

The way this bill works is, it is a tax on the elderly. Under the Affordable Care Act, there is a rule that policies for older people, 50, 55, 60, cannot exceed three times the rate of policies for younger people's policies do in fact cost somewhat less because they tend to be healthier, but the rule was no more than 3 to 1. Under the bill that was passed by the House last week, it is now 5 to 1. That is an elder tax, and Maine happens to be the most elderly State in the United States. If they had taken a blank sheet of paper and said: We want to write a bill to harm the people of Maine, it would have been this bill.

There is also a massive cut to Medicaid—$800 billion—and the sponsors to this bill claim that they are helping the deficit. How are they doing it? By
I have been working on this issue since I got to the Senate. I have been meeting with people throughout Maine—in hospitals and in recovery—and meeting with families and parents and law enforcement. The one thing that is clear is that treatment works and that we need it and that we do not have enough available beds in Maine and across the country.

This is a terrible disease, but the most tragic thing of all is when someone finally reaches the point at which he is ready to ask for help and he is told “Sorry, there is a 3-week wait” or “There is a 3-month wait.” That is when lives are lost and families are destroyed who have taken the hard step to say that this is what they need.

Let me tell you a story. Matt Braun is from Cape Elizabeth, ME, right outside of Portland. In 2009 Matt entered treatment for opioid addiction. His parents, who were strong, middle-class, professional people, purchased what they thought was good health insurance for their family. After 5 days of treatment, they received a call that the insurer was not going to pay for treatment, that he had to be drug-free within 5 days. They had decided their son only needs 5 days. His parents argued, and the medical staff argued. They finally won. They got 7 days of treatment. Those extra 2 days made a difference.

The insurance company said that it was not going to help, that he was going to be a chronically relapsing, drug-addicted person, so they were going to stop at 7 days. They said he would not make it. His parents did not give up.

Matt stayed in treatment and has been sober ever since 2009. He is successful. He is getting ready to take the SATs, get into a good college, and go on to medical school. His goal is to approach addiction from the perspective of a health professional and offer care and support to people who are struggling in the way he did.

“I am frustrating how insurance companies dictate what treatment looks like and what a life is worth,” said Matt.

Getting treatment for substance abuse disorder is not easy, but this bill, the American Health Care Act, which is a misnamed bill—it should be the American Take Away Health Care Act—only makes it worse. The American Medical Association has recently indicated that it is talking about essentially dismantling the Office of National Drug Control Policy—the highest level to be working on this problem in a coordinated way in the Federal Government. Here we are, in the midst of the most serious drug crisis in the history of this country, and the administration is talking about gutting the very office that is supposed to lead the fight. It would weaken the funding for treatment programs—by the way, drug addiction could be one—and drastically eliminate the essential benefits provisions of the Affordable Care Act, we are just making it worse.

The Office of National Drug Control Policy has the Drug-Free Community Support Program, which administers small grants to small towns. That can make a real difference. Last fall, 18 Maine programs each received $125,000, and the DPC’s 2014 national evaluation report said that there was a significant decrease in the 30-day use of prescription drugs for youth in communities with one of these programs.

Prevention is one of the things we need to work on, and it is one of the things we need to understand. Yet talking about this problem is not going to solve it. Treatment is going to solve it. Money for treatment is going to solve it. Money for treatment is going to solve it. Detox centers are going to solve it. More resources to law enforcement are going to solve it. More resources to the Coast Guard, in order to interdict drug shipments coming into this country, are going to solve it.

There is no single answer, but at the core is commitment. Passing this bill from the House, which drastically undermines all of those elements of treatment and prevention, and then talking about and dismantling the office that has led this fight in the entire Federal Government, is beyond comprehension in the midst of where we are.

If this graph were doing this, if it were going down, I would be OK with it. But it is not going down; it is going up. It is getting worse, and we have to deal with it.

As we work through this issue of healthcare—hopefully we are going to start with a blank sheet of paper over here—I hope we will bear in mind that one of the most serious health problems in the country today is opioid abuse as usual?
abuse. This is not all about ideology, and it is not about policy. It is about people. It is about Matt, and it is about Andrew. It is about the thousands and millions of people across this country who are struggling, who want to lead productive lives, and who want to contribute to their communities. All they need is to have that moment when treatment is available, when a helping hand is available, when caring is available to help them escape the throes of this terrible disease and rejoin their community with their families. That is what we have to keep in front of us as we work here in this body. We can make a difference in people's lives, but in leaving them behind, we will certainly not do so.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. Ernst). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, what is the parliamentary situation?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is considering the Lighthizer nomination.

Mr. LEAHY. I thank the Chair.

FIRING OF JAMES COMEY

Madam President, I couldn't help but think, with the discussions earlier today, that the President's dismissal of FBI Director James Comey is so inappropriate that it is hard to know where to begin.

In less than 4 months, this President has pushed our country to the edge of a constitutional crisis—a crisis that in many ways seems more complex, and potentially more threatening, than the one instigated by President Nixon's White House to begin.

First, I think we can easily dismiss President Trump's transparent pretext for dismissing FBI Director Comey.

President Trump claims to have removed the FBI Director because of his unfair treatment of Secretary Clinton. This does not pass the laugh test, and we know it is not true. President Trump celebrated Director Comey's mistakes in handling the Clinton email investigation. He encouraged leaks from the FBI. He pressed Director Comey to release more embarrassing evidence. He even praised Director Comey after the Director's misguided letter to Congress last October. Yet, now, the President would have us believe that these same events compelled him to fire the FBI Director more than 6 months after it occurred. This unbelievable claim, if it was not so sad, would be laughable.

The truth is that the President removed the leading FBI Director in the midst of one of the most critical national security investigations in the history of our country and, certainly, one of the most critical in my 42 years in the Senate—a sprawling inquiry that implicates senior officials in the Trump campaign and administration.

The press is now reporting that President Trump weighed firing the FBI Director as far back as a week after he became enraged at Director Comey's statements and actions in the Russia investigation. There are even reports that his firing may have been precipitated by grand jury subpoenas issued to associates of President Trump, including former White House Advisor. I have no doubt that we are going to learn more disturbing details as to the President's true motivations. I am willing to bet anything that none of them will be because of the feeling that the FBI was too tough on Secretary Clinton.

I am also troubled that Attorney General Sessions played a role in Director Comey's firing. The Attorney General had supposedly recused himself from the Russia investigation for a good reason: He was a central figure in the Trump campaign that is now under investigation. And he provided false testimony to the Judiciary Committee to hide his contacts with Russian officials. It is beyound inappropriate for him to then recommend the firing of the official overseeing the Russia investigation.

I ask: Does anyone really believe that President Trump is interested in getting to the bottom of Russia's interference with our elections? Based on his past performance, does anyone believe the Attorney General is interested in getting to the bottom of Russia's interference with our elections? Does anyone believe that the White House will allow investigators to follow the facts without interference or obstruction at every turn?

In fact, a quick review of President Trump's Twitter account, where he does most of his deep thinking, would dispel any such illusion.

This is the same White House that interfered with the House Intelligence Committee's investigation—interference so strong that the Republican chairman in the House investigation had to recuse himself.

This is the same White House that reportedly sought access to the highly classified FISA Court surveillance order that purportedly authorized surveillance of a Trump associate.

This is the same White House that demanded the FBI Director and the Department of Justice issue perfunctory statements to clear President Trump's name.

Even the President's letter informing FBI Director Comey of his dismissal indicated the President had directly asked the FBI Director whether he was under investigation—three times. That should never happen. No President should be asking such a question. It is intimidating, but it should also be informative. It is clear that any credible investigation must take place outside the political chain of command.

That is why I and others have said for months that a special counsel must be appointed to lead the Russia investigation. A special counsel, unlike an FBI Director or a Deputy Attorney General, cannot be fired by the President. The American people must have confidence that ours is a government of laws, not of the whim of a President—any President.

Frankly, our Nation is at a precipice. There is a counterintelligence investigation into the campaign and administration of a sitting President. There is evidence that that campaign colluded with a foreign government that is an adversary of ours to sway our Presidential election. Now, the President has fired the lead investigator, FBI Director Comey, under what any fairminded person would say is absurd and false pretenses.

There are several inquiries underway into Russian interference and collusion with Russia in the elections, but the President has fired the head of the only investigation that could bring criminal charges. In fact, it has just been reported that this came just days after Director Comey asked for additional funding for the investigation. None of this is normal—it is something I have never seen in Republican or Democratic administrations—and we cannot treat it as such.

President Putin's goal, as we now know, last year was to undermine our democratic institutions, to corrode Americans' trust and faith in government, and to sway the outcome of the election in favor of Donald Trump. If we do not get to the bottom of Russia's interference in our democracy, Putin will be successful. The President appears to be content with that result.

But I know, in talking with many Republican Senators as well as Democratic Senators, that they are not content with it.

We have to understand, in our great democracy, in the greatest Nation on Earth, that we cannot allow our country to try to interfere in our elections. We know the Russians wanted to do that. We know President Putin wanted to do that. We know he wants to do it in many other countries. I think we owe it, not only to ourselves but all these other countries, to stand up and say: We know what you are trying to do; here is how you tried to do it. America won't stand for it, and we hope none of our democratic allies will.

Senators must get involved in policy matters and we may have supported different candidates last November, but I respect all Senators, and I believe we all agree on the supremacy of the rule of law. No person, no President could be above the supremacy of the rule of law. I believe we fulfill our duty to the country if we stand united in calling for a truly independent investigation. There simply is no avoiding the fact that this cascading situation requires the appointment of an independent special counsel to pick up the pieces of these investigations. How we respond at this moment
is a test of our commitment to the separation of powers. It is a test of whether the Senate can truly be the conscience of the Nation, as it should. This is not just a scandal. The President’s actions are neither Republican nor Democratic. They are authoritarian. This is an attempt to undo the ties that bind our democratic form of government. All of us—both sides of the aisle—must now put country over party.

In my years here, I have worked with both Republican and Democratic Presidents. I have worked with them and supported them, notwithstanding their parties, in what I felt was in the best interest of this country. I feel privileged that Vermont has allowed me to serve long enough to become, as my predecessor was, dean of the Senate. But I have also, in deciding to stay here as a Senator, always had the abiding faith that you can and should be the conscience of the Nation. This great Nation deserves no less. That means we set aside party labels and adopt just one label—United States Senator.

With that, let us make sure there is a clear, full, credible, honest investigation. The President tried to influence our elections; a full, clear, thorough, honest investigation into if Russia has ties to anybody in our government; and, a full, clear, honest understanding of how we make sure that never happens again, to either Republicans or Democrats.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

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

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEE TO MEET

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, this afternoon, the Senate Special Committee on Aging is scheduled to hold the second part of a two-part series of hearings that we are holding to explore the impact of isolation and loneliness on the health and well-being of our seniors. The name of our hearing for this afternoon is Aging With Community: Building Connections that Last a Lifetime.

In other words, under the first hearing, we have four witnesses who, at their own expense, have flown in to participate in this hearing this afternoon. One of them, Lindsey Goldman, is the director of healthy aging from the Center for Health Policy and Programs at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago, Illinois. The second is Sherry Gerson, director of the Elder Law and Policy Program at Syracuse University, in New York City. The third is Mary Mitrani, director of healthy aging from the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging in Washington, D.C. The fourth is Dr.  Delores N. Eastman, professor of public health and director of the Healthy Aging Program at the University of Washington in Seattle, Washington.

Each of these witnesses was chosen in connection with my staff’s consultation with the Democratic staff of the committee. As you can see, they represent the States of New York, Maine, Pennsylvania, and Florida, and they incurred great expense in order to come here.

I am very disappointed to learn that, due to issues that are totally outside the purview of the Aging Committee—completely disconnected with this non-partisan bipartisan hearing, but this makes no sense whatsover. That ought to concern all of us—we are going to be prohibited from holding this official hearing this afternoon. I am baffled by this. This has nothing to do with the firing of Jim Comey. It has nothing to do with the Intelligence Committee’s ongoing and successful investigation of Russian influence on our investigations. It has nothing to do with the healthcare debate that is rolling this Congress.

This is a hearing that has to do with the health and well-being of America’s seniors. It is not political in any way, and to ask these four witnesses, who have come from four different States, including the State of the Democratic leader, to go back home and waste all this travel money and not help us better understand how we can deal with an issue that affects the health and well-being of our seniors is just plain wrong. Therefore, I make a request that the Aging Committee be permitted to meet at 2:30 p.m. today for its hearing, Aging With Community: Building Connections that Last a Lifetime. I ask unanimous consent that the committee be allowed to meet.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Democratic leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Given that we have no path forward on the horrible and momentous events of last night from the majority, I am constrained to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President. I see the Democratic leader is rapidly leaving the floor, so he obviously does not want to hear anything more about our hearing, but this makes no sense whatsoever.

This is an example of the dysfunction of the Senate. How does it make sense that the Aging Committee, which operates in a completely bipartisan manner, is being prohibited from holding a hearing that is important to our seniors and that has nothing to do with the issues that are in the news today?

I just don’t understand why we are being prohibited from proceeding to do our work, to do our important jobs on an issue where we have four experts from four different States, including the State of the Democratic leader, including a witness chosen by the ranking Republican member of the committee, and none of that matters. We are being prohibited from holding this hearing.

Mr. President, it is a great disappointment to me—and I am sure it is going to be a great disappointment to all of the witnesses and members of the committee—that we are going to have to cancel this hearing for reasons that are totally unrelated to the subject of this hearing.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I was, to say the least, shocked last night when I heard that President Trump had dismissed FBI Director Comey from his position as the Director of the FBI. To make this decision before the inquiry by the Special Counsel is complete is momentous events of last night from the majority. I am constrained to object.

This is a hearing that is important to our seniors. It is being prohibited from proceeding to do our work, to do our important jobs on an issue where we have four experts from four different States, including the State of the Democratic leader, including a witness chosen by the ranking Republican member of the committee, and none of that matters. We are being prohibited from holding this hearing.

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Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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This is an example of the dysfunction of the Senate. How does it make sense that the Aging Committee, which operates in a completely bipartisan manner, is being prohibited from holding a hearing that is important to our seniors and that has nothing to do with the issues that are in the news today?
According to news reports, President Trump was also upset over the amount of media coverage that the FBI Director and the investigations were attracting, and the White House asked DOJ officials to come up with reasons. It is not clear that the decision to fire Mr. Comey was a personal decision that was reached by President Trump and that it was known by him at the time that it would compromise the investigation that is being done by the Department of Justice.

I have been approached by others in their saying that Mr. Comey was not popular with Democrats or Republicans and that he had done things during his term as Director that had upset a lot of us, which is true, but the Director of the FBI has a 10-year term for a reason—a term that is longer than the two terms of the President of the United States. This is not a partisan position. The FBI is not required to be popular with either Democrats or Republicans. What is required to do is to uphold the law of the land for all Americans, and no one is above the law. That is what we expect from the Director of the FBI.

President Trump has compromised the integrity and independence of the FBI. At this point, what can we do? I would suggest, with regard to the criminal investigation that is being done by the Department of Justice, that there is only one course of action that will maintain the credibility of that investigation, which is that it is incumbent upon the Department of Justice to name, as soon as possible, a special prosecutor to take over that role.

If that is not done, in my view, it will be difficult to have the confidence of the American people that that investigation is not being directed by those who were supposed to be the subject of that investigation. I think it would also compromise the nomination process of the next Director of the FBI. If we do not have a special counsel named, then there will be so much focus on how that next Director will handle this investigation that we really will not have attention paid to the other responsibilities and talents of that individual to be able to handle the FBI’s broad jurisdiction.

If that is not resolved—the investigation and the appointment of a special prosecutor—it is difficult to see how we are going to have a truly bipartisan process for maintaining support for the FBI.

I urge the Deputy Attorney General to name, as soon as possible, a respected person as an independent prosecutor to take over this investigation. There are deeper concerns than just the President of the United States’ hampering a criminal investigation in which associates of his are involved because it also involves a country that is not a friend to the United States. All of this was triggered by Russia’s involvement in our democratic election system. We know that Russia was directly engaged in trying to compromise our election system by calling into question the confidence of our system and trying to tilt the scales in favor of one of our candidates. Russia made contact with Americans in order to further its game at bringing down our democratic systems of government.

This is not unique to the United States. Russia has used similar tactics in other elections of democratic countries. In the Montenegro election, we saw that Montenegrins were being trained on their government’s accession into NATO and that Russia exported individuals into that country to try to disrupt that election. They were not successful, but they tried. Just recently, in the French election, we saw how Russia got directly involved in trying to help one of the candidates who it believed would help pull France away from the EU and create a vacuum for Russia’s influence, but the French voters turned that down. It was not successful, but it meant Russia will not continue to try to bring down democratic systems of government.

Mr. Trump’s casual and consistent dismissal of the facts, as laid out by the entire Intelligence Committee, about Russia’s interference in the United States should set off alarm bells. It cannot be business as usual. Yet, today, President Trump and Secretary Tillerson met with Foreign Minister Lavrov. Today of all days, they decided to meet like nothing has happened, but a lot has happened. Did we see any indication that the purpose of that meeting was to raise our strong objections to Russia’s interference in our election system or Russia’s compromising Americans to try to help in regard to its campaign against our free election system or Russia’s engagement and encroachment into other countries? Did we really hear a commitment by the President of the United States that he would not tolerate that type of behavior by Russia? No. Business as usual. The President wants to establish a friendlier relationship with Russia.

Russia has not just tried to bring down free elections systems; they have invaded other countries. We know about the active campaign in Ukraine, the annexation of Crimea, the Russian presence in Moldova and Georgia. I met with the Prime Minister of Georgia today and he can tell you firsthand about how their country is trying to deal with the Russian presence in their sovereign country.

We all know about Russia’s engagement in other parts of the world. Their engagement in Syria is bringing about serious challenges to trying to resolve the crisis in that country. The Russian Government supporting the Assad regime, war crime activities targeting humanitarian convoys, targeting hospitals and the use of chemical weapons are all of that is facilitated by Russia. That is well known, but it might be not as well known that Russia is ambitions in going into many more parts of the world. Russia is now engaged in Afghanistan. We have had one of our longest wars ever in Afghanistan and our commitment to the people of Afghanistan to have a democratic government. So Russia is now engaged with Tajikistan, trying to use Russia’s ability to bring all of the parties together in unity in the government.

That, to me, is totally counter to history. We know about Russia’s presence in Afghanistan. Does anyone believe that it is really sound in maintaining peace in that country?

Then we see Russia’s fingerprints in Yemen, trying to get a naval base on the Yemeni coast, showing no concern for the humanitarian crisis that has been created in that country. We see Russia’s presence in Libya, supporting General Haftar, who has committed his own human rights violations and war crimes and has disrupted the Government of National Accord, which is our best chance for peace in Libya.

We see Russia’s presence in Nicaragua, sending troops and equipment to that country and now building a major compound that many believe is being built to spy on the U.S. compound. That is Russia.

So to President Trump: It is not business as usual with Russia. There is a reason we need an independent commission to investigate what Russia was doing in the United States because Russia is trying to create space where they can expand their influence, and expanding their influence is for values that are just the opposite of ours—a corrupt government, no respect for human rights, no respect for democratic institutions, and opposition to a free press. That is what Russia is trying to expand. We know that in their involvement in the United States, they are trying to find a way to expand that opportunity.

It is not acceptable for the Senate to say business as usual. We need to come together and facilitate the independent review of potential criminal involvement of Americans in facilitating the Russians and what they were doing, and we need to have an independent review of all of what Russia was doing in this country so we can take the necessary steps to protect our national security.

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

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

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to display water samples from the State of Montana on the Senate floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

With no objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEE TO MEET

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, today our friends across the aisle have decided to hold up Senate committee meetings. Because the Democrats object to the dismissal of James Comey from the FBI, they have chosen to play politics and prevent scheduled hearings from occurring. That means everyone who has taken time to fly to Washington, DC, to testify before Congress per and update us on important issues that face the Nation will not be heard.

One of those scheduled hearings is in the Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water and Power, of which I am a member. This hearing was going to investigate the Dry-Redwater and the Musselshell-Judith Rural Water Systems. This is a critically important issue to Montana.

This hearing was going to focus on water from Circle, MT. These water samples come from different families in the Circle, MT, area. This is from the Arensons’ tap. This yellow-tinted water here is from the Goods’ tap. This cloudy sample here is from the Hancs’ tap.

These are all from Circle, MT. This is from the Carlsons’ tap. You probably can’t see it—perhaps on camera and on the floor—but there is particulate in here, floating, something you wouldn’t want to drink. This is water from the Rossaens’ tap. These samples all came from a small town in Eastern Montana, Circle, MT, and the image here to my left is from Roundup, MT. This unacceptable, unclean tap water is in the homes of Montanans and North Dakotans right now as we speak.

The mayor of Harlowton, MT, a town of about 1,000 in rural central Montana, is here today to testify. I met with him just yesterday. He came to our Montana committee. He spent over $1,000 on a flight. He spent almost $600 on hotel accommodations, not to mention the cost of other incidentals. Now the Democrats will not let him speak.

Why? As the chairman of the Senate Western Caucus, it is shameful—as other witnesses have said. These are water samples from different families to prevent improving water quality in our States. The Arizona witness, for example, spent $2,400 and 3 days out of the office to come back and testify today. The North Dakota witness spent $1,300.

Yes, the FBI needs to regain the trust of the American people. In fact, House Minority Leader NANCY PELOSI said: “Maybe he’s not in the right job.”

But this water, as we can see these samples from Circle, MT, has nothing to do with the FBI. There are over 36,000 Americans spread across Montana and North Dakota without access to clean water. If the mayor of Flint, MI, flew here to testify about the quality and challenges facing their water system, no one would call that hearing. Frankly, this is just another sign of the marginalization of rural Montana and rural America. I was sent here to fight for rural Montana, to stand for rural America, and that is what I will continue to do. This hearing needs to happen today.

Mr. President, I have a request for the Energy Committee to meet at 2:30 p.m. today. I ask unanimous consent that the committee be allowed to meet.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Montana.

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, these are not hearings that the Senate of the State of Hawaii, of course, we care about clean water. So with all due respect to my colleague from Montana, we understand the importance of this issue to the people of his State. However, as I said, this is a very unusual time, and, on the President’s decision to fire Director James Comey in this manner, under this pretext, and at this time, it is also a total disservice to the American people.

This attempt, intended to derail and disrupt the FBI’s ongoing investigation into Russia’s attempt to disrupt or interfere with our democracy and the Trump team’s ties to those attempts, should be a matter of national concern, not a Republican or Democratic concern.

We need a bipartisan call for a special prosecutor who will conduct an impartial, thorough investigation, untainted by political consideration.

Therefore, I object.

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, if I could respond to my colleague from Hawaii.

The folks who have been derailed today are the men and women who have appealed to our colleagues across the country. They have taken time away from work and their families to be here from very small communities across our country. They have taken time away from work and their families to be here to show our committees what is going on in rural America and the unacceptable quality of water.

Water has been the subject of a hearing today. We have water samples here that I think would be shocking to most Members in this body. I am just saddened to see that Democrats are going to derail these hearings this afternoon. Yes, let’s have a fight about the FBI and the firing of Comey. We can have a good-spirited debate about that. But why are we preventing these folks from rural America, who have traveled thousands of miles, to testify today at our request?

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I have a request for the Indians Affairs Committee to meet today at 2:30 p.m.

First, we have a markup in the Indians Affairs Committee. The two bills we are marking up are Democrat-sponsored bills. The first one is Senator Tester’s bill, from the State of Montana, which would provide support for Native languages. I guess the summary is that it would support the education of Indian children. I believe it relates to Native languages in that educational capacity. So that is one of the bills, Senator Tester’s bill.

The other bill we are marking up is Senator Tim Kaine’s bill, also a Democrat-sponsored bill. Native I have is this: To extend Federal recognition to the Chickahominy Indian Tribe, the Chickahominy Indian Tribe-Eastern Division, the Upper Mattaponi Tribe, the Rappahannock Tribe, the Monacan Indian Nation, and the Nananiput of Indian Affairs Committee. The two bills we are scheduled to mark up those bills and get them to the floor and try to do it in a timely way because of the celebration they are trying to get prepared for. Everybody knows the story of Pocahontas and why that would be a big celebration and certainly a big deal in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Obviously, we can’t advance the bill to the Senate floor unless we mark it up. At the request of those two Democratic Senators from the Commonwealth of Virginia, we are scheduled to mark up those bills and get them to the floor and try to do it in a timely way because of the celebration they are trying to get prepared for. Everybody knows the story of Pocahontas and why that would be a big celebration and certainly a big deal in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Again, as we debate this on the Senate floor, I think Senator Daines made some strong points, and I would certainly agree with my colleagues across the aisle to consider what I just described as far as those markups.

In addition to those markups, we also have a hearing on several bills. The first one is a McCain bill, and it is to amend the PROTECT Act to make Indian Tribes eligible for AMBER Alert grants.

Everybody knows what the AMBER Alert Program is and how important that program is to protect our young people when they get abducted. The reason Senator McCain, from Arizona, is bringing this bill forward is because there was an abduction in Arizona, and the AMBER Alert went out late.
think the AMBER Alert went out a day late.

Senator MCCAIN has this PROTECT Act so we can make sure the AMBER Alert is working in Indian Country, and you certainly can understand how important it is that we do that. We have a hearing on the bill again so we can advance the bill to the Senate floor for consideration.

The final bill that we would have a hearing on in committee, if we are allowed to meet, is a Murkowski bill, Senator MURKOWSKI from Alaska. It would provide the conveyance of certain property in this State.

You have to realize that the witnesses—and I think certainly the good Senator from Hawaii will appreciate this—had to come here from Alaska, which is quite a lengthy trip. When the Senator travels back home to Hawaii, that is a long trip. It is certainly a beautiful place but a long trip to get there. Of course, it is not inexpensive to travel from Alaska to Washington, DC.

Those witnesses will be out their costs to come here if we are not able to have the hearing, and we would have to reschedule it. That certainly creates a cost item for them, which is certainly unfair and not what they would want to have had happen on the part of their government.

I am putting that in human terms. Again, we are talking about two Democratic bills and we are talking about two Republican bills. We are talking about constituents who have traveled a long way to come here to have the hearing and the markup.

Again, these are issues we should be able to work on in a bipartisan way. I would certainly ask for that consideration. At this point, I ask for unanimous consent that our committee be allowed to meet.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Hawaii.

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, of course we acknowledge the importance of the matters raised by my colleague from North Dakota and, representing my State, the State of Hawaii, yes, there is support for education of Native people, of Native children, which I hope will include Native Hawaiian children. That is important as well as recognizing various bills and the other matters that were raised by my friend from North Dakota.

However, as I mentioned, these are not business-as-usual times. The untoward firing of the FBI Director, who was conducting an ongoing investigation into Trump campaign's ties to Russia, concerns that our Democracy and the Trump team's ties to those attempts, should be a matter of national concern, should be a matter of concern to every single Member of this body.

This is not a Republican or a Democratic concern. This is a threat to our democracy. We know Russia did this. We know we need to get to the bottom of this. We need to get to the bottom of the Trump team's ties to these efforts, and this thinly veiled attempt by President Trump to derail or disrupt these investigations cannot be sustained or supported.

We certainly ask for a bipartisan call for a special prosecutor who will conduct an impartial, thorough investigation, untainted by political considerations into the Russia-Trump matter. Therefore, Mr. President, I object. The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.
The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, I rise to address President Trump's stunning dismissal of FBI Director Comey yesterday evening. We know the Russians interfered in the 2016 election. We know the Russians did so in order to undermine confidence in our democracy. We know the Russians carried out this attack with the goal of bene-fiting Donald Trump, whom the Kremlin preferred to win the election. These facts have been confirmed by our intelligence agencies.

What we don't fully yet understand is all of the reasons why, all the reasons why Donald Trump and whether associates of the President or members of his campaign assisted in the Russian operations to sway the election in his favor.

These questions are the subject of an ongoing investigation conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and, until last night, an investigation led by James Comey.

As former Director Comey recently testified to the House Intelligence Committee, "[T]he FBI, as part of [its] counterintelligence mission, is investigating the Russian government's efforts to interfere in the 2016 presidential election—and that includes investigations of any links between individuals associated with the Trump campaign and the Russian government and whether there was any coordination between the campaign and Russia."

The timing of Director Comey's dismissal raises serious questions, and President Trump's decision to abruptly fire the man leading an investigation that could implicate the Trump administration should shock the conscience of every American. It is clear that no man or woman is above the law and who has faith in the fair and impartial pursuit of justice.

The White House attempted to preemptively dispel any suspicion by announcing that President Trump fired the Director "based on the clear recommendations" of Attorney General Jeff Sessions and Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein. The White House released several documents to back up that claim: a letter from President Trump to a new Comey; a letter from Attorney General Sessions to President Trump, recommending that Comey be fired; and a memo written by Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein, which cited the Director's handling of the Hillary Clinton email investigation as damaging the FBI's reputation and credibility.

These documents create more questions than they answer. The letter from President Trump to Director Comey firing him. President Trump, ever eager to put distance between the Russian inquiry and himself, wrote: "While I greatly appreciate you informing me, on three separate occasions, that I am not the subject of any investigation, I nevertheless concur with the judgment of the Department of Justice that you are not able to effectively lead the Bureau."

Again, we know the FBI is conducting a criminal investigation into whether members of the Trump campaign coordinated with the Russians in their efforts to influence the election. Director Comey confirmed that before he was fired. Whether President Trump is personally under investigation by the Bureau or whether investigators are merely scrutinizing his advisers and associates, the President's clumsy attempt at misdirection does little more than remind us of the many unanswered questions about his and his administration's connections to Russia.

Second, Attorney General Sessions' letter to President Trump. The Attorney General writes that based on his review of Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein's memo, which cites the Director's handling of the Clinton email investigation, that Attorney General Sessions has concluded that the FBI requires new leadership and a fresh start.

Attorney General Sessions recommended that Director Comey be fired.

Attorney General Sessions should not have had any involvement in this decision at all. On March 2, the Attorney General called a press conference to announce: "I have now decided to recuse myself from any existing or future investigations of any matter relating in any way to the campaigns for president of the United States."

The reason Attorney General Sessions made that announcement was because news reports revealed he had provided misleading testimony in response to a question that I asked during his confirmation hearing; that Attorney General Sessions had falsely stated: "I did not have communications with the Russians." In fact, he did, a fact that he confirmed with the Russian Ambassador during the campaign twice.

Having provided misleading testimony under oath about a matter that could potentially be the subject of a criminal investigation by the FBI, Attorney General Sessions was forced to recuse himself.

I find it deeply troubling that Attorney General Jeff Sessions—who misled the Judiciary Committee about his communications with the Russian Ambassador and who pledged to recuse himself from this investigation as a result—betrayed that pledge by involving
himself in the decision to fire the Director of the FBI, who was leading the investigation into Russia’s interference in our elections, including whether members of President Trump’s campaign were involved in that interference. Attorney General Sessions was a member of the Trump campaign and misled the committee on whether he had met with the Russians, and he did that under oath. That is why he recused himself, and yet he inserted himself in this firing.

Finally, Attorney General Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein’s memo, which asserts that Director Comey’s handling of the Clinton email investigation caused the public to lose confidence in the Bureau. Director Comey spoke publicly about the Clinton email investigation twice, in July and October of last year.

Setting aside whether Director Comey’s decision to discuss the investigation was unorthodox or broke with Justice Department and FBI protocols, his actions were well known to both President Trump and Attorney General Sessions, and both of them celebrated his actions at the time. After Director Comey wrote to Congress on October 28, informing us that the FBI had uncovered additional emails and would therefore reopen its investigation into Secretary Clinton, then-Candidate Trump praised his decision. He said: “What [Comey] did was the right thing. I was happy to hear that he made the move that he made in light of the kind of opposition he had.”

Appearing on FOX Business Network, then-Senator Sessions said that Director Comey “had an absolute duty, in my opinion, 11 days [before an election] or not, to come forward with the new information that he has and let the American people know that, too.”

If President Trump or Attorney General Sessions objected to the move that Director Comey conducted the investigation into Secretary Clinton’s emails, I suspect they would have said so at the time rather than heap praise upon him. But their previous statements lauding Director Comey’s handling of the Clinton email probe cast suspicion on the extent to which they relied on the Deputy Attorney General’s purported rationale.

Further, and this is important, if Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein were truly concerned that Director Comey’s handling of the Clinton email investigation had damaged the reputation of the Bureau, then why not wait for the conclusion of an investigation by the very respected DOJ inspector general into Comey’s decision during the election—his decisions—an investigation that had been underway since January?

The shifting positions of President Trump and Attorney General Sessions lead me to believe something else is going on here, that this is not about Hillary Clinton’s emails but about turning the page on Russia. In fact, last night, a White House spokesman said so. Appearing on FOX News, White House Deputy Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders was asked how Director Comey’s firing would affect the Russia investigation. She replied:

When are they going to let that go? It’s been so long, right? It’s actually getting kind of absurd. There’s nothing there. It’s time to move on. Frankly, it’s time to focus on the things the American people care about.

The American people care about whether a hostile foreign government influenced our election. They care about whether advisers and associates of the President helped that foreign government do that.

The events that have occurred over the past 24 hours are deeply, deeply unsettling. As my Republican colleague Senator Flake said last night:

I’ve spent the last several hours trying to find an acceptable rationale for the timing of Comey’s firing.

And I can’t either. In my view, the timing and the circumstances surrounding Director Comey’s dismissal are very suspicious. For example, just this morning, it was reported that Director Comey recently asked the Justice Department to provide additional resources for the Russian investigation—a request that purportedly he made personally to Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein. This raises grave concerns about the Trump Justice Department conducting a full, fair, and impartial investigation. In order to address these concerns, Attorney General Sessions and Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein should come to the Senate and explain their involvement to all of the Senators in this body.

In the wake of what I believe was a politically motivated decision to remove Director Comey, I no longer have confidence that the Department of Justice can fulfill its obligation to resolve this matter impartially. The situation now calls very clearly for the appointment of a special prosecutor to oversee the investigation into whether associates of the Trump organization or former members of the Trump campaign had knowledge of or participated in the Russian attack on our democracy.

I join my colleagues’ calls for an independent inquiry so the American people know the truth. It is up to the individuals who conduct this investigation will follow the facts no matter where they lead.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I am here today to speak on a different topic, but before the Senator from Minnesota leaves, I want to thank him for his statement and for his observations, which are dead-on about the need now for the special counsel to take a look at what has happened here. I am very grateful for that, and I believe that is the conclusion others in this Chamber, Republicans and Democrats working together, will reach as well, as they let sink in what has actually transpired over the last 24 hours.

CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW ACT RESOLUTION

Mr. President, earlier today, in a paragraph good news for a bipartisan majority voted to block an effort that would have wasted taxpayer resources, polluted our air, and accelerated climate change. I thank my colleagues who voted that way, in particular the Republicans who crossed the aisle to join us in this vote.

Today, we showed that the Senate is still together to put the public above the powerful. Today we showed that, in the Senate at least, a majority still exists for common sense, for public health, and for good stewardship of public resources.

Before this morning, the Trump administration and some Members of Congress sought to undo a rule from the Obama administration that had been a win for taxpayers, for businesses, and the environment. Across the country, oil and gas companies pay royalties to extract from Federal and Tribal lands. Each year, these companies spend around $330 million worth of gas because of inefficient operations, from leaky pipes to excess burning, to faulty vents.

By preserving this rule, we will give taxpayers roughly $380 million in new revenue over the next decade. It is a win for taxpayers, for businesses, and the environment. Across the country, oil and gas companies pay royalties to extract from Federal and Tribal lands. Each year, these companies spend around $330 million worth of gas because of inefficient operations, from leaky pipes to excess burning, to faulty vents.

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This is a win all the way around. For public health, it reduces toxic pollutants in the air we breathe. For businesses, it cuts waste and expands their profit margins. For the planet, it curbs leaking methane, which is up to 80 times more potent than a greenhouse gas and accelerates climate change. In fact, without the proper protections, natural gas can burn as dirty as coal, and the benefits that we have gotten from natural gas would be dramatically reduced.

Thanks to bipartisan cooperation, this rule will remain in place. I want to recognize Colorado’s leadership in the fight to save our community.

The Senate passed a resolution to block the Administration’s attempt to roll back the methane standard on public lands. By a strong bipartisan majority, the Senate voted to support Colorado’s leadership in the fight to save our community.

This was the first vote in the Senate to reject a Trump Administration rule, and I am proud to have supported it. We showed that Washington can work together to protect our environment, and we showed that we can stand up to the Administration when they try to roll back important protections.

I am proud to have supported this resolution, and I am proud to have stood up for Colorado’s natural gas producers, who have been hit hard by a global decline in energy prices. This rule is a win for taxpayers, a win for businesses, and a win for the environment. It is a win for all of us, and I hope that we can continue to work together to protect our environment and our communities.
Critics also argued that Colorado’s rule would kill jobs. Once again, the facts tell a very different story. In Colorado alone, 41 different companies put people to work to repair pipes, monitor pollution, and develop technologies to reduce emissions. Our experience showed that the rule spurred new jobs and technologies, reduced pollution, and protected the planet, all while failing to reduce energy production as critics alleged. Those facts were critical in preserving the rule this morning.

Because of what we did this morning, the national standard we preserved, our State will not suffer from higher methane pollution coming across the border from other States. That would have hurt tourism in one of the most visited States in the country, and it would have been deeply unfair to the people of Colorado, to kids with asthma and seniors who need clean air to breathe. That is the next generation of Americans, of Coloradans who deserve a healthy planet.

Now that Congress has spoken, the administration should listen. My colleagues and I will vigorously oppose any attempts by the Department of the Interior to bypass, somehow administratively, the decision that has been made today. All of us need to remain vigilant to ensure that this common-sense protection remains in place, protecting Americans, protecting our environment, and protecting our future. At least today, at last, we can come together and put fact over ideology and put the public good over narrow interests.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. 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. Thank you, Mr. President.

First, I want to thank my colleague from Colorado for his outstanding remarks and, even much more important, the work on the methane CRA. Much is happening today, and not many people paid much attention. I guess, because they were so busy, but this is the first CRA to go down, and it is probably the most important one that came before us. So the fact that it wasn’t voted on means the people of America and the people of the world can breathe a sigh of relief because methane—one of the great causes of global warming—will not be released into the atmosphere as easily.

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Mr. President, now on the topic of the day, this morning the Democratic caucus discussed the circumstances of Mr. Comey’s dismissal by the White House. There are many questions to be answered and many actions to be taken. We will be pursuing several things in the coming days and weeks that we decided in our caucus, and we will have more to say about those next steps in the days ahead, but there are three things our caucus agreed must be done.

First, Mr. Rosenstein should not be the one to appoint the special prosecutor. That responsibility should go to the highest serving career civil servant at the Department of Justice.

Second, the decision that has been made more than ever to testify before the Senate.

Third, Attorney General Sessions and Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein should brief all Senators on these events separately and in a classified setting, if necessary, and they should do it soon because the questions are just swirling about, and there are more every day, almost every hour.

Let me go over each.

First, it is the overwhelming view of my caucus that a special prosecutor should now be appointed to conduct the investigation into the Trump campaign’s ties to Russia. Mr. Rosenstein cannot be the one to appoint him.

Serious doubts have been cast on Mr. Rosenstein’s impartiality for two reasons: First, there are many reports that Director Comey met with Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein last week to make a request for more resources or help with the investigation into the Trump campaign’s ties to Russia. That would make the timing of this firing even more suspect. Second, Mr. Rosenstein signed his name to a memo of highly political recommendations for Director Comey’s dismissal and made no complaint about the involvement of the Attorney General, who had recused himself from all matters relating to the Russia investigation, in recommending the firing of the man who was leading it.

It is hard to believe that a seasoned prosecutor without bias would have allowed Sessions to be a part of this. It is so hard to believe a seasoned prosecutor would write such a memo, which seems highly political—not in the kind of language and not with the kind of annotation that prosecutors normally write.

These facts make it clear that the decision to appoint a special prosecutor should go to the highest ranking civil servant at the Department of Justice. Mr. Rosenstein and other political appointees appointed by the President, or himself, to investigate, should not be the ones making a special call on a prosecutor, lest that decision be seen as influenced or, worse, made at the direction of the administration.

We need to assure the American people that they can have confidence in our criminal justice system to conduct the Russian investigation impartially. The best and only way to do that now would be for a career civil servant at the Department of Justice to be the person who decides on a special prosecutor. It should not be a political appointee who makes such a decision.

My friend, our great senior Senator from the State of California, brought this up in our meeting. Senator Feinstein’s call that the appointment be made by someone who is a career civil servant, not a political appointee, has the bipartisan support of our caucus and is the only fair way to proceed.

Second, we have also learned that Mr. Comey will no longer be appearing before the Intelligence Committee tomorrow. In his stead will be the Acting FBI Director, Andrew McCabe. There are so many unanswered questions that only Mr. Comey can answer. We Democrats hope and expect that he will still come before the Senate in some capacity.

I for one salute Senators Burr and Senator Warner for inviting him to testify next week before the Intelligence Committee. It is the right thing to do. We ought to hear from Mr. Comey. At this moment of profound doubt about the reasons and timing of Mr. Comey’s firing, it is the President and about the status and progress of a very serious investigation into the Trump campaign and Russia by his agency, we require answers.

Third, the recent revelations about Mr. Rosenstein and Mr. Comey and the demand that the Attorney General and the Deputy Attorney General—Attorney General Sessions and Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein—brief the Senate and answer questions because of so many things swirling from last night’s firing. That briefing could be classified if necessary—it may be part classified, part not—and each briefing should be done separately.

Let me speak plainly. The prospect that a campaign for the Presidency of the United States colluded with a foreign power in order to win our Nation’s highest office is as grave a topic for an investigation as there could be. It gets right to the heart of the pillar of our democracy: the fair and free elections that we all vote in. The Russian investigation is as central to the heart of our democracy as the election which we are seeking to protect from the influence of a foreign power in order to win our Nation’s highest office. The American people deserve to know the full facts of this investigation in a classified setting if necessary—it may be classified if necessary. And the American people deserve for that briefing to be done separately.

Furthermore, the fact that Mr. Rosenstein—which came out after I made my request for more resources—asked for more resources makes it all the more important for Rosenstein to come before that might be the reason Comey was fired—because he was pursuing the investigation in an improper way that was very much needed.

So what we are seeking—the only thing we are seeking—are assurances that this investigation will be carried out in an impartial, independent way; that we get all the facts; that we set to the very bottom of this. All we are seeking is some assurance that the subject of this investigation is not able to
influence it or, God forbid, quash it. The topic of this investigation itself is very serious. The possibility that the investigation is being impeded or tampered with is even worse. That threatens the integrity of our criminal justice system and the hallowed American belief in rule of law. I believe this rises far above party labels. I believe it rises far above partisan politics.

I have been heartened that several Republicans have expressed concerns. I hope they expect our Republican friends will join us in these efforts to make sure this investigation is conducted in the manner it deserves. We want Congress’s role to be nonpartisan, looking at the good of neither political party but, rather, the good of our dear country.

These are tough and serious times. We cannot shirk from our responsibilities, neither Democrats nor Republicans. I hope everyone in this Chamber will rise to the occasion.

I thank my good friend from Minnesota for allowing me to speak.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

FING OF JAMES COMY

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I join in the minority leader’s remarks and his plan for moving forward, which is a bipartisan plan and a plea for our colleagues to work together.

America is not like some countries where people are all of the same ethnic background or practice the same religion. America is an idea. America is an ideal. It is something that is grounded in our democracy.

Way back centuries ago, our Founding Fathers were concerned about foreign influence on our democracy. They were concerned at the time about the threat from Great Britain. Well, now we have another concern, and that concern is Russia. It is not just the Democrats’ concern. As one of our colleagues, Senator RUBIO, has noted in the past, maybe this is something that can happen on a political candidate in one party, but next time it will be the other party. That is why we must join together and handle this correctly and in the spirit of our democracy and our Constitution.

I have known Director Comey for a long time. We were classmates at the University of Chicago Law School. He was well liked in our class, and he earned the respect of the agents he supervised and the law enforcement he worked with. It is clear to him that I didn’t agree with how he handled the email investigation regarding Secretary Clinton, but nevertheless this man is a hard worker and someone of integrity. Just because someone doesn’t agree with how an investigation is handled, even if it is in a big way, doesn’t mean this person should be fired.

FBI Directors have 10-year terms for a reason; that is because we want them to be independent from political influence.

All Americans, including those who have criticized Director Comey for whatever reason in the past, should be very troubled by the timing of this firing.

Let’s look at the past week. We started the week on Monday, when Former Director Clapper testified in front of the Senate Intelligence Committee about the Russian threat to our democracy and the fact that the Russians feel empowered and that he believes they will do it again and again. We also were on the heels of the French cyber attack, where their elections were attacked and where Russia was trying to get involved in their elections.

Former Acting Attorney General Sally Yates testified, and she made very clear that she had not just given a heads-up to the administration that their National Security Advisor was compromised by the Russians—no. She had two formal meetings over at the White House. She outlined in detail how she had gone over to the White House and voiced her concerns.

When I asked former Director Clapper and former Acting Attorney General Yates whether this was material for blackmail—when you have a high-ranking official saying one thing on a tape recording that the Russians knew he had and then another to the Vice President of the United States—if that was material for blackmail, they said yes, definitively yes, that he had been compromised.

Yet, as it became clear, the White House then allowed National Security Advisor General Flynn, to stay on for 18 days, including being part of an hour-long conversation between the President of the United States and Vladimir Putin. So that is what happened on Monday.

We know what was going to happen tomorrow, Thursday, this is that Director Comey was going to testify in his capacity as the FBI Director in front of the Senate Intelligence Committee. We were going to get the answers to the questions we have been searching for a long time.

As one of our colleagues, Senator BURR, said that Director Comey to be a public servant of the highest order, and his dismissal further confuses our already difficult investigation.

The memo provided by Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein cites old justifications. These are quotes from letters that I remember from the Presidential campaign, and they are used in the letter as a justification.

If the administration found Director Comey’s conduct during the election to be so problematic, why now—right, smack in the middle of the advancements of this Russia investigation?

The answer, I believe, is that the justification that is provided in the memo is a pretext. The fact that President Trump’s termination letter to Director Comey strangely discusses the fact that Director Comey informed the President that he was not under investigation in the context of the Russia investigation sheds light on what this is really about; that Director Comey was seeking the truth.

Senator BURR said that Director Comey has been more forthcoming with information than any FBI Director he can recall in his tenure on the congressional intelligence committees. In firing Comey, President Trump has cast doubt about the depth and viability of any further investigation into the foreign interference of our democracy.

Why was Attorney General Sessions, who had recused himself from the investigation on Russian interference, able to influence the firing of the man at the helm of the Russia investigation?

That is one of the questions we want answered and why, by the way, I believe it is important to have a closed-door briefing with the Deputy Attorney General and his predecessor.

Did Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein act on his own or at the direction of Attorney General Sessions or the White House?

Are reports that the President had been searching for a rationale to fire the FBI Director for more than a week true?

Was his firing influenced by any recent developments in the investigation, like the issuance of grand jury

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warned the administration that the Russians were misled.

Flynn, the National Security Advisor—was not truthful with the Vice President. The one thing they have in common is that they were all investigating links, and they were doing their jobs.

Think about that. Let that sink in. The independent government officials who were or could have been charged with getting to the truth, no matter where it led, were fired.

We owe it to the American people to get to the bottom of what is going on here. It is our job to get to the bottom of this because the President of the United States—President Trump—cannot fire Congress. We need to know the full extent of the Trump campaign’s contact with the Russian Government during the campaign and transition, including what was said and what was done and who knew about it.

That is why, on January 4, I stood with Senator CARDIN and with ADAM SCHIFF and ELLIJA CUMMINGS, of the House of Representatives, and called for an independent commission. Now, this is different than the special prosecutor whom we need to handle the criminal investigation. This is also different than the good work that is being done by the Senate Intelligence Committee under the leadership of Senators BURR and WARNER.

To me, the independent commission would help us because it could get to the bottom of what has happened, with the intent of making sure it does not happen again, in order to protect our democracy. It could have recommendations, just like the 9/11 Commission had, on how we could improve our laws. It could have recommendations on what we could do if the media gets hold of information that is the result of a cyber attack from a foreign government. It could have recommendations of what political parties and campaigns could do—perhaps even in agreement—when they get access to information that is a result of a cyber attack against the campaign.

It was not that long ago when campaigns would come upon debate information and other things and would simply put it in an envelope and send it back to the other side. We can do this, but that is not going to come out of some simple piece of legislation or from the work that the Intelligence Committee is doing.

That is why I believe we need this independent commission as well as a special prosecutor to look into all contacts between Trump aides and surrogates and Russian officials during the campaign, transition, and administration. This prosecutor must be fair and independent and unattached to either political party.

In addition to the independent commission, we also need our congressional committees, as I mentioned, to continue to exercise their oversight authority.

Since the election, we have heard a lot about the three branches of government and our system of checks and balances. One of Congress’s fundamental jobs, as I told a group of students in my office today, is to closely oversee the executive branch in order to ensure that the law is being properly followed and enforced. This shouldn’t just be things that students learn from their Senators when they come in during school trips or be what they learn from a textbook. This is actually our job.

This means that in addition to this independent, 9/11-style Commission, we must make sure that our congressional committees continue to investigate Russian interference in our political system. We have subpoena power. We need to use it.

Some of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle understand the importance of doing our jobs in order to get to the bottom of this. After all, we have the Intelligence Committee investigation, but we also have the Judiciary subcommittee, on which I serve, led by Senators GRAHAM and WHITMER. They are the ones who held the hearing with Sally Yates and Director Clapper this week.

This is an unprecedented time in our country’s history. We are witnessing a singular moment of constitutional and democratic unease. In recent months, foundational elements of our democracy, including the rule of law, have been questioned, challenged, and even undermined.

Several of my colleagues have compared the President’s action to President Richard Nixon’s firing of special prosecutor Archibald Cox, who was investigating Watergate. Even then, Mr. Cox was replaced by a new special prosecutor. Today, we have no special prosecutor to determine whether the President’s campaign colluded with a hostile foreign power. Some in Congress are continuing to resist any serious investigation. For that reason, our democracy may be in even greater peril. The night he was fired, Mr. Cox defended his decision to conduct the Watergate investigation as he saw fit rather than to yield to the President’s order that he limit his request for tape recordings.

Cox said: “Whether ours shall continue to be a government of laws and not of men is now for Congress and, ultimately, the American people.”
He is right. The American people deserve a thorough, independent investigation into the extent of Russia’s interference in the 2016 Presidential election. This is not a partisan issue. Americans deserve the truth. And we hope they will get that truth sooner rather than later. So if they should ask what they should get those answers? They should get those answers from this Chamber, because we, as Members of the Senate, cannot be fired. I yield the floor.

"The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TOOMEY). The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I was listening with interest to our friend and colleague from Minnesota talk about the Russia investigation. I agree with her 100 percent that it is our responsibility to get to the bottom of what exactly happened with respect to Russian involvement in our elections, much as they got involved in the elections in France, using the combined process of cyber espionage, propaganda, and a use of social media through paid trolls who can then actually try to raise the visibility of some of the things that they want to accomplish. Cyber measures. Active measures are a combination of cyber espionage, propaganda, and a use of social media through paid trolls who can then actually try to raise the visibility of some of the things that they want to accomplish. Cyber measures. Active measures.

But now our colleagues seem to forget their very own conviction and vote on Rod Rosenstein, and now they say that he can’t be fair, that he somehow appears an appearance of a conflict of interest, making it necessary to appoint a special counsel, which, by the way, also then reports to the leadership at the Department of Justice.

I think we should give Mr. Rosenstein a chance to demonstrate that he is capable of leading that investigation at the Department of Justice, understanding that our role here in the Congress is not to pursue a criminal investigation, and that is the job of the Department of Justice. Our job, in parallel fashion, is for oversight reasons and to let the American people and ourselves know exactly what happened. That is why the investigation of the bipartisan Senate Select Committee on Intelligence is so important, in addition to the hearings we are having in the Judiciary Committee, on which the Senator from Minnesota and I happen to serve as well.

So we need to get to the bottom of what happened, and I am confident we will. It is our duty, and we will get the job done.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

On another topic, Mr. President, last week our colleagues in the House took the first necessary step to deliver on our campaign promises for the last three elections to repeal and replace ObamaCare. Why is that important? Well, because of the impact of ObamaCare on premiums and deductibles, for all 48 million people, literally, are now being priced out of the insurance market, and their insurance, even though they have the policy, is really unavailable to them because they have, for example, such high deductibles. We know insurance companies continue to pull out of the marketplace, and people are reduced to little or no choices when it comes to where to buy their insurance, because, frankly, ObamaCare was overpriced and underdelivered.

The President, if you like your policy, you can keep it. Well, that proved to be false. He said: If you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor. Well, that didn’t turn out to be true, either. He said that a family of four would save an average of $2,500 on their premiums, and that didn’t prove to be true, either.

So like most command and control from Washington, D.C.—notwithstanding, the programs of our colleagues across the aisle to deliver affordable healthcare to the American people—it simply failed to do so, and it is in serious distress—even a meltdown.

So we would invite our colleagues across the aisle—our Democrat friends—to join with us to help rescue the American people from this failure of the Affordable Care Act.

The House passed a bill last week—the American Health Care Act. It is not a perfect bill. I dare say the Senate is going to take up a bill of its own, and we will try to work with our House colleagues to try to get legislation to the President and signed into law that will rescue the American people and will finally deliver on our promise of affordable premiums, better access, and real choice.

But it is really not enough to just stand back and criticize those who are actually trying to rescue those who are in harm’s way as a result of the failures of ObamaCare. That, so far, is what our friends across the aisle are doing. They are not lifting a finger to help the people hurt today by ObamaCare. We would challenge them to get involved and to work with us.

Many of our colleagues have come to the floor and talked about stories they have heard from their constituents back in their States and the harm that the Affordable Care Act has caused. Premiums have skyrocketed. Millions have been kicked off their healthcare plans. The economy is saddled with billions of dollars in new regulations. Employers are laying people off or not hiring new people because, frankly, they don’t want to suffer the additional financial burdens of ObamaCare.

Instead of having more access to more health insurance options, Texans—the people I represent—have less of both.

The bottom line is ObamaCare has failed, and it is up to us to provide some relief to the people who are being hurt by the failure of ObamaCare. We should invite our colleagues to work with us to do that.

Since the creation of ObamaCare, I have been hearing regularly from my constituents back home in Texas how they need relief from the healthcare law that they need a law that works. They need a law that works. I don’t know many people who can withstand that kind of increase in their expenses for healthcare.
She wrote to me and said: “This has to stop—and quality, flexible plans need to return for individuals.” I agree with her.

Another wrote in to say that before ObamaCare her daughter was getting what used to be adequate healthcare insurance for about $190 a month with just a $50 deductible. Now that has gone up to a payment of almost $400 a month—roughly, doubled—with a deductible of more than $6,000. What else people supposed to do with a deductible of $6,000 which says you have to pay $6,000 before your insurance pays a penny? It is essentially no good to most hard-working, middle class families.

So ObamaCare does not equal healthcare that is affordable or better for Americans. It is simply not working.

In fact, in Texas, if you have a gross income of about $24,000 a year, under ObamaCare, you could end up spending about 20 percent of your total income on healthcare costs alone—30 percent of your gross income on healthcare and related costs.

Fortunately, thanks to the passage of the American Healthcare Act, or the AHCA, signed by the President last week, we have the beginning of a path forward to provide a lifeline to those people who are simply priced out of the market today—the 30 million people who don’t have insurance—and those who simply can’t use the health coverage they have under ObamaCare.

So I look forward to working with our Senate colleagues—hopefully, all of our Senate colleagues, if they are willing—to help improve the House bill and to get it passed in this Chamber and signed by the President.

This is not something we can do without the support of every Republican Senator, but my hope is that we would do this with the help of more than just a few Republicans.

Our goal to repeal and replace this bill has been, of course, no secret.

We need legislation that will reform Medicaid. With the American Healthcare Act, we have the first major healthcare entitlement reform in a generation, without eliminating anybody who is currently covered by Medicaid today.

We also need to do away with ObamaCare’s job-killing taxes, like the individual and the employer mandate. I remember, in Tyler, TX, a few years ago, meeting with a single mom who worked in a restaurant who told me that her hours had been cut from 40 hours a week to less than 30 hours a week because her employer didn’t want to pay the employer mandate and so basically had to cut people from full-time work back to part-time work. So what did she do? She had to get another job as a single mom, working in a restaurant in Tyler, TX. That is the sort of unintended consequence of ObamaCare.

Then there is the medical device tax—something the President Officer has led on—which is a tax on innovation. This isn’t even a tax on income. It is a tax on gross receipts. I have had some medical device companies from my State tell me they have had to move their operations to Costa Rica in order to avoid the medical device tax, which has crippled their ability to innovate and invest in their business. Then there is the tax on investments and the tax on prescription drugs. Middle-income Americans and our job creators need and will get massive tax relief when we repeal and replace ObamaCare.

So that is what 52 Members of the Republican conference are working on and what we would like to work on with our colleagues across the aisle, if they are willing to help. We welcome their ideas. Actually, a bipartisan solution would be preferable to one done strictly along party lines. But all Members of the Republican conference are at the table working on that today. There is no denying that our country can’t afford another one-size-fits-all approach to healthcare. The American people need relief from the unworkable, unsustainable system that President Obama promised—or delivered, which is very different from what he promised. I am confident that we can get there by working together to responsibly provide relief and, in doing so, empower individuals to deliver more options and competition and responsibly help those who need care to have more access to it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDENT OFFICER. The majority leader.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session. The PRESIDENT OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 35, Rachel L. Brand to be Associate Attorney General.

The PRESIDENT OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE MOTION

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

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Rachel L. Brand, of Iowa, to be Associate Attorney General.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 35, Rachel L. Brand to be Associate Attorney General.

The PRESIDENT OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDENT OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Rachel L. Brand, of Iowa, to be Associate Attorney General.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 37, Jeffrey A. Rosen, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of Transportation.

The PRESIDENT OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

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

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 35, Rachel L. Brand to be Associate Attorney General.

The PRESIDENT OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDENT OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Rachel L. Brand, of Iowa, to be Associate Attorney General.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 37, Jeffrey A. Rosen, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of Transportation.

The PRESIDENT OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDENT OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Jeffrey A. Rosen, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of Transportation.

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

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

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Jeffrey A. Rosen, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of Transportation.


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

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

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

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:
The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW ACT RESOLUTION

Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. President, I am proud that the Senate voted to reject an effort to overturn commonsense protections to reduce methane waste. It was just a couple of years ago that satellite images from NASA revealed that there is a giant cloud of methane—about the size of the State of Delaware—sitting over the Four Corners region in Northwestern New Mexico and Southwestern Colorado.

Although evidence had shown that there was methane air pollution in the Four Corners as early as 2003, the image of NASA data is truly striking. This is the single most important, major threat to public health for communities in the region.

The San Juan Basin in the Four Corners region has long been a leading producer of oil and natural gas. With the natural gas boom of the mid-2000s, production in the basin grew by leaps and bounds, and that created hundreds of new high-paying jobs and a major new domestic source of an important energy resource.

Unfortunately, amid all this growth, some producers developing natural gas on our public lands and on Tribal lands released harmful air pollution and wasted these publicly owned resources by allowing methane to leak into the air from faulty equipment and pipes, and even by burning off valuable natural gas in the process called flaring.

Following the discovery of the methane hotspot, researchers at NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory joined Caltech and University of Michigan scientists to conduct a detailed study into the cause of the methane cloud. Some producers claimed that the hotspot was caused primarily by natural seeps of gas from natural formation, but宇宙甲 said by gas venting out from an old coal mine in the region.

The NASA researchers, using instrumentation mounted on aircraft that flew close to the ground and throughout 1,200 square miles of airspace in the Four Corners region, identified leaks from natural gas wells as the major methane emitters contributing to the methane air pollution.

As NASA pointed out, methane has over 80 times the global warming potential as carbon dioxide over the short term. We have a moral obligation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to mitigate our contributions to climate change.

Even absent its consequences for climate change, methane leaks waste valuable energy resources, and they harm public health. When methane leaks from oil and gas wells, harmful carcinogens such as benzene leak into the air alongside it.

Because of the air pollution over the Four Corners region, the American Lung Association gave San Juan County in New Mexico an F rating for ozone pollution in 2016. That means children suffer more asthma attacks and seniors have more difficulty breathing.

I want it to be clear that this is not a case of methane leaking from an underground geologic formation, a natural gas source. That is because the definition of a win-win situation.

Energy workers and manufacturers. When we reduce wasteful leaks, it means that instead of having a giant methane cloud over the northwest corner of New Mexico and over the Navajo Nation—a major public health hazard—our publicly owned natural gas resources to beneficial use. That is the definition of a win-win situation.

I say all this because that is exactly what the Bureau of Land Management’s methane waste prevention rule is designed to do. These commonsense and cost-effective protections in the rule were put in place to reduce harmful methane and benzene pollution and to ensure that oil and gas operations are using technological advances that minimize emissions and maximize the amount of natural gas we produce.

Between 2009 and 2015, the BLM estimates that oil and gas producers on our public and Tribal lands vented, flared, and leaked 1.4 billion cubic feet of methane. They wasted enough natural gas to supply over 6 million American households for a year. Instead of heating our homes or fueling power plants, powering buses, that gas was leaked into the atmosphere, wasting millions of dollars of this limited resource.

It is estimated that the oil and gas industry wastes about $100 million worth of natural gas every year. That also means $6 million each year of lost State revenue, revenue that pays for schools, roads, and emergency services in New Mexico. That is quite a figure.

A recent report found that New Mexico taxpayers have lost out on over $42 million of royalty revenues since the year 2009—$42,728,949 to be exact. The BLM’s methane waste prevention rule will help put a stop to this wasted resource.

While developing the rule, the BLM held public meetings, it held Tribal consultations, and it factored in feedback from over 300,000 comments submitted during the public comment period. The agency also coordinated with States like Colorado, Wyoming, and North Dakota that have already created similar protections to reduce methane leaking and flaring at the State level.

The BLM rule will have minimal costs for oil and gas producers, and, in fact, leak detections and repairs required by the rule will help companies make more money selling the gas that they save. Meanwhile, this rule will grow our economy by investing in innovative companies that have developed the technologies to minimize leaks and protect our public health.

This rule should not have been controversial. The overwhelming majority of my constituents in New Mexico support reducing wasted natural gas. A recent poll of my constituents after the election found that 74 percent of New Mexicans support the BLM’s methane waste reduction rule.

I am proud that enough Senators shared that view and voted to reject an attempt to repeal commonsense protection of public health, air quality, and responsible development of our natural resources. There is nothing conservative about making it easier to waste a precious public energy source.

We should be focused on reducing waste, capturing critical royalties for New Mexico communities, and putting our natural gas resources to beneficial use. This repeal effort of the methane rule would have represented a major step backward.

Today’s vote was a major victory for responsible development of our natural gas resources and our Nation’s decades-long commitment to protect the air we breathe. On behalf of my constituents and theirs, I want to say a special thank-you to all 51 Senators who supported our efforts today. Thank you very much.

Mr. President, I yield back the remainder of my time.

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

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

FIRTH OF JAMES COMEY

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss President Trump’s decision to fire FBI Director James Comey. During his campaign, then-Candidate Trump regularly talked about how he would fire the FBI director and order President. “Law and order” means different things to different people, but all of us should be able to agree that we cannot have law and order without the rule of law.

The rule of law is not a new or even uniquely American idea. It dates back to the Magna Carta of 1215. This document—a pact between King John of
England and his barons—established that the Nation’s people have certain rights and that even the monarch is subject to the laws of the land. Centuries later, as we cast off the British monarchy, declared our independence, and established our own form of government, we put into place a system of checks and balances that, especially the President, Without the rule of law, law and order becomes merely order imposed by an unaccountable government. We know what order without the rule of law looks like. Last century it looked like the regimes of the Axis Powers. Now it looks like North Korea, Egypt, the Philippines, and, yes, Russia. These are all nations led by strongmen whom our President has praised in some manner, strongmen who hold democratic institutions in contempt, who exercise disproportionate control over their nations’ military, government institutions, and the media.

While the press here in the United States remains independent, we have a President who has chosen to regularly do battle with what he derides as the “fake news media.” He has even called our cherished, constitutionally protected free press “the enemy of the American people.” It is often said that the news is the “first rough draft of history.” While the President can attempt to wage war with the news media, none of us can truly fight history. But here in the Senate, we can help shape it. History has its eyes on our Chamber now.

Some of my colleagues across the aisle have said they are “troubled” or “disappointed” by the President’s decision to fire Director Comey, but it appears that many are taking a wait-and-see approach to how the administration replaces him. They are taking a wait-and-see approach to how the administration replaces him. They are taking a wait-and-see approach to the ongoing investigation into the Trump campaign’s potential collusion with Russia. The problem here is that this administration won’t let us see anything. The Trump administration is actively working to cover up everything that we, as the independent legislative branch, need to see to get to the bottom of the Trump campaign’s potential collusion with Russia.

Director Comey was investigating this potential collusion at the time that he was fired, and it has been reported that Director Comey recently asked Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein for an increase in money and personnel for this very investigation. Within a matter of days, the Deputy Attorney General wrote a memo recommending that President Trump fire Director Comey for actions he took last year. So was Director Comey fired on May 9, 2017, for his actions back in 2016? Are we to believe the President and the Attorney General were carefully weighing the merits of Director Comey’s service since the inauguration, or was he fired because he was ramping up his investigation into Russian collusion? Let’s not forget that this is the same investigation from which Attorney General Sessions recused himself before recommending to the President that he fire Director Comey. This is clearly a President who is more than happy to fire people, and he does so in a hasty fashion. Director Comey is not the first public servant to be fired while investigating this administration. In fact, he is in pretty good company. Acting Attorney General Sally Yates was fired while overseeing the collection of intelligence related to meetings between the Russian Ambassador and members of the Trump team. The U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York was fired while investigating the executive branch’s financial investments, in addition to leading a separate investigation into corrupt Russian businessmen and officials. One firing is an incident, two is a coincidence, but three is a pattern.

The point is that our President thinks he can simply tweet and fire his way out of this problem, while continuing to cozy up to the Russians. Earlier today, less than 24 hours after firing Director Comey, President Trump hosted Mr. Sergey Ryabkov, the Foreign Minister in the Oval Office.

I am deeply concerned that the President is unable or unwilling to grasp what the underlying problem here actually is. When the President hears Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle discuss the Russian attack on our election and the very foundations of our democracy, he hears sour grapes stemming from people who would have preferred that his vote did not tip the balance of that general election to have ended differently. But let me be very clear: This is not about scoring political points. This is not about winning the news cycle or the back-and-forth on Twitter. This is not the newest iteration of partisan politics.

Now is the time for all of us to put country above party. Throughout our Nation’s history, Senators have come together to tackle some of the Nation’s most difficult problems. Our Union has survived other challenges, and I am confident we can navigate this together, but we need to know exactly what we are up against. This is about properly diagnosing and curing a possible Russian infection in the White House and inoculating our government and elections for the future. Firing your doctor won’t take your illness away, and taking a wait-and-see approach won’t do that either.

We need an independent, special prosecutor or a Senate-authorized investigatory committee at this critical moment in our Nation’s history—a moment when partisanship should be set to the side, politics should be put on hold, and every Member of this Chamber should focus on what they can do to ensure the integrity of our justice system and the independence of our executive branch. Nothing less is at stake, and none of us here should forget that.

For months, the questions surrounding President Trump’s campaign’s ties to Russia—what happened, who was involved, and why—have gone unanswered. The more information that comes out, the more suspicious it all looks. And the more that President Trump tries to douse the flame by firing the people looking at where the smoke is coming from, the more we are going to keep paying attention, because the bottom line is that there are so many questions—real questions, legitimate questions—that absolutely need to be answered.

Many of us have pushed for these answers. We have called for an independent investigation. We had hoped that President Trump would resist the urge to slow them down or stop them or cover anything up. But the time for back-and-forth is over. The time for us to come together and speak with one voice for truth and against any kind of cover-up is now.
What happened yesterday was truly shocking, and this is coming from someone who didn’t think that was possible anymore with this President. But if anyone was wavering before, if anyone wanted to give this administration the benefit of the doubt, I am hoping they have been paying attention to the events of the last 24 hours because it is hard to stay on the fence now.

President Trump’s firing the head of the FBI—like that—in such a haphazard way—in the middle of an investigation into his own campaigning activities should be the last straw for anyone. So right now it could not be more clear.

It is time for a special prosecutor who can conduct an independent investigation, far from the reach of President Trump and his administration, to take the case and finally get the answers the American public deserves.

At the same time, our efforts here in Congress to investigate the Intelligence Committee—have to continue, and they need to continue in an independent and bipartisan way.

As I mentioned before, this isn’t about loyalty or partisanship, it shouldn’t be, and it can’t be. This is about the integrity of our election, of our national security, of our justice system, of our Presidency, of America’s standing in the world.

No Member of Congress, no matter what their political affiliation, should stand in the way of a thorough investigation, and neither should the President of the United States.

Mr. Trump may think he can bully his way to a lucrative real estate deal or bully his way into the White House; that he can fire anyone, including the Deputy Attorney General, a U.S. attorney, or the FBI Director, if they dare to get in his way or investigate his wrongdoing, but he can not—bully his way out of an investigation, especially not when so much is at stake.

More than 100 days into his term, President Trump may have forgotten that the American people are the voice for millions of people across our country. But I haven’t forgotten whom I represent, and I stand here today to lift up the voices of so many people in my home State of Washington who are calling on us to get the answers—people who care about our country, who know we can do better, who hate to see us spiraling toward situations we have not seen since President Nixon.

As of noon today, my office had been flooded with hundreds of calls. The phones are ringing off the hook. On the other end of the line are the people we represent. They are picking up the phone and trying to get through to every one of us in the Senate. They want answers they deserve them.

So let’s get to the bottom of this, once and for all, for the people we represent and for the integrity of our elections and our very democracy.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this is a photograph taken today of our President Donald Trump and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. This photograph was taken in the Oval Office today, where President Trump met with Mr. Lavrov. The meeting was closed to the American press. The photo was released by the Kremlin in Moscow.

The second photo is of Mr. Trump and the Russian Ambassador to the United States. His name is Sergey Kislyak. He was also in the Oval Office today to meet with President Trump, and this picture was also released by Moscow and the Kremlin.

Ambassador Kislyak’s name is familiar to many Americans now—it is familiar to me—because President Trump’s National Security Advisor, Michael Flynn, resigned because of communications he had with Ambassador Kislyak which he tried to keep secret to justify to the American people but to the Vice President of the United States.

The warm smiles and hearty handshakes President Trump gave to these Russian officials stand in stark contrast to the way the White House has treated three American Department of Justice officials: Sally Yates, Preet Bharara, and James Comey.

After President Trump was elected President, he asked Ms. Yates to serve as Acting Attorney General, and he asked Mr. Bharara to stay on as U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York and indicated that Mr. Comey could stay on as Director of the FBI. But then it appears that each of these Justice officials who led investigations that appeared to be getting close to the President and his inner circle. All three were then fired by President Trump.

President Trump’s firing of Director Comey made history. Not since Watergate—a Saturday night massacre—has a President dismissed the head of an investigation into his own administration. In its 50-year history, only one FBI Director had been fired. FBI Director William Sessions was dismissed for serious ethical violations, and the FBI at that time was not investigating the Clinton administration.

I have had my disagreements with Director Comey—how can I not when he has made statements he has made, statements he has made. I am not exactly his greatest fan. But I didn’t question his competence when it came to investigating. I never called on him to be fired.

There are so many questions that need to be answered: Why was Director Comey fired now, just as the FBI was conducting an investigation into Russia’s interference in the 2016 election and possible connections between the Russians and individuals in the Trump campaign and administration. Last night, CNN reported that Federal prosecutors have begun a new phase of this Russian investigation, issuing grand jury subpoenas to accountant Michael Flynn’s, seeking business records.

Director Comey was supposed to testify before the Senate Intelligence Committee later this week.

According to news reports, last week Donald Trump fired FBI Director Comey was only the most recent in a line of Justice Department officials who led investigations that appeared to be getting close to the President and his inner circle. All three were then fired by President Trump.

President Trump’s firing of Director Comey was the beginning of a new administration that is running the Justice Department and requested more money and resources to devote to the Russian investigation.

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When will the Republicans join us in a renewal of the investigation of Russian collusion with the Trump administration because of his close connections with the Trump campaign and communications he himself had with Mr. Kislyak and other Russian officials?

When they made the decision to fire Director Comey, was the White House aware that Director Comey had reportedly just asked the Justice Department for more resources for an adequate investigation?

Perhaps the most important question of all: When will Republicans in Congress agree to support a special prosecutor and an independent commission to get to the bottom of this Russian collusion in our last Presidential election?

November 8, 2016, is a day that will live in cyber infamy. It was that election in which the Russians set out to change the results. It is the first time we have seen an overt effort by a foreign power to change the votes of the American people in an election. It was a profound threat to the democracy of the United States and in terms of serving justice and, sadly, it is a sad reflection on American ideals and values.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, as you know, last night President Trump fired FBI Director James Comey. He did this in the middle of an open FBI investigation into possible links between the Trump campaign, Trump associates, and the Russian Government. This action should worry every Member of the Senate. I know it worries the people who represent. My office has been flooded with calls since this decision became public. Americans are asking why this firing happened now, why the firing happened at all—and they are right to ask.

Officially, President Trump said the Director's dismissal was necessary to restore the "public trust and confidence" in the FBI. That is laughable. Anybody who knows Director Comey or knows the FBI knows that statement is completely false. I had my issues with the decisions that Director Comey had made over the past months. I never called for his removal, but I know that he did not have a negative effect on morale at the Justice Department or in the FBI.

I worked for a Deputy Attorney General of the United States. I am so disappointed in the tone of the letter written by this Deputy Attorney General—we learned this afternoon—at the request of the President of the United States. This is not a letter that came up through the chain at DOJ, but a conversation—as the public reports are tonight—that happened at the White House, where the Deputy Attorney General and the President agreed mutually that it was time for Director Comey to go.

The President, apparently, asked the Deputy Attorney General to put it in writing. Then he wrote a letter, the
The Founders knew that when they established the Constitution, they wanted to preserve the independence of the judiciary and the executive branch. The idea that the President, who has the power to appoint judges, might also have the power to remove them at any time would undermine the rule of law. The Senate must stand firm and speak up for the independence of the judiciary and the executive branch.

The American people deserve an explanation for this unprecedented action. They deserve an explanation tonight. They deserve one this afternoon. They know this isn't how our government is supposed to work. They think the reason why people in Colorado and in other parts of the country are so concerned is that this dismissal is not the first action the President has taken to undermine the rule of law.

In order for the American people to learn the full truth, the Senate must immediately appoint an independent special prosecutor to investigate Russian interference in the 2016 election. This investigation is critical to our democracy.

I urge every Member of this body, every Member of Congress, to rise above the pressure of the moment and see this not as just another skirmish in our endless and often pathetic feuding but as a test of the resilience of these institutions and of our Republic, a test of whether we as Congress stand for something more than winning praise from our base in a cable news cycle or in the next election.

The President, who has access to all of the investigative agencies, said: "I respect him a lot." Now, overnight, based on a completely nonroutine letter written at the request of the President, he has turned the Senate over to the FBI. The Senate must stand firm and speak up for the independence of the judiciary.
The BLM methane rule is a reasonable, achievable way to limit emissions of methane—a particularly potent greenhouse gas—and save taxpayer money. The rule would prevent the oil and gas industry from excessive venting and flaring of methane into the air and encourage companies to work more quickly to address methane leaks. As we have seen in Colorado, which has a similar rule, the technology to meet these requirements exists and is not prohibitively expensive.

The BLM methane rule is a tremendously effective way to address greenhouse gases. Simply limiting these methane emissions would be the equivalent of taking nearly 1 million cars off the roads. Reducing methane leaks also prevents the leak of volatile organic compounds and other pollutants that contribute to ground-level ozone and damage public health.

By overturning this rule, the Senate would not just have given the oil and gas industry a green light to keep polluting, it would essentially be paying them to do it. Right now, companies don’t pay royalties on wasted gas from public lands. If we allow them to continue their inefficient practices, they will make more than $300 million in royalties over the next decade. Because States where operations are located get a large share of the royalties, western States like Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, and Montana would lose out on millions of dollars. Oil and gas companies would be taking public resources, wastefully venting them into the atmosphere, and avoiding any cost for that behavior.

Stakeholders like sportsmen, conservationists, tribal leaders, and consumer groups support the methane rule. The only voices asking for its repeal are the oil and gas industry and the Koch brothers. We should stand for our constituents and taxpayers instead.

ARMS SALES NOTIFICATION

Mr. CORKER, Mr. President, section 36(b) of the Arms Export Control Act requires that Congress receive prior notification of certain proposed arms sales as defined by that statute. Upon such notification, the Congress has 30 calendar days during which the sale may be reviewed. The provision stipulates that, to the extent that notification of proposed sales shall be sent to the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

In keeping with the committee’s intention to see that relevant information is available to the full Senate, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the notifications which have been received. If the cover letter references a classified annex, then such annex is available to all Senators in the office of the Foreign Relations Committee, room SD-423.

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

DEFENSE SECURITY
COOPERATION AGENCY,
Arlington, VA.

Hon. Bob Corker,
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEARMr. CHAIRMAN: Pursuant to the hearing Transmittal No. 17-21, concerning the Army’s proposed Letter(s) of Offer and Acceptance to the Government of the United Arab Emirates for defense articles and services estimated to cost $2.0 billion. After this letter is delivered to you, we plan to issue a news release to notify the public of this proposed sale.

Sincerely,

J. W. Rixey,
Vice Admiral, USN, Director.
Enclosures.

TRANSMITTAL NO. 17-21

Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer Pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended.

(i) Prospective Purchaser: Government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

(ii) Total Estimated Value: Major Defense Equipment* $1.0 billion. Other $1.0 billion.

(iii) Description and Quantity or Quantities of Articles or Services Under Consideration for Purchase:

Major Defense Equipment (MDE):

Sixty (60) Patriot Advanced Capability 3 (PAC–3) Missiles with canisters.

One hundred (100) Patriot Guidance Enhanced Missile-Tactical (GEM-T) Missiles.

Non-MDE:

Also included are canisters, tools and test equipment, support equipment, publications and technical documentation, spare and repair parts, U.S. Government and contractor technical, engineering and logistics support services, and other related elements of logistics and program support.

(iv) Military Department: Army (AE–ZUG, Amendment 8).

(v) Prior Related Cases, if any: AE–B–ZUG.

(vi) Sales Commission, Fee, etc., Paid, Offered, or Agreed to be Paid: None.

(vii) Sensitivity of Technology Contained in the Defense Article or Defense Services Proposed to be Sold: See Attached Annex.


*As defined in Section 47(6) of the Arms Export Control Act.

POLICY JUSTIFICATION

Government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—Patriot PAC–3 and GEM–T Missiles

The Government of the United Arab Emirates has requested the possible sale of sixty (60) Patriot Advanced Capability 3 (PAC–3) missiles with canisters and one hundred (100) Patriot Guidance Enhanced Missile-Tactical (GEM-T) missiles. Also included are canister, launcher, and test equipment, support equipment, publications and technical documentation, spare and repair parts, U.S. Government and contractor technical, engineering and logistics support services, and other related elements of logistics and program support. The estimated cost is $2 billion.

This proposed sale will contribute to the foreign policy and national security of the United States by improving the security of an important ally which has been, and continues to be, a force for political stability and economic progress in the Middle East. This sale is consistent with U.S. initiatives to provide key allies in the region with modern systems that will enhance interoperability with U.S. forces and increase security.

The proposed sale will enhance the UAE’s capability to meet current and future aircraft and missile threats. The UAE will use the capability as a deterrent to regional threats and to strengthen its homeland defense. The UAE also has a robust Patriot system since 2009 and will have no difficulty absorbing these additional missiles into its armed forces.

The proposed sale of these missiles will not alter the basic military balance in the region.

The prime contractor for the PAC–3 Missiles is Lockheed-Martin Corporation, Texas. The prime contractor for the GEM–T missile is Raytheon Company in Andover, Massachusetts. There are no known offset agreements proposed in connection with this potential sale.

Implementation of this proposed sale will require additional contractor representatives to the UAE. It is not expected additional U.S. Government personnel will be required in country for an extended period of time. U.S. Army Aviation and Missile Life Cycle Management Command (AMCOM) currently maintains a field office in UAE in support of UAE Patriot systems.

There will be no adverse impact on U.S. defense readiness as a result of this proposed sale.

TRANSMITTAL NO. 17-21


(vii) Sensitivity of Technology:


2. The PAC–3/C–3 sensitive/critical technology is primarily in the area of design and production know-how and primarily inherent in the design, development, and/or manufacturing data related to the following components:

a. Radar Enhancement Phase III (REP–3) Exciter Assemblies
b. Radar Digital Processor

  c. Modern Adjunct Processor
d. REP–3 Traveling Wave Tube
e. Classification, Discrimination, and Identification–3 (CDI–3) Digital Signal Processor
f. CDI–3 Analog/Digital Converters
g. Hardware-in-the-Loop and Digital Simulations
h. Surface Acoustic Wave (SAW) Oscillators

  i. PAC–3 Missile Guidance Processor Unit
j. PAC–3 Seeker
k. PAC–3 Missile Software
l. PAC–3 MSEG Software
m. GEM–T Fuzes
n. GEM–T SAW Oscillator

  o. Selected areas of the Patriot Ground Equipment Software
p. Multiband Radio Frequency Data Link (MRFDL)
3. Information on vulnerability to electronic countermeasures and counter-countermeasures, system performance capabilities and effectiveness, survivability and vulnerability data, and U.S. -based and related technologies.

4. If a technologically advanced adversary were to obtain knowledge of the specific hardware and software elements, the information could be used to develop countermeasures which might reduce weapons system effectiveness or be used in the development of a system with similar or advanced capabilities.

5. A determination has been made that the Government of the UAE can provide substantially the same degree of protection for the sensitive technology being released as the U.S. Government. This proposed system commitment program is necessary to the furtherance of the U.S. foreign policy and national security objectives outlined in the policy justification.

6. All defense articles and services listed in this transmittal are authorized for release and export to the Government of the UAE.

DEFENSE SECURITY COOPERATION AGENCY, Arlington, VA.

HON. BOB CORKER, Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended, we are forwarding herewith Transmittal No. 17–08, concerning the Army’s proposed Letter(s) of Offer and Acceptance to the Government of India for defense articles and services estimated at $75 million. After this letter is delivered to your office, we plan to issue a news release to notify the public of this proposed sale.

Sincerely,

J.W. RIXLEY, Vice Admiral, USN, Director.

Enclosures.

TRANSMITTAL NO. 17–08
Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer Pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended

(i) Prospective Purchaser: Government of India.

(ii) Total Estimated Value: Major Defense Equipment $0 million. Other $75 million. Total $75 million.

(iii) Description and Quantity or Quantities of Articles or Services under Consideration for Purchase: Major Defense Equipment (MDE): None. Non-MDE: None.

38,034 M50 General Purpose Masks.

Joint Service Lightweight Integrated Suit Technology (JSLIST) consisting of: Thirty-eight thousand thirty-four (38,034) Suits, Thirty-eight thousand thirty-four (38,034) Sets, Thirty-eight thousand thirty-four (38,034) Pairs of Trousers, Thirty-eight thousand thirty-four (38,034) Pairs of Gloves, Thirty-eight thousand thirty-four (38,034) Pairs of Aprons, Eight hundred fifty-four (854) Alternate Aprons, Nine thousand five hundred nine (9,509) Quick Doff Hoods, Thousand one hundred two (1,102) M61 Filters.

Also included in the potential sale is training; technical data; U.S. Government technical assistance; staging/consolidation; transportation; and other related elements of logistics support. The estimated cost is $75 million.

This proposed sale will contribute to the foreign policy and national security of the United States, by helping to improve the security of a friendly nation which has been, and continues to be, an important force for political stability and economic progress in South Asia.

The GoI intends to use these defense articles and services to modernize its armed forces. This will contribute to the Indian military’s goal to upgrade its capability while enhancing the relationship between India and the United States. The GoI will have no difficulty absorbing these defense articles into its armed forces.

The proposed sale of this equipment and support will not alter the basic military balance in the region.

The principal contractors involved in this program are Avon Protection Systems, Inc., Cadillac, MI. At this time, there are no known offset agreements proposed in connection with this potential sale.

There will be no adverse impact on U.S. defense readiness as a result of this proposed sale.

TRANSMITTAL NO. 17–08
Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer Pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act

Annex Item No. vii

(vii) Sensitivity of Technology: 1. The Joint Service lightweight Integrated Suit Technology (JSLIST) consists of: Thirty-eight thousand thirty-four (38,034) Suits, Thirty-eight thousand thirty-four (38,034) Trousers, Thirty-eight thousand thirty-four (38,034) Gloves, Thirty-eight thousand thirty-four (38,034) Aprons, Eight hundred fifty-four (854) Alternate Aprons, Nine thousand five hundred nine (9,509) Quick Doff Hoods, One hundred eleven thousand one hundred two (111,102) M61 Filters.

Also included in the training, technical data, U.S. Government technical assistance, staging/consolidation, and transportation line.

(vi) Military Department: Army.

(v) Prior Related Cases, if any: None.

(vi) Sales Commission, Fee, etc., Paid, Offered, or Agreed to be Paid: None.

(vii) Sensitivity of Technology Contained in the Defense Article or Defense Services Proposed to be Accepted: M50 General Purpose Mask.


As defined in Section 47(b) of the Arms Export Control Act.

POLICY JUSTIFICATION

Government of India — CBRN Support Equipment

The Government of India (GoI) has requested a possible sale of 38,034 M50 general purpose masks; Joint Service Lightweight Integrated Suit Technology (JSLIST), which consists of 38,034 each: Suits, Pairs of Trouser, Pairs of Gloves, Pairs of Aprons; 9,509 Quick Doff Hoods; and 114,102 M61 filters. Also included in the potential sale is training; technical data; U.S. Government technical assistance; staging/consolidation; transportation; and other related elements of logistics support. The estimated cost is $75 million.

This proposed sale will contribute to the foreign policy and national security of the United States, by helping to improve the security of a friendly nation which has been, and continues to be, an important force for political stability and economic progress in South Asia.

The GoI intends to use these defense articles and services to modernize its armed forces. This will contribute to the Indian military’s goal to upgrade its capability while enhancing the relationship between India and the United States. The GoI will have no difficulty absorbing these defense articles into its armed forces.

The proposed sale of this equipment and support will not alter the basic military balance in the region.

The principal contractor involved in this program is Avon Protection Systems, Inc., Cadillac, MI. At this time, there are no known offset agreements proposed in connection with this potential sale.

There will be no adverse impact on U.S. defense readiness as a result of this proposed sale.

TRIBUTE TO DANIEL K. AKAKA

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, today I wish to honor our former colleague, Senator Daniel K. Akaka, for his lifetime of distinguished leadership, service, and contributions to our Nation’s veteran and Native Hawaiian communities.

Daniel Kahikina Akaka dedicated his life to serving the people of Hawaii. He served as a Member of the U.S. Senate for 14 years. Prior to that, he served Hawaii’s 2nd Congressional District in the United States House of Representatives for 14 years.

However, his story of leadership and service begins well before his tenure on Capitol Hill.

On December 7, 1941, a young Senator Akaka witnessed Japanese fighter planes attacking Pearl Harbor from his dorm room at the Kamehameha Schools. The events of that morning were life-altering for him and many young men his age, and he joined the war effort.

Following his service in World War II with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,
Senator Akaka earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Hawaii. He later attained a master's degree as well. As he has relayed in the past, had it not been for the benefits received under the G.I. Bill, Senator Akaka's future in public service would not have been more than a dream.

As a believer in the power of education, Senator Akaka made it a career. Before entering politics, he served as a teacher, principal, and educational administrator, making a difference in the lives of many students for over 15 years.

As a veteran himself, Senator Akaka dedicated his service in Congress to helping servicemembers, veterans, and their families. His commitment to these issues led to his service as chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs from 2007 to 2011. As chairman, he worked to expand VA services. He also authored and passed the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill, which is making a difference to new generations of veterans as the original G.I. Bill did for his generation.

Not only was Senator Akaka a champion for education and veterans, he was also a champion for Native Hawaiians. He is the first person of Native Hawaiian ancestry to serve in the U.S. Senate, and he grew up in an era where the Hawaiian language and culture were heavily looked down upon. To help change this perception, he committed to protecting the language, culture, and traditions of indigenous peoples.

Senator Akaka advanced these priorities as chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs from 2011 to 2013. He also played a key role in ensuring the passage of legislation that enhanced Native Hawaiian education programs and authored a joint resolution that acknowledged the U.S. Government's role in the overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaii in 1893, while recognizing the special trust relationship held with the Native Hawaiian community.

He also fought tirelessly for self-determination for Native Hawaiians. During his time in Washington, DC, he served the people of Hawaii well and with distinction. Although he retired in 2012, Senator Akaka has continued down a path of leadership and service, speaking to students and mentoring some of Hawaii’s up-and-coming leaders. We all appreciate his continued service.

Mahalo nui loa, my dear friend, for being a true champion of aloha.

HONORING CORPORAL GEORGE A. PERREault, JR.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I want to recognize George Albert Perreault, Jr., a Korean war veteran whose remains are being brought home to Vermont, 66 years after he was declared missing in action. CPL Perreault enlisted in the U.S. Army after graduating from Burlington High School, and he served bravely in the Korean war. CPL Perreault was assigned to Headquarters Battery, 15th Field Artillery Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division, which was supporting a regiment of the Republic of Korea Army in the area known as the Central Corridor in South Korea. CPL Perreault went missing in 1951, after the Chinese People’s Volunteer Forces launched a massive attack against the regiment at Changbong-ni. He was declared killed in action in 1954. CPL Perreault’s remains were recovered in 2013.

The National Association of Home Builders was established in 1942 to represent the interests of the Nation’s homebuilding industry and to help create a business environment that facilitates homebuilding, enables more Americans to achieve homeownership, and provides for ample rental housing for all income levels. The National Association of Home Builders’ membership includes not just builders, but professionals in a broad range of fields who are part of the homebuilding industry, including those who remodel, design, build, and help maintain existing homes.

For many years, the goal set forth in the Housing Act of 1949 of “a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family” has been a guiding principle for America’s homebuilders, and they have made great strides in achieving that goal.

Since 1942, the total number of housing units in the United States has more than tripled, increasing from about 35 million to almost 136 million. Also the Nation’s homeownership rate has increased from about 44 percent to almost 64 percent. Moreover, the Nation’s standard of living has increased significantly thanks to the efforts of the National Association of Home Builders’ members, who build about 80 percent of the new homes constructed in the United States each year.

The members of the National Association of Home Builders have served as a driving force behind the significant advances in the quality of the Nation’s housing and the resulting improvement in quality of life for Americans. America’s homebuilders play important roles in the fabric of their communities, and they are essential to the Nation’s economic health. Homebuilding accounts for about 16 percent of the total U.S. economy.

I congratulate the National Association of Home Builders and its members on the organization’s 75th anniversary and encourage my colleagues in the Senate to reflect on the crucial role the homebuilding industry has played over the last 75 years in our Nation’s economy and the lives of our people.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

REMEMBERING DON DUNWELL

MR. TESTER. Mr. President, today I wish to remember the life of Don Dunwell—journalist, husband, father, and community leader. Don was known for his thoughtful interview style, creative storytelling, and ability to connect with the thousands of viewers who entrusted him to deliver the news.

It was common to find Don teaching and mentoring young reporters about the ins and outs of journalism. He believed fiercely in the free press and the strong ethics that were required to be a trusted source of information.

He never took his platform for granted and used it to make Montana and this Nation a better place.
EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

In 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.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

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

EC–1535. A communication from the Director, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Hispanic-Serving Agricultural Colleges and Universities (HASACU)” (RN0924–AA39) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on May 4, 2017; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–1536. A communication from the Secretary of Defense, transmitting a report on the approved retirement of Lieutenant General Stephen R. Lanza, United States Army, and to the grade of lieutenant general on the retired list; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC–1537. A communication from the Secretary of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, a six-month report on the national emergency declared in Executive Order 12978 of October 21, 1996, with respect to significant narcotics traffickers centered in Colombia; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–1538. A communication from the Secretary of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, a six-month report on the national emergency that was declared in Executive Order 13067 of November 3, 1997, with respect to Sudan; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–1539. A communication from the Assistant to the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Federal Reserve Bank Capital Stock” (RN7100–AE58) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on May 4, 2017; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–1540. A communication from the Assistant to the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Federal Reserve Bank Capital Stock” (RN7100–AE47) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on May 8, 2017; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–1541. A communication from the Secretary, Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Technical Amendments to Form ADV and Form ADV-W” (17 CFR 279.329) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on May 8, 2017; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–1542. A communication from the Comptroller of the Currency, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans; Texas; Clean Air Act Requirements for Vehicle Inspection and Maintenance, Nonattainment New Source Review and Emission Statements” (FRL No. 9960–15–Region 6) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on May 5, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1543. A communication from the President of the United States, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the designation as an emergency requirement all funding (including the rescission of funds) so designated by the Congress in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017, pursuant to section 251 (b) (2) (A) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, as amended, for accounts of the executive branch; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–1544. A communication from the President of the United States, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the designation for Overseas Contingency Operations/Global War on Terrorism all funding (including the rescission of funds) and contributions from foreign governments so designated by the Congress in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017, pursuant to section 251 (b) (2) (A) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, as amended, for the enclosed list of accounts; to the Committee on the Budget.

EC–1545. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans; Texas; Clean Air Act Requirements for Vehicle Inspection and Maintenance, Nonattainment New Source Review and Emission Statements” (FRL No. 9962–25–OAR) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on May 5, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1546. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report of a rule entitled “Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, as amended” (FRL No. 9961–93–Region 10) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on May 5, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1547. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Approval and Promulgation of Air Quality Implementation Plans; Virginia; Revisions to the 2012 Fine Particulate Standard” (FRL No. 9966–9–Region 3) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on May 5, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1548. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Approval and Promulgation of Air Quality Implementation Plans; Texas; Revisions to the 2015-2025 Regional Haze Baseline for the State of Nevada” (FRL No. 9961–26–Region 8) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on May 5, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1549. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans; Oklahoma; Revisions to Minor Source Review Permitting Program” (FRL No. 9965–67–Region 6) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on May 5, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1550. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans; West Virginia; Infrastructure Requirements for the 2012 Fine Particulate Standard” (FRL No. 9966–7–Region 3) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on May 5, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1551. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Approval and Promulgation of Air Quality Implementation Plans; Virginia; Revisions and Amendments to Regulations for Continuous Emissions Monitoring, Continuous Emissions Monitoring and Quality Assurance Requirements for Continuous Emissions Monitoring; Correction” (FRL No. 9961–38–Region 3) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on May 5, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1552. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Approval and Promulgation of Air Quality Implementation Plans; Maryland; Revisions and Amendments to Regulations for Gasoline Dispensing Facilities” (FRL No. 9961–38–Region 3) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on May 5, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1553. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Approval and Promulgation of Air Quality Implementation Plans; Tennessee; Infrastructure Requirements for the 2012 PM2.5 National Ambient Air Quality Standard” (FRL No. 9961–9–Region 8) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on May 5, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1554. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Air Plan Approval; North Carolina
Repeal of Transportation Facilities Rules” (FRL No. 9961–4–Region 4) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on May 5, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1556. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Air Plan Approval; NH; Nonattainment New Source Review and Prevention of Significant Deterioration Standards” (FRL No. 9962–01–Region 1) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on May 5, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1557. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Air Plan Approval; Indiana; Commission’s Seventy-Fifth Potomac River Basin, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Commission’s Seventy-Fifth Potomac River Basin,” (FRL No. 9962–11–Region 5) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on May 5, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1558. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Air Plan Approval; Indiana; Commissioner’s Order for Carmeuse Lime, Inc.” (FRL No. 9962–9–Region 5) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on May 5, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1559. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Air Plan Approval; ID; Updates to Incorporations by Reference” (FRL No. 9963–43–Region 10) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on May 5, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1560. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Air Plan Approval; Washington; Ambient Air Quality Standards” (FRL No. 9961–44–Region 4) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on May 5, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1561. A communication from the Director of Regulations and Policy Management Staff, Office of the Administrator, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Indirect Food Additives: Polyvinyl Chloride and Related Products” (FRL No. 9961–45–Region 10) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on May 5, 2017; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC–1562. A communication from the Acting Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Semiannual Report of the Inspector General and a Management Report for the period from October 1, 2016 through March 31, 2017; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–1563. A communication from the Executive Director, Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Commission’s Seventy-Fifth Financial Statement for the period of October 1, 2015 through September 30, 2016; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–1564. A communication from the Executive Director, Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Commission’s Seventy-Sixth Financial Statement for the period of October 1, 2016 through March 31, 2017; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–1565. A communication from the Assistant Administrator of the Office of Division Control, Drug Enforcement Agency, Department of Justice, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report entitled “Control of Methyl-1,4-Endocastor, a Chemical Precursor Used in the Illicit Manufacture of Lysergic Acid Diethylamide, as a List I Chemical” (RIN1113–AF90; DEAPF) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on May 8, 2017; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC–1566. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Amendment of Restricted Areas R–4102A and R–4102B, Fort Devens, MA” (RIN2121–AA46) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on May 3, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1567. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Establishment, Modification and Revocation of Air Traffic Service (ATS) Routes; Western United States” (RIN2120–AA66) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on May 3, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1568. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Establishment of Restricted Areas R–2879T and R–2879S, Mount Massive, CA” (RIN2021–AF24) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on May 3, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1569. A communication from the Assistant Chief Counsel for Regulatory Affairs, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Hazardous Materials: Revision of the Hazardous Materials Table; Barrels and 55-Gallon Drums” (RIN2327–AF25) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on May 3, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1570. A communication from the Assistant Chief Counsel for Regulatory Affairs, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Pipeline Safety: Inflation Adjustment for Civil Penalties” (RIN2327–AF16) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on May 3, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Ms. MURKOWSKI, from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, without amendment:

S. 365. A bill to promote energy savings in residential buildings and industry, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 115–60).

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. SANDERS (for himself, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. BROWN, Mrs. HASSAN, and Mr. BLUMENTHAL):

S. 1081. A bill to establish an Employee Ownership and Participation Initiative, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. SANDERS (for himself, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. LEAHY, and Mr. HASSAN):

S. 1082. A bill to provide for the establishment of the United States Employee Ownership Bank, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

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

S. 1083. A bill to amend section 1214 of title 5, United States Code, to provide for stays during a period that the Merit Systems Protection Board lacks a quorum; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

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

S. 1084. A bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to require the Director of the Bureau of Prisons ensure that each chief executive officer of a Federal penal or correctional institution provides a secure storage area located outside of the secure perimeter of the Federal penal or correctional institution for firearms carried by certain employees of the Bureau of Prisons, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. TOOMEY (for himself, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. COTTON, Mr. CRUZ, Mrs. FISCHER, Mr. HAYES, Mr. JOHNSON, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. LANKFORD, Mr. LEE, Mr. McCAIN, Mr. MURAN, Mr. PERDUE, Mr. PORTMAN, Mr. RISCH, Mr. TILLIS, and Mr. SULLIVAN):

S. 1085. A bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to provide for plea agreements for convicted murderers who kill or target America’s public safety officers; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. TOOMEY (for himself and Mr. BLUMENTHAL):

S. 1086. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to remove the prohibition on eligibility for TRICARE Reserve Select of members of the reserve components of the Armed Forces who are eligible to enroll in a health benefits plan under chapter 89 of title 5, United States Code; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mr. TOOMEY (for himself and Mr. BLUMENTHAL):

S. 1087. A bill to ensure America’s law enforcement officers have the equipment needed to defend themselves and civilians from attacks by terrorists and violent criminals; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. PORTMAN (for himself and Mrs. SHAHRIER):

S. 1088. A bill to require the Secretary of Energy to review and update a report on the refinancing of used lubricating oil; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.
By Mr. CRAPO (for himself, Mr. BENNET, Mr. RISCH, Mr. GARDNER, and Mr. ENZI):
S. 1090. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to facilitate water leasing and water transfers to promote conservation and efficiency; to the Committee on Finance.
By Ms. COLLINS (for herself and Mr. MURPHY):
By Mr. ENZI (for himself, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. DAINES, Mr. HEINRICH, Mr. RISCH, and Mr. MURPHY):
S. 1092. A bill to protect the right of law-abiding citizens to transport knives interstate, notwithstanding a patchwork of local and State prohibitions; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.
By Mr. FRANKEN (for himself and Mr. ENZI):

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS
The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. DONNELLY (for himself, Mr. PORTMAN, Mr. BROWN, Mr. NELSON, Ms. WARREN, Mr. RUIZ, Mrs. SHAHEEN, and Mr. PETERS):
S. Res. 161. A resolution expressing the sense of the Senate that defense laboratories are on the cutting-edge of scientific and technological advancement, and supporting the designation of May 18, 2017, as “Department of Defense Laboratory Day”; to the Committee on Armed Services.

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

S. 322
At the request of Mr. PETERS, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 322, a bill to protect victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and dating violence from emotional and psychological trauma caused by acts of violence or threats of violence against their pets.

S. 378
At the request of Mr. BARRASSO, the name of the Senator from Utah (Mr. Lee) was added as a cosponsor of S. 378, a bill to amend titles 5 and 28, United States Code, to require the maintenance of databases on awards of fees and other expenses to prevailing parties in certain administrative proceedings and court cases to which the United States is a party, and for other purposes.

S. 407
At the request of Mr. CRAPO, the names of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) and the Senator from Colorado (Mr. HEDY) were added as cosponsors of S. 407, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to permanently extend the railroad track maintenance credit.

S. 423
At the request of Mr. TESTER, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 423, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to increase the maximum age for children eligible for medical care under the CHAMPVA program, and for other purposes.

S. 431
At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 431, a bill to amend titles XIX and XXI of the Social Security Act to authorize States to provide coordinated care to children with complex medical conditions through enhanced pediatric health homes, and for other purposes.

S. 449
At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 449, a bill to designate the area between the intersections of Wisconsin Avenue, Northwest and Davis Street, Northwest and Wisconsin Avenue, Northwest and Edmunds Street, Northwest in Washington, District of Columbia, as “Boris Nemtsov Plaza”, and for other purposes.

S. 509
At the request of Mr. BARRASSO, the name of the Senator from Utah (Mr. Lee) was added as a cosponsor of S. 509, a bill to improve the control and management of invasive species that threaten and harm Federal land under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior, and for other purposes.

S. 563
At the request of Mr. HELLER, the name of the Senator from Iowa (Mrs. ERNST) was added as a cosponsor of S. 563, a bill to amend the Flood Disaster Protection Act of 1973 to require that certain buildings and personal property be covered by flood insurance, and for other purposes.

S. 583
At the request of Ms. CANTWELL, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 583, a bill to amend title 54, United States Code, to provide consistent and reliable authority for, and for the funding of, the Land and Water Conservation Fund to maximize the effectiveness of the Fund for future generations, and for other purposes.

S. 573
At the request of Mr. PETERS, the name of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 573, a bill to establish the National Criminal Justice Commission.

S. 583
At the request of Ms. KLOBUCHAR, the names of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN) and the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO) were added as cosponsors of S. 583, a bill to amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to authorize COPS grants to use grant funds to hire veterans as career law enforcement officers, and for other purposes.

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

S. 670
At the request of Mr. WARREN, the name of the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 670, a bill to provide for the regulation of over-the-counter hearing aids.

S. 704
At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 704, a bill to provide that members of the Armed Forces performing services in the Sinai Peninsula of Egypt shall be entitled to tax benefits in the same manner as if such services were performed in a combat zone.

S. 721
At the request of Mr. UDALL, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 721, a bill to require the disclosure of certain visitor access records.

S. 772
At the request of Mr. MCCAIN, the names of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL) and the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINE) were added as cosponsors of S. 772, a bill to amend the PROTECT Act to make Indian tribes eligible for AMBER Alert grants.

S. 808
At the request of Mr. THUNE, the name of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 808, a bill to provide protections for certain sports medicine professionals who provide certain medical services in a secondary State.

S. 939
At the request of Mr. CRUZ, the name of the Senator from Georgia (Mr.
ORDERS FOR THURSDAY, MAY 11, 2017

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 10 a.m. on Thursday, May 11; further, that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and morning business be closed; further, that following leader remarks, the Senate proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the Lighthizer nomination, and the time until the vote equally divided in the usual form.

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

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order, following the remarks of Senator WHITEHOUSE and Senator TILLIS.

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

The Senator from North Carolina.

ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I rise to discuss the new FDA Commissioner, or, more specifically, the agency must play in tackling one of the biggest health crises of our day, one that I have personal experience with. Unless we act decisively, this crisis will only grow in terms of the staggering human and economic costs in the future.

That crisis is the Alzheimer’s epidemic in this Nation. The reason I am

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The FDA cannot do this alone. This is an all-hands-on-deck kind of battle, but FDA will play a critical role in tackling this vital public health priority. I was pleased to vote for Dr. Gottlieb’s confirmation yesterday. I told him to ensure that we are doing everything we can to defeat Alzheimer’s. For those of us who have been and will continue to be Alzheimer’s caretakers, I hope we will see a cure in our lifetime. Those who are cured deserve it. It is a fiscal crisis we can avert.

With the right focus by the FDA and this Congress, I am absolutely convinced this is a disease we can take the war to and win the war in our lifetime in the near future.

I encourage the FDA and all of my Members to stand in battling this terrible disease so we can end it once and for all.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

**CLIMATE CHANGE**

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, it is perhaps a providential happenstance that I should be giving this particular speech while the Senator from Louisiana is presiding because we are both from coastal States. I am sure he will find things that are familiar in my Rhode Island remarks, particularly given that his Governor has declared the Louisiana coast a state of emergency due to sea level rise.

As the Presiding Officer knows, one place where the effects of climate change are most evident is in our oceans and along our coasts. Rhode Island is the Ocean State, and we have almost 400 miles of beautiful coastline. Everyone in Rhode Island lives less than a half hour from the shore. We count on a healthy ocean and vibrant coast. Our ocean economy, including fishing, tourism, and shipbuilding, amounts to $2.5 billion every year—perhaps not what Louisiana’s coastal economy is but pretty good for our small State.

It employs over 42,000 Rhode Islanders. Warming, acidifying, and rising oceans are a clear and present danger to many aspects of our Rhode Island way of life. Sea level rise now threatens to remake our Rhode Island coast, swallowing low-lying land, widening existing inlets, eroding beaches, and stranding higher shorefronts as new islands.

For my 166th “Time to Wake Up” speech, I want to show the Senate what Rhode Island can expect, particularly harsh for the northeast coast. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration released a new report in January updating global sea level rise estimates based on the latest peer-reviewed scientific literature.

Ice sheets, it turns out, and glaciers, are melting faster than expected, raising the so-called extreme scenario for average global sea level rise in this century, the “we do nothing on climate change scenario,” by around 20 inches.

The Ocean State is well positioned to take advantage of new opportunities in the green economy, but what we do today will have implications for our children and grandchildren. We need to take leadership on this issue.

I have been an advocate on this issue for many years. The 1991 reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act required the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to improve its climate research. In 2010, based on new findings from the institute, the new Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council was established to remake our Rhode Island coast, that becomes a new island chain, the new Rhode Island—Neck, which is now part of our new West Shore.

As a boy growing up in Rhode Island, I swam by the shorefronts as a child. More recently, as a member of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, I have been impressed by the testimony of the nation’s coastal managers, and the wide recognition of the threat of climate change. This year, the Senate Committee held a series of meetings on climate change. After all, Rhode Island is the only one of our top 10 diseases that is the only one of our top 10 diseases for causes of death in the United States. It is a current and growing problem. It is the only top 10 disease for causes of death that cannot be prevented. It can’t be cured. We can’t even slow the pace of the disease. Simply put, we need a war on Alzheimer’s disease like we have on cancer.

As a country, we must take the fight to this awful disease. This should be one of our highest priorities, to support the discovery and development of new medicines and technologies to help millions of patients who currently have Alzheimer’s and the millions more who may develop it in the future. We need medicines to slow the progression of the disease. We need medicines to reverse its affects. We need medicines to cure Alzheimer’s disease. One day, we need medicines to prevent it in the first place.

That is where the FDA comes in. The new Commissioner must make Alzheimer’s a mission to advance this goal? Do they have the science of developing new medicines and technologies is complicated under any circumstances. Those challenges are only compounded by the fact that we still do not fully understand the disease. Its causes, or how to stop it, but the FDA does hard things and they often do them very well.

The new Commissioner must ask tough questions of the agency: Are they doing everything they possibly can to accelerate the development of safe and effective new drugs for Alzheimer’s? Are they using all the tools at their disposal and using them flexibly to advance this goal? Do they have the right policies to be facilitators of and not barriers to important efforts to innovate in this space?

I recently visited with Dr. Gottlieb in my office and was pleased to hear the battle against Alzheimer’s is a mission-critical priority. I assure you that pervades the FDA. I want to be clear. I do not know the answers to the questions related to FDA’s specific regulatory policies related to Alzheimer’s. I think those determinations are best made by medical experts, but I know the status quo, the current standard of care, and the set of FDA-approved treatment options is not enough for patients or our Nation. Inaction is not acceptable. America is at its finest when we come together to do big things. Now is the time to commit to stopping the suffering and death from Alzheimer’s.
prosperous bedroom community, just disappears under the water. As I said, Warren and Bristol become their own island.

Now we move down the bay to historic Newport, RI, and the historic waterfront area completely within the historic Point section here floods, down here the western part of Newport becomes a new island. Again, all of this is now land that we lose to rising seas.

Not only does Western Newport become Western Newport Island, but it gains its own Castle Hill Island off to the side of it. Up here, the existing Goat Island virtually disappears.

This story is repeated all along Rhode Island's coast. The tip of Little Compton breaks off to become its own tiny little archipelago of new islands. This is Tiverton, which is just north of Little Compton. On the other side, here, is the shore of Portsmouth on Aquidneck Island. What you see is that the sea level rise turns Nonquitt Pond into an ocean and makes an island of this section of Tiverton here near Fogland Point, another new island.

Here we see the point on the other side of the opening into Narragansett Bay from Little Compton. You have Little Compton, Aquidneck Island, which comes down in the middle, and on the other side you have Point Judith. Point Judith also begins to break up into little islands.

If you go just off here, Gallilee is our fishing port. It is where most of the fishing trawlers have their home port and the entrance runs right up here into the protected harbor area. As you can see, Gallilee is now pretty much under water.

So for folks who like to go to Champlin's Seafood, you will probably have to row there, and it might not even be there. For those who like Aunt Carrie's better, it is here, and it is not in great shape for surviving storms.

So here on the other side, you have Block Island, which has been designated by The Nature Conservancy as one of the world's last 10 great places. Well, it is no longer one of the world's last 10 great places, it is now two of the world's last—I guess it would have to be 11 great places because it breaks into two separate islands. Block Island becomes Block Islands.

The beautiful town of Jamestown, which is its own island between Aquidneck Island and our mainland shore, breaks up into three separate islands. It is now one. Jamestown goes up a little bit further, that part stays intact, but the upper part breaks away from downtown Jamestown, here, and the Beaver Tail area breaks off into, I guess it would become Beaver Tail Island.

Now let's go up to our capital city. We started with the first map showing Providence. This series of images will show what happens to Providence at sea level rise. Just to orient people who are seeing this, this is the Providence River coming in. This is the Woonasquatucket River. This is the circle at Waterplace Park and the Woonasquatucket River goes out over the Providence Place Mall, and it goes on from there.

This is Providence's downtown business district. That is 3 feet of sea level rise coming in. Now you get to 7 feet of sea level rise, and you see the encroachment of the ocean into our business center. Seven feet used to be our worst-case scenario, but as the evidence comes in and we are seeing things happen faster and the sea level rise occurring greater than had been expected, we have been raising our expectations.

So here is the new worst-case scenario—10 feet of sea level rise. As you can see, the business section of downtown Providence is entirely overwhelmed. Twelve feet of sea level rise is a natural consequence once you get to 10 feet of sea level rise because if you have 10 feet of sea level rise, then what you get is a regular and recurring problem of low water and saltwater. So it is not unreasonable to think about sea level rise if you are expecting a baseline, what they call bathtub level of 10 feet.

As you can see, downtown Providence, our business district is more or less completely inundated. So this is Climate Central. Climate Central has allowed us to get these images of what downtown Providence looks like up close, with various levels of sea level rise, and this is something they run off of Google Earth. This, again, is downtown Providence.

This is Providence City Hall. This is Kennedy Plaza, you will be pleased to know, Senator. It is named after another John Kennedy because he gave his last speech in his campaign for President before he went home to take the election results and find out that he had been elected—his last speech was right here to a huge crowd that had come out to see him in downtown Providence.

This is the Rhode Island Galleria. This is the famous Biltmore Hotel. This used to be the train station. Now the offices of the Rhode Island Foundation are there. As you can see, most of these historic buildings are up to their second floor. If you look at old pictures from the hurricane in 1938 and the hurricane in 1998, you see buildings where the water got that high, but that was at a peak of a hurricane surge. This becomes the baseline. This is what it looks like every day.

Here is the old Providence City Council Hall. Instead of coming along the sidewalk and walking up the steps, you would have to come over in one of our gondolas in order to get to the front entrance, and the first floor of City Hall is lost. If you look at all of this, it represents a loss of billions of dollars in property value to Rhode Islanders.

Let me grab the original. All of these areas are currently occupied by people's homes, people's businesses are there, and if they disappear below rising seas, all that value is lost. It is actually worse than that because if this is the new coastline, then behind that coastline is going to be a new set of flood zones and a new set of velocity zones. For those who are not familiar with what a velocity zone is, that is the part of the flood zone in which it is deep enough and exposed enough that you actually get wave action against structures. So you get the physical force of waves damaging structures rather than just tides rising. Between the V-zones and flood zones, there is a much larger area in which structures become uninhabitable, and they become unmortgageable, and result they become valueless. So the economic harm from this potential sea level rise inundation of Rhode Island is virtually incalculable, and we are not the only ones who are looking at this.

Looking ahead at this coastal threat also is the massive government-backed home loan mortgage corporation Freddie Mac. Freddie Mac has predicted "the economic losses and social disruption may happen gradually, but the result they become valueless. So the economic harm from this potential sea level rise inundation of Rhode Island is virtually incalculable, and we are not the only ones who are looking at this.

Think about that. Think about the economic damage that this country sustained and the pain the families experienced after the 2008 Wall Street meltdown in that housing crisis, the great recession. Here is Freddie Mac saying this problem is going to be greater in total than those experienced in the housing crisis and great recession. Here people would be looking at the government about this stuff. You have to trust the private sector. The government doesn't know what it is talking about.

Here is a quote from a recent article in the trade publication Risk & Insurance, an insurance trade publication. The editor of that publication wrote that this was what he called "a growing and alarming threat." He went on to say: "Continually rising seas will destroy coastal real estate and commercial property values to the point that property owners will flee those markets in droves, thus precipitating a mortgage value collapse that could equal or exceed the mortgage crisis that rocked the global economy in 2008."

For anybody who wonders why I come and give these speeches every week, for anybody who wonders why I am up to No. 168, it is about seeing the coastline of my home State of Rhode Island being whittled away into this chain of islands—this new Rhode Island archipelago. If this were your State, you would be up here too.
We have a responsibility here in Congress to all Americans to face up to what is happening. This is not just a Rhode Island circumstance. It is going to be Louisiana. It is going to be North and South Carolina. It is going to be Massachusetts and Maine and California. It is going to be the Gulf coast. We are all going to have to face up to this and help communities prepare. The carbon dioxide that we have already pumped into the atmosphere will make some of this sea level rise inevitable. It is baked in now, and we just have to wait for it to happen. We can still avoid these worst case scenarios if we act promptly and if we will, for one minute, say to the fossil fuel industry: You have had enough. You have fed enough at this trough. You have silenced Congress enough. Your power and your greed will no longer prevail here. We are going to solve this problem for the people of our States.

We can still do that, but we do have to act promptly. With regard to the stuff that we cannot avoid, we also have an obligation to help our coastal communities prepare for this, to make this transition. All of these islands are going to need bridges to get to them where there are now roads. Where things are falling into the ocean and you can shore them up and protect them with hard protection, you need to do that. Where not, you need to go back and adjust zoning and planning so that nature can defend herself a little bit better through dunes and through marshes and so forth. There is a lot of work we need to do with this coming at us.

This is not funny. Nature will not wait for our politics to sort themselves out. The laws of physics, the laws of chemistry, the laws of biology do not wait for our politics to sort themselves out. We are all going to have to face up to this and help communities prepare.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 6:13 p.m., adjourned to the next session.
To the grade indicated in the United States Navy

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY

To be captain

BRUCE E. OSBORNE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY

To be captain

COLETTE M. MURPHY

JOHN A. ROBINSON III

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY

To be lieutenant commander

NATHAN R. ANDERSON

RANDALL L. RICE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY

To be captain

MARY A. PONCE

BRIAN K. BIRD

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY

To be lieutenant commander

PHILIP L. NOTZ

RYAN K. MAHELONA

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY

To be captain

MARY A. PONCE

BRIAN K. BIRD

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY

To be captain

RYAN K. MAREBONA

PHILIP L. NOTZ

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY

To be captain

JOSEPH T. BAILEY

MARKUS P. BAUER

RAYMOND K. HEDBERG

HEATHER M. BOTNEWELL

STANLEY A. RUNNER

EDWARD G. CARR

JOHN B. GARRY

CHARLES S. HARTUNG

HARRY W. HAMILTON

ANNA M. GRUETZMACHER

JOSEPH A. GOMEZ

ROBERT D. FETHERSTON

JOSEPH L. DESAMERO

DANIEL W. CLARK

CHARLES L. CATHER

JENNY S. BURKETT

SUSANNE E. BLANKENBAKER

JESSICA D. BEARD

SHANE P. STROHL

NICHOLAS R. RUSSO

EDWARD D. PIDGEON

JACQUELINE M. MEYER

CHRISTIAN M. MAHLER

ROBERT R. MAZEAUBILBA

MICHAEL C. MCCORMACK

JOSTHA R. MCKAY

JACQUELINE M. MEYER

EDWARD D. PIDGEON

WADE W. SONDY

NICHOLAS R. RUSSO

KATHY K. BRYER III

KADILOU F. SIDIBI

JAMES H. STRAUB

SHANE P. STROHL

CHRISTOPHER A. WALDRO

RICHARD H. WILHELM

STEPHEN M. WILSON

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY

To be captain

MICHAEL J. ALLANSON

RANDY E. ASHMAN

JESSICA D. BEARD

SUSANNE E. BLANKENBARKER

JENNY S. BURKETT

ALISON H. CASTRO

CHARLES L. CATHER

DANIEL W. CLARK

CAROLYN M. CURDIN

JOSEPH L. DESAMERO

VICTOR M. DIAZ

ROBERT D. FETHERSTON

JOSEPH A. GOMEZ

ANNA M. GRUETZMACHER

BABAK A. BARAKAT

SCOTT D. LOGAN

JASON E. KLINGENBERG

MICHAEL N. JEFFERSON

TROY M. GRONBERG

TIMOTHY R. GRIFFIN

TONY V. GILES

TIMOTHY E. GIFFIN

TROY M. GRONBERG

JEFFREY RECTOR

KAREN D. RADOS

PETER D. ROCHA

JEFFREY S. POWELL

RUSSELL C. RAN

MATTHEW C. ROTHMILLER

LAURIE SCOTT

FRANCES J. STAVISH

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY

To be captain

DANNY W. KING

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY

MARC S. BRENNER

MARCUS N. FULTON

SCOTT D. LOGAN

JASON E. KLINGENBERG

BRUCE KONG

SCOTT D. LOGAN

MANUEL K. LOGO

CHRISTIAN M. MAHLER

ROBERT R. MAZEAUBILBA

MICHAEL C. MCCORMACK

JOSTHA R. MCKAY

JACQUELINE M. MEYER

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THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY

To be captain

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THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY

To be captain

DANNY W. KING

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY

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MICHAEL C. MCCORMACK

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CHRISTOPHER A. WALDRO

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STEPHEN M. WILSON

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY

To be captain

MICHAEL J. ALLANSON

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TONY V. GILES

TIMOTHY E. GIFFIN

TROY M. GRONBERG

JEFFREY RECTOR

KAREN D. RADOS

PETER D. ROCHA

JEFFREY S. POWELL

RUSSELL C. RAN

MATTHEW C. ROTHMILLER

LAURIE SCOTT

FRANCES J. STAVISH

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY

To be captain
TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

THOMAS B. HINES, JR.
TUANH C. HALQUIST
CHRISTOPHER E. CRECELIUS
DANIEL A. BROWN
JEFF A. BLEILE

UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

KEDRIC E. WEBSTER
MATTHEW J. WAUSON
CHRISTOPHER M. TEPERA
SEAN A. SWIATKOWSKI
JASON D. SWEET
JAMES P. SMITH
JASON W. SCHROEDER
ROLF K. SCHMIDT
ADAM K. SAPERSTEIN
KEVIN C. OMALLEY
ARASH MOHTASHAMIAN
MICHAEL L. MEADOWS
RYAN C. MAVES
MICHAEL L. MEADOWS
SOIL R. METZGER
ABHAYA NEETHAMMAN
MICHELE P. MORRISON
MARK M. MOLTON
JAMIS J. MUCCIONI
FRANK E. MULLENS
TODD J. OCHSNER
KEVIN C. O'CALLANY
ADAM R. RAPERT
ROLF K. SCHMIDT
JASON W. SCHUBERTER
ANDREW J. SELLERS
SEAN G. SHELFON
JAMIS P. SMITH
JASON D. SWEDT
SEAN A. SWIATKOWSKI
CHRISTOPHER M. TEPERA
JOHN W. TOTH
KRISSY K. TUGWELL
PORCEY A. TWINARD
DAVID D. OBRIEN
JENNIFER B. JONES
GREGORY A. FRANCIOCH
DANIEL E. FILLION
TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624.

IN THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY

HIEN TRINH
NANCY OSBORNE
KEITH L. MAYBERRY
MOLLY A. JENKINS
THOMAS B. HINES, JR.
TUANH C. HALQUIST
CHRISTOPHER E. CRECELIUS
DANIEL A. BROWN
JEFF A. BLEILE

UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

SEAN R. WISE
KEDRIC E. WEBSTER
MATTHEW J. WAUSON
CHRISTOPHER M. TEPERA
SEAN A. SWIATKOWSKI
JASON D. SWEET
JAMES P. SMITH
JASON W. SCHROEDER
ROLF K. SCHMIDT
ADAM K. SAPERSTEIN
KEVIN C. OMALLEY
ARASH MOHTASHAMIAN
MICHAEL L. MEADOWS
RYAN C. MAVES
MICHAEL O. ENRIQUEZ
SERGIO CHAVEZ
CURTIS W. GABALL
DAVID M. FURLONG
JONATHAN A. FORSBERG
NATHANIAL FERNANDEZ
BRENDON G. DREW
KONRAD L. DAVIS
HENRY F. CASEY III
HAN Q. BUI
JOHN S. BROOKS
CHAD M. BAASEN
KATHERINE C. AUSTIN
NATHANIEL B. ALMOND
OLADAPO A. AKINTONDE
TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY

ANTHONY C. TARANTO, JR.
JEFFRY A. SANDIN
DAVID DWYER
EDWARD L. CALLAHAN
ROBERT B. BAILEY
BRETT A. WISE
TIMOTHY M. SULLIVAN
MARCUS D. STARKS
SUZANNE R. MEYER
KEVIN J. MCHALE, JR.
JOHN B. MARKLEY
KYLE L. LEESE
ERIC E. LAHTI
CHRISTOPHER W. HALL
JAMIE A. FRASERLORIA
JAMES L. BOND
JULIE M. ALFIERI
BRINT W. FINGERSON
JAMES A. FRASERLORIA
CHRISTOPHER W. BALL
STACY L. HANNA
RAYMOND R. KENDALL
ERIC B. LANTZ
KYLE L. LIEBER
JIM B. MARKLEY
FRANCISCO J. MARTINEZ
KEVIN J. MCELHANEY
SUZANNE R. MEYER
THOMAS P. SCAREY
MARCUS D. STARKS
TIMOTHY M. SULLIVAN
MATTHEW A. YEROS
BRITT A. WISE
THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624.

To be captain

JOHN R. FRITZ
TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624.

GRADY G. DUFFY, JR.
BRETT D. INGLE
JOSEPH P. MONTES
DAVID A. VON DRAAK
THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624.

DAVID M. KAPPA
RYAN M. PERRY
KEVIN R. STEPHENS
WILLIAM M. URBAN
THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624.

DANIEL R. FJOLLON
GREGORY A. FRANCIOCH
JENNIFER B. JONES
TUAN NGUYEN
DAVID D. OHIEN
JASON D. WIEDO
THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624.

DAMON B. DIXON
RICHARD A. KENNEDY, JR.
DAVID R. RUBIN
THOMAS A. MONEYMAKER II
JONATHAN J. VOISAR
THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624.

JAMIS W. AKEDISCH III
CHRISTOPHER G. BRYANT
ROBERT S. DAMSKY
ETHAN C. GIBSON
RACHEL J. V. LIND
DOMINIC R. LOVELLO
MARC W. RAVITO
JOSEPH D. SEARS
VICTOR L. SPEARS III
HOLLY A. DUDINSKY
SHERI R. DERMER
THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624.

CORY B. BRUMMET
ANDREW B. DITTMER
JAMIS O. HAMMOND
JAMIS A. LECOUNT
ERIK O. FUTTMAN
JAMIS A. LATINO
WILLIAM A. DESCH
JASON D. SWEDT
SEAN A. SWIATKOWSKI
CHRISTOPHER M. TEPERA
TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624.

JAMIS J. MCCUCCIA
FRANK E. MULLENS
TODD J. OCHSNER
KEVIN C. O'CALLANY
ADAM R. RAPERT
ROLF K. SCHMIDT
JASON W. SCHUBERTER
ANDREW J. SELLERS
SEAN G. SHELFON
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PORCEY A. TWINARD
DAVID D. OBRIEN
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DANIEL E. FILLION
TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624.

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WILLIAM A. DESCH
JASON D. SWEDT
SEAN A. SWIATKOWSKI
CHRISTOPHER M. TEPERA
TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624.

JAMIS J. MCCUCCIA
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SEAN A. SWIATKOWSKI
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PORCEY A. TWINARD
DAVID D. OBRIEN
JENNIFER B. JONES
GREGORY A. FRANCIOCH
DANIEL E. FILLION
TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624.
The following named officer for appointment in the grade indicated in the Regular Marine Corps under Title 10, U.S.C., Section 531:

Michael S. Stevens

The following named officer for appointment in the grade indicated in the United States Marine Corps Reserve under Title 10, U.S.C., Section 12203:

To be colonel

To be major
SENATE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Title IV of Senate Resolution 4, agreed to by the Senate of February 4, 1977, calls for establishment of a system for a computerized schedule of all meetings and hearings of Senate committees, subcommittees, joint committees, and committees of conference. This title requires all such committees to notify the Office of the Senate Daily Digest—designated by the Rules Committee—of the time, place and purpose of the meetings, when scheduled and any cancellations or changes in the meetings as they occur.

As an additional procedure along with the computerization of this information, the Office of the Senate Daily Digest will prepare this information for printing in the Extensions of Remarks section of the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD on Monday and Wednesday of each week.

Meetings scheduled for Thursday, May 11, 2017 may be found in the Daily Digest of today’s RECORD.

MEETINGS SCHEDULED

MAY 17

9:30 a.m.  Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe
To hold hearings to examine the growing Russian military threat in Europe, focusing on assessing and addressing the challenge.

SVC-208

10 a.m.  Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
To hold hearings to examine current issues in American sports, focusing on protecting the health and safety of American athletes.

SR-253

Committee on Environment and Public Works
To hold hearings to examine improving America’s transportation infrastructure.

SD-406

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
Business meeting to consider S. 34, to amend chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, to provide for the on-bloc consideration in resolutions of disapproval for “midnight rules”; S. 829, to reauthorize the Assistance to Firefighters Grants program, the Fire Prevention and Safety Grants program, and the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response grant program, S. 951, to reform the process by which Federal agencies analyze and formulate new regulations and guidance documents, S. 21, to amend chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, to provide that major rules of the executive branch shall have no force or effect unless a joint resolution of approval is enacted into law, S. 577, to require each agency, in providing notice of a rule making, to include a link to a 100 word plain language summary of the proposed rule, S. 584, to amend chapter 6 of title 5, United States Code (commonly known as the Regulatory Flexibility Act), to ensure complete analysis of potential impacts on small entities of rules, S. 579, to require agencies to publish an advance notice of proposed rule making for major rules, S. 459, to designate the area between the intersections of Wisconsin Avenue, Northwest and Davis Street, Northwest and Wisconsin Avenue, Northwest and Edmunds Street, Northwest in Washington, District of Columbia, as “Boris Nemtsov Plaza”, S. 995, to provide U.S. Customs and Border Protection with additional flexibility to expedite the hiring process for applicants for law enforcement positions, S. 696, to amend title 5, United States Code, to appropriately limit the authority to award bonuses to Federal employees, S. 594, to permanently authorize the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Business Travel Card Program, S. 842, to prohibit Federal agencies and Federal contractors from requesting that an applicant for employment disclose criminal history record information before the applicant has received a conditional offer, S. 760, to expand the Government’s use and administration of data to facilitate transparency, effective governance, and innovation, S. 831, to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 120 West Pike Street in Canonsburg, Pennsylvania, as the “Police Officer Scott Bashioum Post Office Building”, an original bill entitled, “Department of Homeland Security Blue Campaign Authorization Act of 2017”, an original bill entitled, “Federal Agency Customer Experience Act of 2017”, and an original bill entitled, “Saving Federal Dollars Through Better Use of Government Purchase and Travel Cards Act of 2017”.

SD-342

Joint Economic Committee
To hold hearings to examine the state of social capital in America today.

SD-106

10:30 a.m.  Committee on the Budget
To hold hearings to examine running the government for less.

SD-608

2 p.m.  Committee on Armed Services
To hold hearings to examine military space organization, policy, and programs.

SR-222

2:30 p.m.  Committee on Indian Affairs
To hold hearings to examine the Government Accountability Office’s high risk list for Indian programs.

SD-628

Committee on Veterans’ Affairs
To hold hearings to examine pending calendar business.

SR-418

3:30 p.m.  Committee on Armed Services
To hold hearings to examine United States military small arms requirements.

SR-232A

MAY 16

10 a.m.  Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure
To hold hearings to examine leveraging Federal funding, focusing on innovative solutions for infrastructure.

SD-406

Committee on Finance
To hold hearings to examine the nominations of Sigal Mandelker, of New York, to be Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Crimes, Marshall Billingslea, of Virginia, to be Assistant Secretary for Terrorist Financing, and Heath P. Tarbert, of Maryland, to be an Assistant Secretary, all of the Department of the Treasury, and Mira Radeleovic Ricardel, of California, to be Under Secretary of Commerce for Export Administration.

SD-533

3:15 p.m.  Committee on Environment and Public Works
Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure
To hold hearings to examine leveraging Federal funding, focusing on innovative solutions for infrastructure.

SD-406

Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
To hold hearings to examine the nomination of the Treasury, and Mira Radeleovic Ricardel, of California, to be Under Secretary of Commerce for Export Administration.

SD-215

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

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.
Senate

Chamber Action

Routine Proceedings, pages S2851–S2890

Measures Introduced: Thirteen bills and one resolution were introduced, as follows: S. 1081–1093, and S. Res. 161.

Measures Reported:

S. 385, to promote energy savings in residential buildings and industry. (S. Rept. No. 115–60)

Measures Considered:

Bureau of Land Management Rule Relating to Methane: By 49 yeas to 51 nays (Vote No. 125), Senate rejected the motion to proceed to consideration of H.J. Res. 36, providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the final rule of the Bureau of Land Management relating to “Waste Prevention, Production Subject to Royalties, and Resource Conservation”.

Lighthizer Nomination—Agreement: Senate continued consideration of the nomination of Robert Lighthizer, of Florida, to be United States Trade Representative, with the rank of Ambassador.

Prior to the consideration of this nomination, Senate took the following action:

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Executive Session to consider the nomination.

Rosen Nomination—Cloture: Senate began consideration of the nomination of Jeffrey A. Rosen, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of Transportation.

Nominations Received: Senate received the following nominations:

J. Christopher Giancarlo, of New Jersey, to be Chairman of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission.

Adam J. Sullivan, of Iowa, to be an Assistant Secretary of Transportation.

Robert L. Sumwalt III, of South Carolina, to be a Member of the National Transportation Safety Board for a term expiring December 31, 2021.

Neil Chatterjee, of Kentucky, to be a Member of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for the term expiring June 30, 2021.


Andrew K. Maloney, of Virginia, to be a Deputy Under Secretary of the Treasury.

Mark Andrew Green, of Wisconsin, to be Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development.

A motion was entered to close further debate on the nomination, and, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, a vote on cloture will occur upon disposition of the nomination of Robert Lighthizer, of Florida, to be United States Trade Representative, with the rank of Ambassador.

Prior to the consideration of this nomination, Senate took the following action:

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Legislative Session.

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Executive Session to consider the nomination.

A motion was entered to close further debate on the nomination, and, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, a vote on cloture will occur upon disposition of the nomination of Jeffrey A. Rosen, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of Transportation.

Prior to the consideration of this nomination, Senate took the following action:

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Legislative Session.

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Executive Session to consider the nomination.

A motion was entered to close further debate on the nomination, and, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, a vote on cloture will occur upon disposition of the nomination of Jeffrey A. Rosen, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of Transportation.

Prior to the consideration of this nomination, Senate took the following action:

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Legislative Session.

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Executive Session to consider the nomination.

A motion was entered to close further debate on the nomination, and, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, a vote on cloture will occur upon disposition of the nomination of Jeffrey A. Rosen, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of Transportation.

Prior to the consideration of this nomination, Senate took the following action:

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Legislative Session.

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Executive Session to consider the nomination.

A motion was entered to close further debate on the nomination, and, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, a vote on cloture will occur upon disposition of the nomination of Jeffrey A. Rosen, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of Transportation.

Prior to the consideration of this nomination, Senate took the following action:

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Legislative Session.

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Executive Session to consider the nomination.
Jay Patrick Murray, of Virginia, to be Alternate Representative of the United States of America for Special Political Affairs in the United Nations, with the rank of Ambassador.

Jay Patrick Murray, of Virginia, to be an Alternate Representative of the United States of America to the Sessions of the General Assembly of the United Nations, during his tenure of service as Alternate Representative of the United States of America for Special Political Affairs in the United Nations.

Routine lists in the Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, and Navy. Pages S2886–90

Executive Communications: Pages S2880–81

Additional Cosponsors: Pages S2882–83

Additional Statements: Pages S2879–80

Record Votes: One record vote was taken today. (Total—125) Page S2853

Adjournment: Senate convened at 9:30 a.m. and adjourned at 6:13 p.m., until 10 a.m. on Thursday, May 11, 2017. (For Senate’s program, see the remarks of the Majority Leader in today’s Record on page S2883.)

Committee Meetings

(Committees not listed did not meet)

U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS CAPABILITIES TO COUNTER RUSSIA

Committee on Armed Services: Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities receive a closed briefing on United States special operations capabilities to counter Russian influence and unconventional warfare operations in the “Grey Zone” from Major General Mark C. Schwartz, USA, Commander, and Colonel Terry Guild, USA, Director of Intelligence, both of Special Operations Command Europe, Department of Defense.

CONSTRAINING NORTH KOREA

Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs: Subcommittee on National Security and International Trade and Finance concluded a hearing to examine secondary sanctions against Chinese institutions, focusing on assessing their utility for constraining North Korea, after receiving testimony from Adam J. Szubin, Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, Washington, D.C.; and Juan C. Zarate, Financial Integrity Network, and Center on Sanctions and Illicit Finance, Alexandria, Virginia.

GROWTH POLICIES

Committee on the Budget: Committee concluded a hearing to examine growth policies for the new Administration, after receiving testimony from former Senator Phil Gramm.

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

Committee on Environment and Public Works: Committee concluded a hearing to examine state views on the need to modernize the Endangered Species Act, after receiving testimony from Nick Wiley, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Tallahassee, and Larry D. Voyles, Arizona Game and Fish Department, Phoenix, both on behalf of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies; and Janet Coit, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, Providence.

EXTERNAL INFLUENCES IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

Committee on Foreign Relations: Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Transnational Crime, Civilian Security, Democracy, Human Rights, and Global Women’s Issues concluded a hearing to examine emerging external influences in the Western Hemisphere, after receiving testimony from Emanuele Ottolenghi, Foundation for Defense of Democracies, and Eric Farnsworth, Council of the Americas, both of Washington, D.C.

CYBER THREATS

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs: Committee concluded a hearing to examine cyber threats facing America, focusing on an overview of the cybersecurity threat landscape, after receiving testimony from Jeff Greene, Symantec Corporation, and Steven R. Chabinsky, White and Case LLP, both of Washington, D.C.; Brandon Valeriano, Marine Corps University, Alexandria, Virginia; and Kevin Keeney, Monsanto Company, Linn, Missouri.

NOMINATIONS

Committee on the Judiciary: Committee concluded a hearing to examine the nominations of Steven Andrew Engel, of the District of Columbia, who was introduced by Senator Graham, and Makan Delrahim, of California, who was introduced by Senator Hatch, both to be an Assistant Attorney General, and Noel J. Francisco, of the District of Columbia, to be Solicitor General of the United States, who was introduced by Senator Cruz, all of the Department of Justice, after the nominees testified and answered questions in their own behalf.
House of Representatives

Chamber Action

The House was not in session today. The House is scheduled to meet in a Pro Forma session at 2 p.m. on Thursday, May 11, 2017.

Committee Meetings

No hearings were held.

Joint Meetings

No joint committee meetings were held.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR THURSDAY, MAY 11, 2017

(Committee meetings are open unless otherwise indicated)

Senate

Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry: to hold hearings to examine pesticide registration under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act, focusing on providing stakeholders with certainty through the Pesticide Registration Improvement Act, 9:30 a.m., SR–328A.

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies, to hold hearings to examine reducing burden and increasing access to healthcare, focusing on improving Department of Veterans Affairs community care, 10:30 a.m., SD–124.

Committee on Armed Services: to hold hearings to examine cyber policy, strategy, and organization, 9:30 a.m., SD–G50.

Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs: to hold hearings to examine the status of the housing finance system after nine years of conservatorship, 10 a.m., SD–538.

Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions: business meeting to consider S. 934, to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to revise and extend the user-fee programs for prescription drugs, medical devices, generic drugs, and biosimilar biological products, and S. 1028, to provide for the establishment and maintenance of a National Family Caregiving Strategy, 9:30 a.m., SD–106.

Committee on the Judiciary: business meeting to consider S. 139, to implement the use of Rapid DNA instruments to inform decisions about pretrial release or detention and their conditions, to solve and prevent violent crimes and other crimes, to exonerate the innocent, to prevent DNA analysis backlogs, S. 534, to prevent the sexual abuse of minors and amateur athletes by requiring the prompt reporting of sexual abuse to law enforcement authorities, S. 583, to amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to authorize COPS grantees to use grant funds to hire veterans as career law enforcement officers, and S. 867, to provide support for law enforcement agency efforts to protect the mental health and well-being of law enforcement officers, 10 a.m., SD–226.

Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship: to hold hearings to examine the nomination of Althea Coetzee, of Virginia, to be Deputy Administrator of the Small Business Administration, 10:30 a.m., SR–428A.

Select Committee on Intelligence: to hold hearings to examine worldwide threats, 10 a.m., SH–216.

Full Committee, to hold closed hearings to examine worldwide threats, 1:30 p.m., SH–219.

House

No hearings are scheduled.
Next Meeting of the SENATE
10 a.m., Thursday, May 11

Senate Chamber

Program for Thursday: Senate will continue consideration of the nomination of Robert Lighthizer, of Florida, to be United States Trade Representative, with the rank of Ambassador, and vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the nomination at approximately 11 a.m.

Next Meeting of the HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
2 p.m., Thursday, May 11

House Chamber

Program for Thursday: House will meet in a Pro Forma session at 2 p.m.