



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 115th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 163

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2017

No. 208

Senate

The Senate met at 11 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, in this season of gladness and cheer when many celebrate Your breakthrough at Bethlehem, we pause to thank You for Your mercy and grace. While we were sinners, You initiated the process of our redemption and restoration. Great is Your faithfulness.

Lord, make our lawmakers ambassadors of reconciliation for Your Kingdom, using them to demonstrate Your precepts and represent Your purposes. As they strive to bring the illumination of Your wisdom to a dark world, may people see their labors and glorify Your Holy Name. Because of our Senators' faithful service, may our Nation experience the unity of Your healing presence.

Lord, let there be peace on Earth, and let it begin with us.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

TAX REFORM BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, last night, the United States accomplished

something really remarkable. After years of work, dozens of hearings, and an open process, we passed a historic overhaul of the Nation's Tax Code. It will deliver real relief to families and small businesses all across our country. We passed tax reform to spur the American economy, to encourage job creation and grow economic opportunity, to bring jobs and investment home, and to put more money into the pockets of hard-working men and women whom we represent. We voted to repeal ObamaCare's individual mandate tax so that low- and middle-income families are not forced to purchase something they either don't want or can't afford. We voted to responsibly develop more of Alaska's oil and gas potential, strengthening our economy and our national security in the process.

I would like to commend my colleagues in the Senate for their work to pass these historic reforms and bring our Tax Code into the 21st century.

I want to extend special thanks to Senate Finance Committee Chairman ORRIN HATCH, a skilled legislator whose expertise was essential to shepherding this legislation through a challenging process while faced with complete and total obstruction.

I thank Chairman MIKE ENZI for his assistance and Chairman LISA MURKOWSKI and Senator DAN SULLIVAN, who worked tirelessly to bring the people of Alaska a victory on energy exploration for which they have been waiting for almost 40 years.

I am grateful to the other Senate conferees—Senators CORNYN, THUNE, PORTMAN, SCOTT, and TOOMEY—who worked day and night to get this legislation across the finish line.

And of course, in addition to Senator HATCH, his colleagues on the Senate Finance Committee deserve our gratitude as well: Senators BURR, CASSIDY, CRAPO, GRASSLEY, HELLER, ISAKSON, and ROBERTS. This could not have happened without all of them.

Of course, a great deal of credit goes to President Trump, Vice President PENCE, and their dedicated White House team. Their efforts were absolutely essential to this process, and we are proud to have worked together to deliver on a key part of the President's agenda.

It goes without saying that tax reform would have been impossible without Speaker RYAN, Chairman BRADY, and the Members of the House who share our commitment to make taxes lower, simpler, and fairer. I am proud to call them my colleagues.

When the final version of this historic law passes the House later today, it will await the President's signature. Then, families and small businesses—like so many in my home State of Kentucky—can begin to enjoy the benefits. Our constituents called out for relief from the Obama economy, and Congress delivered.

FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on a different matter, the Senate's work this week is not finished. Before Friday, Congress must agree on funding to sustain the necessary operations of the Federal Government. I know that all our colleagues on both sides of the aisle want to keep the government funded and attend to a number of other urgent priorities. I am confident we can work together to do just that. Americans are counting on us, after all.

To begin with, our men and women in uniform are counting on us to provide the resources they require to fulfill their missions and keep the country safe. The burden of the Budget Control Act has fallen disproportionately on our All-Volunteer military. Under that law, defense cuts have outpaced non-defense cuts by \$85 billion since fiscal 2013. At the same time, the previous administration insisted that new defense spending be matched equally by

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



Printed on recycled paper.

S8153

new nondefense spending, notwithstanding the actual needs of our military.

This week, let's dispense with the arbitrary standard—as we did earlier this year—and provide our warfighters with the funding they need to accomplish the tasks put before them.

Americans whose premiums are soaring or whose coverage is in jeopardy because of the failures of ObamaCare are counting on us to take bipartisan steps toward stabilizing health insurance markets.

The parents of 9 million children enrolled in the Children's Health Insurance Program are counting on us to renew the program's funding.

Our country's law enforcement professionals are counting on us to renew an important foreign intelligence program that helps them defend the homeland from those who wish us harm.

Veterans are counting on us to renew the popular Veterans Choice Program and preserve their flexibility to access care outside of the VA system.

Just as we have done in the past, we need to pass a routine pay-go waiver to avoid a draconian sequester that none of my colleagues want to see take effect. Americans are counting on us not to inflict harmful cuts on Medicare and other essential operations.

I look forward to working together in the coming days to fund our government in a manner that does right by the American people.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The majority leader.

RECOGNIZING THREATS TO FREEDOM OF THE PRESS AND EXPRESSION AROUND THE WORLD

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 277, S. Res. 150.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 150) recognizing threats to freedom of the press and expression around the world and reaffirming freedom of the press as a priority in efforts of the United States Government to promote democracy and good governance.

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered

made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 150) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in the RECORD of May 3, 2017, under "Submitted Resolutions.")

RECOGNIZING THE CREW OF THE "SAN ANTONIO ROSE", B-17F, WHO SACRIFICED THEIR LIVES DURING WORLD WAR II

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Armed Services be discharged from further consideration of S. Res. 326 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 326) recognizing the crew of the San Antonio Rose, B-17F, who sacrificed their lives during World War II, and honoring their memory during the week of the 75th anniversary of that tragic event.

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. I further ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 326) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in the RECORD of November 9, 2017, under "Submitted Resolutions.")

NATIONAL ERNIE PYLE DAY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Judiciary Committee be discharged from further consideration of and the Senate now proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 345.

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

The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 345) designating August 3, 2018, as "National Ernie Pyle Day."

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 345) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in the RECORD of November 30, 2017, under "Submitted Resolutions.")

RECOGNIZING THE SERVICE OF THE "LOS ANGELES"-CLASS ATTACK SUBMARINE THE USS "JACKSONVILLE" AND THE CREW OF THE USS "JACKSONVILLE"

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 362, submitted earlier today.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 362) recognizing the service of the Los Angeles-class attack submarine the USS Jacksonville and the crew of the USS Jacksonville, who served the United States with valor and bravery.

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 362) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

REPUBLICAN TAX BILL

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, last night the Senate passed an awful, partisan rewrite of the Tax Code. I said a good deal about the bill over the course of the debate and added my concluding thoughts into the RECORD before the final vote, but let me just reiterate one point. The Republican tax bill will cement the Republican Party as the party of the wealthy and the party of the big corporations against the middle class and the working people of this country.

Corporations get permanent tax breaks. The individual tax breaks expire. By 2027, according to the Joint Committee on Taxation, 83 percent of the middle class—that is almost 145

million American families—will either get a tax increase or a tax cut of less than \$100.

Meanwhile, according to the Tax Policy Center, the top 1 percent of earners in our country will reap 83 percent of the benefits of the tax plan.

Let's go over that again. The middle class, 83 percent, either get a tax increase or a tax break of less than \$100. The top 1 percent, the wealthiest, get 83 percent of the benefits. Middle-class America is asking something: Why does the top get far more than I do? Why do I get a tax increase when so many of them get a huge decrease? To boot, millions of middle-class Americans will now go without health insurance and millions more will see their premiums rise. At the same time, multinational corporations and wealthy hedge fund managers enjoy a massive tax break. To repeat, the legacy of this bill will be to cement the Republican Party as the party of the rich and powerful against the middle class.

We Democrats have been saying this for years, but our Republican colleagues with this tax bill have done us a major favor. Even their Republican supporters are realizing where the Senate Republicans and House Republicans are—on the side of the most wealthy, on the side of the big powerful corporations, not on the side of the middle class.

Whenever we have had a Republican President and Republican Congress, we get the same thing—a program of tax cuts for the rich, higher deficit and debt, and then threats to Social Security and Medicare. That is what happened under President Bush, and we are seeing the exact same playbook today. There is nothing about this bill that is suited to the needs of the American worker or the American economy. My Republican friends would propose it in a booming economy or recession, whether we have surpluses or deficits. No matter what, it seems to our Republican friends that tax cuts for the rich and big corporations are the answer to our problems. The benefits will trickle down like magic to the rest of us.

Trickle down is the entire philosophy of this tax bill—trickle down. When they say they are helping the middle class, when they say they are creating jobs, it is because the wealthy get money and, in their belief, will create jobs. It hasn't happened. It hasn't happened. Corporate America has more money than ever before. The stock market is higher than ever before, and job creation isn't.

That is where this bill is at. There is nothing about this bill that suits the needs of the American worker, as I said. Trickle down has been widely discredited as an economic theory. It has been discredited by recent history, and it will be discredited again.

Our Republican colleagues are clinging. They are saying: This bill is so unpopular, but don't worry, once the economy takes off, once people see

hundreds of dollars in their pockets, they will change their mind.

The economy is not going to take off. The wealthy will do better. There will be a lot of dividends. There will be a lot of stock buybacks, not too much job creation. AT&T is a big American company and a fine American company. Their tax rate over the last 10 years was a mere 8 percent, and they cut 80,000 jobs. That one statistic belies all this trickle-down bunk that our Republican colleagues still cling to even though it is outdated and disproved, and the American people will have their chance in 2018 to reject this philosophy and move our country in a dramatically different direction—back toward government that works to lift up the middle class rather than one that gives more to those who already have so much. From now until then, we Democrats will focus like a laser on making things better for working Americans and the middle class. The contrast, particularly this tax bill, which so benefits the wealthy and powerful, could not be more clear.

FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. SCHUMER. Now to the end of the year, Mr. President, as a result of the Republican efforts to jam the tax bill through before the end of the year, we now have precious little time left to keep the government open and to solve a legion of problems.

We still haven't reached a budget deal to lift the spending caps equally for both defense and urgent domestic priorities such as combatting the opioid crisis, improving veterans' healthcare, and building infrastructure.

We have not reached a deal to reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program, community health centers, or to extend the 702 FISA Court program.

Two major sticking points remain in the form of the disaster supplemental, which still does not treat Puerto Rico, California, and the U.S. Virgin Islands as well as Florida, Texas, and Louisiana.

Of course we have the Dreamers and a moral imperative to protect them. These are kids who were brought here very young through no fault of their own. Many of them know no other country but ours. They learn in our schools, work in our companies, serve in our military, and want to be Americans more than anything in the world. They are Americans in every single important way but one; they lack the paperwork. We have to solve that problem.

We have been negotiating with our Republican counterparts for weeks in search of a deal to pair DACA protections with reasonable border security. Democrats have always believed in border security, as the comprehensive immigration bill in the Senate showed. I hope now that the tax bill is behind them, my Republican colleagues are fi-

nally willing to reach an agreement, but because of the particular importance of all of these issues, especially Dreamers, we cannot do a short-term funding bill that picks and chooses what problems to solve and what not to solve. That will not be fair and will not pass. We have to do them all together instead of in a piecemeal fashion.

Whether that global deal comes before the week is out or a later date in January, it has to be a truly global deal. We can't leave any of the issues behind. Our Republican colleagues on tax and healthcare decided not to work with us. In this case they have to work with us, and working with us means that we sit down around the table and decide there are some things you want, some things we want, and let's compromise and get it done—not just picking and choosing what you want to get done and telling us to deal with it. That will not work this time.

I can assure my friend the majority leader that my caucus will be working in good faith with his caucus as long as they choose to work with us, and we will work with our colleagues in the House as well to reach a deal as soon as possible.

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.

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

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

REPUBLICAN TAX BILL

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, early this morning, the Senate voted on the tax bill. I voted against the measure, and as I have said many times, I don't think this is a bill that is going to work for my State or for America. The House now has one more opportunity. I don't think many people think they are going to change their vote, but I just hope, instead of celebrating what happens today, they are going to step back and look at what this really means.

I am in a group of people who have long called for tax reform. In fact, 2 weeks before this bill passed, we stood before the public and said we would like to work with the Republicans on a bill to bring the business rate down and to bring the money in from overseas but a bill that didn't add this kind of weight to the debt and a bill that actually was good for all Americans, not just some Americans.

We also could have done so much more. We are adding \$1.5 trillion to the debt. Yet we are doing nothing for infrastructure. We didn't change the carried interest loophole. We did nothing to fix so many things that even the President had identified as things that needed to be fixed in the Tax Code.

I have been concerned by this latest effort, which has not been bipartisan at

all. It has resulted in a bill that will, as I said, add to the debt, create huge, new loopholes, and will encourage companies to move money around and move jobs overseas to avoid taxes. It will have huge, unintended consequences on the economy. Why? We didn't even have a hearing over this bill, a bill that will affect every single American.

Over the next 10 years—and this is not disputed—this bill will add \$1.5 trillion to our national debt, and even the most generous estimate says it may add \$500 billion in economic gain. If that is true, this bill would still be adding \$1 trillion to the debt. By the way, it is not the wealthiest Americans who are going to have to worry about that debt; it is the kids of middle-class Americans, of people who go to work every single day. What do they go to work to do now? To have a big chunk of their money that is going to pay for the interest on this debt. Almost all economists agree that a deficit-financed tax cut at this point in the business cycle makes no sense at all. If anything, at this time of low unemployment and strong market performance, it gives us a rare opportunity to try to, one, do something about our debt and, two, while we are doing something about our debt, figure out what our priorities are for investment. I would say one of those top priorities is infrastructure, including broadband, including rural broadband. That wasn't in this bill. We accumulated \$1.5 trillion in debt.

Adding to the debt will, of course, put pressure on programs that everybody Americans rely on. This means Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. One of the most troubling developments in this bill was the inclusion of a provision to repeal a key part of the Affordable Care Act that would kick 13 million people off their insurance by 2027 and increase premiums by 10 percent in the individual market, and that means less money in the pockets of American middle-class families. The American people want us to move forward together to make fixes to the Affordable Care Act like the Murray-Alexander bill, but instead this bill moves us backward with a partisan approach that kicks people off their healthcare.

This bill, in the end, is really a bait and switch. Millions of middle-class Americans will end up paying more in taxes in the long run since many of the tax cuts they receive, if they receive a tax cut at all, would only be temporary. In 10 years, most Americans earning \$75,000 or less will pay more in taxes while people earning more than \$100,000 a year will continue to pay less. According to the analysis by the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, 644,000 people in my State with incomes below \$153,800 would see a tax hike in 2027. Meanwhile, a huge majority of the tax cuts in 2027 and after will benefit only the top 1 percent of Americans.

The bill creates a new and complicated system of taxing the income of companies, especially with regard to their international income. The practical effect of this systemic change is entirely untested. While the bill seeks to impose a minimum tax on overseas earnings, it allows companies to blend the tax rate for income overseas. This seemingly minor detail opens a big loophole that can give companies incentives to move jobs to foreign countries and may create a whole new tax avoidance scheme. While I heard celebration in this Chamber last night, I can tell you who are really celebrating—the tax accountants, the lawyers, as people are going to pay them millions and millions of dollars to look for new loopholes in a scheme that, again, didn't even get a hearing. I support bringing down the rate on foreign earnings held overseas and to make sure the money, though, is invested here and invested in infrastructure.

Bob Pozen, the former chairman of the oldest mutual fund company in the United States, has said the new system in this bill, which includes a new minimum U.S. “tax is like Swiss cheese. It has so many holes that it would rarely be paid by U.S. firms.” He goes on to say that, in fact, this proposal would encourage U.S. companies to “relocate to foreign countries more of their U.S. factories and U.S. intellectual property such as patents and trademarks. A minimum tax would be effective only if it applied to the foreign taxes paid by U.S. multinationals on a country by country basis, rather than on an aggregate basis across all foreign countries.”

Again, we haven't had one hearing to understand the impact of this bill.

This bill would allow a one-time opportunity to bring back some of the trillions of dollars of earnings overseas. Again, I have long supported this, but I would also like to see at least part of this money be used on infrastructure. That was our original plan. Our original plan was that we were going to create incentives to bring the money in from overseas—a bipartisan plan—and then put a chunk of it, if the money was voluntarily brought back, into infrastructure.

Why? Well, the American Society of Civil Engineers' 2017 report card gave our Nation's infrastructure an overall D-plus grade. There is an economic imperative to fixing our infrastructure. The future of our markets is exporting to the 90 percent of those who live outside of our shores. Yet this bill, with the accumulation of \$1.5 trillion in debt, doesn't put the money into the infrastructure that will allow us to have that kind of an export economy.

True comprehensive tax reform requires closing loopholes, yet this bill does almost nothing to close the worst loopholes in our current Tax Code. The carried interest loophole, which President Trump promised over and over again that he would close, is still there. The loopholes that benefit big oil are still there. The Buffet rule that

would make sure the wealthiest Americans pay the same tax as their employees is nowhere to be found. I have already mentioned the new opportunities for tax avoidance created by the new system of international taxation. That is just one of them.

This bill contains vast new loopholes for hedge fund managers, real estate investment companies, and anyone who can take a few minutes to reorganize as a passthrough business to take advantage of a lower rate, if they have the money to pay for a lawyer or pay for an accountant to do it. By taxing wage and salary income at a higher rate than so-called passthrough income, this bill creates opportunities for tax avoidance that are virtually unprecedented.

Given the speed with which this bill was rushed through, enterprising attorneys and accountants are going to find dozens of new loopholes in the coming years. If done right, we could have closed loopholes. We could have brought back money U.S. companies are holding overseas to fund infrastructure projects here at home.

We could have given local businesses the ability to compete against out-of-State internet retailers, support our rural communities, and provide incentives to keep jobs in America.

I have always wanted to bring the corporate tax rate down—I have so many successful businesses in my State—but not like this, not with adding \$1.5 trillion in debt that is going to be put on the people whom I represent in my State, who just go to work every day. They don't have holdings overseas. They don't have a hedge fund manager. They don't have people who are investing money in all kinds of ventures all over the world. They just go to work and get an hourly wage or maybe they get a salary, and they just get enough money so that they hope they can have a house and send their kids to college. This bill doesn't make it easier on them.

It does not simplify the Tax Code. If anything, it makes it more complicated. It does not close loopholes. It is a huge missed opportunity.

A few weeks ago, I joined 17 of my Democratic colleagues in calling on our Republican colleagues to join us in a bipartisan approach to tax reform. Unfortunately, the bill that we voted on early this morning—and the bill that the House still has an opportunity to look at once more—involved negotiations only on one side of the aisle. When that happens, bad things happen.

We can do better. I will continue to work across the aisle on bipartisan solutions. We have to make changes to this bill going forward. We know that, and the American people will depend on it.

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

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

CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM

Mr. CASEY. Madam President, I rise this afternoon to talk about the Children's Health Insurance Program and, particularly, the reauthorization of that program. By reauthorization I mean taking action to continue a program that is not just worthy but battle-tested now for almost a quarter of a century nationally, at least 20 years. In States like Pennsylvania, it is more than 20 years, more like 25.

The unfortunate reality, though, is this isn't done. This program should have been reauthorized at the end of September, and it is not done yet. It has gone from unacceptable to inexcusable. We should not leave this week without either having it reauthorized or having a game plan that would guarantee it will be reauthorized in the very early days of 2018, literally, the early days of January.

In just the last 2 weeks, I met with families across Pennsylvania and even families that came from beyond Pennsylvania here to Washington to talk about what the Children's Health Insurance Program means to them.

CHIP provides health insurance to some 9 million American children each year, including over 342,000 children in Pennsylvania, if you look at it over the course of the year. As you might recall, when the CHIP program expired on September 30, there were a lot of indications or promises made that it would be reauthorized rather soon, but that was 81 days ago. Whether you want to express it in days or months—81 days or 2½ months or more now—that is inexcusable. We have to get this done for these families.

I just saw a report this morning on "NBC News" that profiled a family. They were talking in this case to the mom and talking to her children, and it was a very moving story about the importance of the Children's Health Insurance Program and what would happen to that family if the program were not reauthorized.

This is a bipartisan program. It was bipartisan in its inception in the mid-1990s, and it has remained bipartisan. Now there is only one party that runs the House, the Senate, and the administration, and I hope that this one party—in this case, the Republican Party—can get the votes. You don't even have to talk about votes. It is really talking about floor time and really making sure there is an agreement on a pay-for.

The most recent action by the Finance Committee on CHIP was in the Keep Kids' Insurance Dependable and Secure Act, known by the acronym KIDS. The KIDS Act came through the Finance Committee by a voice vote.

That almost never happens, even on reauthorization. There was a voice vote on October 4. It seems like a long time ago now. It is ready to go. If it came onto the Senate floor, we can pass it here. I have to ask: Why isn't that happening?

Maybe the better person to ask that question would be a family who is benefiting and who could be harmed if it is not reauthorized. I am thinking about Connie, a woman I met here in Washington just last week. Then, I saw her again on Monday in Pittsburgh at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh. That is one of those great institutions for children across our country. She was there with two of her children. Carmen and Diego are both on the CHIP program. CHIP provides good health insurance so that they can get the healthcare they need.

I had a picture with Connie's daughter Carmen here in Washington. She dutifully handed me a copy of the picture when I saw her just a few days later in Pittsburgh at Children's Hospital.

Both Carmen and Diego might lose their health insurance because there is a lot of activity here and focus and a result when it comes to a big tax bill. In this case, it is a tax bill that gives permanent corporate tax cuts to multinational, profitable corporations. At the same time, there is almost no action or any sense of momentum right now to get the Children's Health Insurance Program in place again, or reauthorized, as we call it.

We had an event here in Washington yesterday where not only were there child advocates but so many others coming together to talk about this program. Maybe the most important thing we did yesterday, in addition to the mechanics, was to talk about the children in the room. Here are the children and the States they came from. I will just read through them quickly: Jason and Kelsey from Utah; Deanna came from New York; Malachi came from Colorado; Addie and Cailin from Kentucky; Patience, Serenity, Tyler, and Harmonie, all from the State of Texas; Jeridan, Kendra, and Makayla from the State of Wisconsin; and, finally, another Michaela—spelled a different way—and Grace came from the State of West Virginia. They and their parents—these children and their parents—spoke about what CHIP means to their families. Several of the parents said CHIP means their children can get the prescription eyeglasses they need.

I have to ask: How is a child supposed to learn and succeed in school without eyeglasses? CHIP provides that.

So while these kids don't know if they are going to be able to get the glasses they need to be able to read and to learn, the Senate is busy passing a tax bill. It is OK to pass a tax bill, even if I didn't agree with it, but we should find the time in the remaining hours of this year to get CHIP done.

I saw a tweet just 2 days ago that said the following: "Congress must

renew funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program so the parents of the nine million children who are covered by CHIP can know their children's healthcare is secure."

The good news about that tweet is, it was a Member of Congress. The even better news is, it was a Senator. Better news even than that, the Senator happened to be the Senate majority leader, Senator MCCONNELL.

I ask Senator MCCONNELL, please allow floor time and please obtain the consensus you need in your own party to get this on to the floor and get it passed.

As I said, the KIDS Act, the Finance Committee bill, is ready to go. I ask for the majority leader's help because I know he cares about this program as well. We have to get this done.

Just a final note before I yield the floor. I wanted to note several other healthcare priorities that Congress must address.

Community health centers are facing a funding cliff that will hurt millions of people around the country, and over 800,000 in Pennsylvania whom they serve, and other priority community health centers. Medicare extenders—meaning tax provisions that are extended from one year to the next or from one year into the future—including support for rural hospitals and lifting the so-called therapy cap to ensure seniors and people with disabilities have access to physical and occupational therapy services have also expired, just like the CHIP program, or will expire at the end of this calendar year. Failing to address these extensions is also unacceptable and will harm our children, our seniors, and our communities.

So we have a lot of work to do in a short amount of time on all of these healthcare issues. I think we should start with voting on and reauthorizing the Children's Health Insurance Program for 9 million American children.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TAX REFORM BILL

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, last night—I guess, actually, early this morning—was a pretty historic time for us. Our final vote to approve the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act was a historic moment for America, and it was clearly a historic moment for my State of Alaska.

For the first time in 31 years, since President Reagan was in office, we passed tax reform that will make our Tax Code work better for American families and businesses.

After 37 long years—yesterday, I said it was 38. I stand corrected. It was 37 years. That is a long time that we have been working to advance the opportunity to open a small portion of the non-wilderness 1002 area in northeast Alaska, up in our North Slope, to responsible energy development.

Many in our State believed this would happen in the early 1980s after Congress specifically set aside the 1002 area for exploration—and it is something we have been fighting for ever since. It is a long time to be working on an issue. It has been decades and, in many instances, generations.

Through this bill, we voted to let Americans keep more of their hard-earned dollars. We voted to make our businesses more competitive on a global scale. We voted to strengthen our Nation's energy security. And we voted to create new jobs, new wealth, and new prosperity for a generation to come.

One thing we know for sure is that legislation like this doesn't happen by accident. It doesn't happen quickly or with the sleight of hand. It happens with a considerable amount of work. So I wish to take a few moments this afternoon to simply say thank you—thank you to those who have worked so hard and for so long to help us reach this point.

I want to start by personally acknowledging our majority leader, Senator MCCONNELL. He was the first one I went to back in early January to ask about how we might be able to proceed to include the opening of the 1002 area. We discussed avenues and opportunities. He told me he thought we could make it work, and he committed to me that we would work to do just that. He did, and I thank him for his considered effort and his belief in the cause.

I also need to thank and recognize our Budget Committee chairman, Senator ENZI. He was the second person I went to early this year. He agreed to provide an instruction in the reconciliation bill and allow us to run with this opportunity. He, too, recognized the significance of this as a policy initiative and how it dovetailed with what he was seeking to achieve through the Budget Committee.

The work of many within the Energy and Natural Resources Committee is significant, and I thank them for their efforts. An excellent group of Senators in that committee worked with me to craft our energy title and to report it out of the committee. We reported it on a bipartisan basis—not as strong as I would have liked, but we did receive support from our colleague Senator MANCHIN, from West Virginia. Again, it was a solid effort by the committee, and it was a good and important part of the process.

Along similar lines, I would like to thank all of the Members of this Chamber who supported our work here on the Senate floor—first, to protect the instruction and then to protect our good work to meet it.

For some, ANWR has been an issue which they have had an opportunity to weigh in and vote on for many years and thus was not a new matter in which education was needed. For others, it was important to be able to update them, to let them know that many of the issues they may have heard over the years were outdated, that the arguments were stale and needed to be refreshed, thus allowing them to understand what we are doing with new technology. Today, technology is helping us to facilitate development in a way that allows us to access more resources with less of a footprint, with less land, and with less intrusion on the surface, working to ensure that we are not only protecting the wildlife that is there, whether it be caribou or polar bears, but also ensuring that the people who live there in the 1002 region—the people of Kaktovik, the children who are going to school there, those who have called this place home for decades, if not centuries—will have an opportunity there not only for the potential for jobs, but for what the resources will bring to them.

I thank my colleagues for being open to the new reality of what we have been developing in Alaska's North Slope, as we have been seeking to provide resources the country needs, jobs my State and the country need, and truly to help us from an energy security and a national security perspective. So I thank the Members of the Senate.

I thank the members of the Finance Committee, led by Chairman HATCH, for their excellent work and for letting us ride shotgun when it came to tax reform. We knew we had to make it to the finish line together, and that is exactly where we are right now.

I thank the President and Secretary Zinke, among others in this administration, who have been working with us, fighting for Alaska, as we have moved forward.

Of course, this wasn't just a Members-led effort. We could not have done it without the men and the women who work for us and whom we work for in many ways but who were at the very core of the effort.

As usual, within the Energy Committee, certainly it is always a team effort. Everyone contributed in a rock-solid way. My team was very ably led by Brian Hughes, supported by Kellie Donnelly, Lucy Murfitt, Chuck Kleeschulte, Patrick McCormick, Annie Hoefler, Brienne Miller, Nicole Daigle, Michelle Lane, Lane Dickson, Isaac Edwards, Chester Carson, Ben Reinke, Suzanne Cunningham, Melissa Enriquez, Sean Solie, John Starkey, Tonya Parish, Robert Ivanuskas, Barbara Repeta, and Diana Nielsen. There were so many on the committee who came together in a host of different ways, some of them working the issue new; others, like Chuck Kleeschulte—27 years working here in the U.S. Senate and, prior to that, working for the

State of Alaska. If there is anyone who has a collective history and wisdom about the background of ANWR and the battles we have endured, it is Chuck Kleeschulte. I know that, as he is approaching retirement, he is looking forward to knowing that we have successfully moved this opportunity forward for Alaskans and for the Nation.

I also thank those in my personal office who helped not only with ANWR but with the tax provisions as well. My chief of staff, Mike Pawlowski, has done an extraordinary job for me. My assistant, Kristen Daimler-Nothdurft, has done amazing things. Karina Petersen, Garrett Boyle, Madeline Lefton, and Parker Haymans, among many others—you really recognize a team when you reflect on how so many have given in so many different ways.

It is not just within my own office or the Energy Committee; it is those who run the operations here. Specifically, I want to thank Leader MCCONNELL's staff—Sharon Soderstrom, Hazen Marshall, and Terry Van Doren—and especially the outstanding floor staff here, led by Laura Dove. I know many of them—certainly Laura and Sharon—have been around for their fair share of the ANWR debates and fights, and this is no new issue for them. I appreciate their help and their support a great deal.

From Budget, I thank Betsy McDonnell, Eric Ueland, Paul Vinovich, and Alison McGuire.

From Finance, I thank and congratulate Jay Khosla, who has done a terrific job, and Mark Prater. I had the added benefit of going to law school with Mark Prater, a brilliant guy then and even more brilliant now. I greatly appreciate all they did on the tax reform bill.

I also want to give a shout-out to Tara Shaw, who is now with Senator ENZI and who has been a good friend and a help to me.

Lastly and certainly not least, I thank all of the Alaskans who have contributed to this effort over the years. We had a group of about two dozen Alaskans who traveled all the way from Alaska's North Slope—some 5,000 miles—to be here last night for this vote. These are men and women who, for decades now, have fought to open up the 1002 area for the opportunities it presents to them and to their families. For them, to see this advance is as significant and as historic as most anything they have seen in a considerable period of time.

Oliver Leavitt is an elder. He is certainly a legend in my time. To have Oliver here last night was extraordinarily significant. Matthew Rexford and Fenton Rexford, who live in Kaktovik—there were four or five different individuals from the village of Kaktovik—again, those who actually reside in the 1002 area. Crawford Patkotak and his wife, Laura, were also with us and also Richard Glenn of Utqiagvik. They were here not only to

be a part of the culmination of this effort, but they are men and women who have been part of this battle for decades, truly decades. The number of trips they have made to Washington, DC, over the years, the doors they have knocked on, and the efforts they have contributed to are considerable.

When I start to name names, I think of Tara Sweeney and the folks who have been there year in and year out, those who have been supportive by traveling here and those who call and those who write.

It is gratifying, it is heartwarming, and it is a reality that one can never say thank you enough for the efforts that you have made over the years. To know that you spoke as Alaskans, your voices have been heard, and that Congress has finally listened is, indeed, gratifying.

Of course, we would not have reached this point without two particular Alaskans—the ones I am proud to serve with here in our delegation. DON YOUNG, the dean of the House and Congressman for all Alaska, has single-handedly kept this issue alive in the House for a generation. He reminds me that it has been 13 times now that he has passed it out of the House. To be able to recognize his extraordinary work is, indeed, a pleasure and an honor. And, of course, my friend, my very able partner in the Senate, Senator DAN SULLIVAN, was an incredible partner in this effort, and I thank him greatly for his work.

I also recognize that it is not just the delegation present who needs to be thanked. As I have said, this has been a decades-long battle. This has been a generational battle. We are standing in the footsteps of those who have preceded us, including my father, Frank Murkowski, who was chairman of the Energy Committee and at a point in time had advanced this, only to see it fail at the very end. And, of course, my dear friend, my mentor, one who helped give me such great guidance over the years was our former Senator, Ted Stevens.

Yesterday, you may have noticed I was wearing some unusual earrings. When my friend Ted, the former Senator Stevens, had a serious matter in front of him, he wanted the rest of his colleagues to know that, by gosh, he was serious that day, and this was an issue to be taken seriously, and he would don a Hulk tie. It was somewhat legendary around here. I am not one to wear ties, but after finding a nice pair of Hulk earrings, it seemed to me only appropriate to wear them on a day that would acknowledge the work of extraordinary Alaskans who went before me. I think, today, Uncle Ted is smiling and happy, and he is probably wearing his Hulk tie.

This is a big moment for Alaska. There is a spirit and an optimism that I am taking home right now that I think we haven't seen in years. I think it is worth noting that today is winter solstice. This is the shortest day of the

year—today and tomorrow. In Alaska, it is the darkest day of the year. I mentioned yesterday the effort we have seen from the Senate, which, hopefully, we will finalize shortly, is one that will bring a brightness and an energy to the people of Alaska. For that, I thank my colleagues. I thank the many Alaskans who have supported us in this epic battle, and I thank all those who have helped to make it possible.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

EDUCATION

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, unlike most of my colleagues, the time I spent here in the Senate represents the sum total of my experience in elected office. For most of my life I approached politics and public policy from a very different perspective. I tried to be an educated citizen who understood how the issues being debated here in Washington affected me, my family, my neighbors, and those in my State and my country. I tried to be an advocate for the values I believed in—honesty in public discourse, for sure, but also fairness, justice, and the idea that in America we are all in this together. I tried to be an activist, putting my voice and my energy behind candidates and causes that I cared for and about.

When I leave the Senate in a few weeks, I will continue trying to be an educated citizen, an advocate, and an activist. Over the last 8½ years, as I have had the privilege of serving the people of Minnesota, I also gained a new perspective on the issues we face and the way we here in Washington make decisions.

Before I go, I want to spend some time sharing some of what I have learned in a series of speeches focusing on the challenges I came to Washington to address—challenges that my colleagues will continue to wrestle with, challenges that will determine not just the political landscape we leave for the next generation of Senators but what kind of country we leave for the next generation of Americans.

Today I want to start by talking about education. Even at a time when our politics is more polarized and more poisonous than it has ever been, you would think that education is one place where Democrats and Republicans could come together to make progress. After all, while we do have significant differences on the details of education policy, nobody disagrees about the importance of getting it right. We all agree that education from pre-K through college and beyond is es-

sential to providing our economy with a skilled workforce that is ready to innovate and lead us into the future.

Ever since I have been here, employers in Minnesota have stressed to me that they need employees with critical thinking and problem solving skills, with team work and creativity—tools that we need our children to be developing long before they enter the workforce. I am pretty sure that my colleagues hear this from employers in their States too.

Of course, education isn't just about our economy. It is about the most basic responsibility we have as human beings. Many of us who have served in the Senate have children and grandchildren, and we would do anything to be able to promise to them that when they grow up, they will be able to follow their dreams and take a risk on themselves to achieve more than we ever could. Many of us remember just how hard our own parents worked to keep that promise to us. All of us, Democrat and Republican alike, want to be able to make that promise not just to our own children but to every child in America, no matter where they grow up or what their family life is like or what obstacles they may encounter along the way.

We all want a country where every child has the opportunity to fulfill his or her God-given potential. We all understand that whether we can provide every child with a great education is the most basic measure of whether we are keeping that promise. Fortunately, the HELP Committee, which I had the honor of serving on since I first arrived in the Senate, has been led by public servants who share those values and a common commitment to delivering on that promise. Under Chairman Harkin and now under Chairman ALEXANDER and Ranking Member MURRAY, the HELP Committee has often been able to be an example of how Democrats and Republicans can work together to make progress.

When I first got here, the debate was focused on No Child Left Behind, which Congress had passed and President Bush had signed into law in 2002. Democrats and Republicans worked together on that bill back then because they all believed that it was important that our schools be held accountable for the results they achieved on behalf of all students. But by 2009, it had become clear that No Child Left Behind simply wasn't getting the job done.

A couple of weeks after I got to the Senate, I held a roundtable with principals at a school that had been turned around in a poor neighborhood by a great principal in St. Paul. One of the other principals told me that he referred to the NCLB tests as autopsies. I knew exactly what he meant. The kids were taking the tests in late April. The results didn't come back until late June or later—too late to let the results inform teachers' instruction of each child.

In Minnesota, therefore, most school districts added computer adaptive tests

in addition to the required NCLB tests—computers so the teachers could get the results right away and adaptive so that if a kid was getting all the questions right, the questions would get harder and if the kid was getting all of the questions wrong, the questions would get easier. That way, instead of measuring whether or not a student was appropriately proficient at grade level in reading and math, educators could find out exactly what grade level each student was at in those subjects—adaptive. NCLB, on the other hand, didn't allow a State to test outside of grade level. Schools and teachers were judged on whether a sufficient percentage of kids met this arbitrary standard. This became known as measuring for proficiency, and it created what teachers in Minnesota described to me as "a race to the middle." It made them focus on kids just below or just above proficiency. So the ones just below would get above and the ones just above would stay above proficiency, and they would ignore the kid at the top because those kids at the top, no matter what you did, wouldn't go below proficiency. They would ignore the kids at the bottom because no matter what you did that year you couldn't get those kids to proficiency. So there was this race to the middle. Think about how perverse that is.

Think about a fifth grade teacher who takes a kid from a second grade level of reading to a fourth grade level of reading. Well, that kid didn't get to proficiency. So under No Child Left Behind, that teacher was a goat. But a teacher who helps a child grow by two grade levels in a single year is a hero. Teachers, principals, superintendents, school board members and parents all argued that it was time to stop measuring just for proficiency and to measure for growth or measure just growth, instead. This became quickly a central focus of the debate over how to reform No Child Left Behind, and it remains a pivotal debate when it comes to the future of our education system, which is why it was so shocking when President Trump picked a Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, who turned out to have no idea what the growth versus proficiency debate was even about.

It would be as if our children's future relied on the outcome of a football game and the President nominated a head coach who didn't know how many yards it took to get a first down. It was a deeply upsetting moment, not just because of what it revealed about Mrs. DeVos or the President who had picked her to be in charge of our Nation's education system but because these are the kinds of problems that we should be able to solve. There is nothing ideological about the debate. It is simply a matter of coming together and working in good faith to make things work better. A functioning democracy should be able to get stuff like this right, and sometimes we have.

For example, in the bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act we were able to

address some of the excessive testing that was burdening educators and students alike. Under the new law, schools would still have to test every year between third and eighth grade and once in high school, but each State would control the consequences of the test results and that would almost certainly mean fewer high stakes tests, less drilling, more time to teach and learn.

Meanwhile, the law included important priorities like strengthening STEM education, expanding student mental health services, increasing access to courses that help high school students earn college credit, and preparing and recruiting more and better principals to lead better schools. These are all things that I fought to include in that final law.

It also included a long overdue investment in early childhood education, but not enough—not enough. We know from study after study that a quality early childhood education returns between \$7 and \$16 for every dollar invested. That is because children who get a quality early childhood education are less likely to be referred to special ed and less likely to be held back a grade. They have better health outcomes. Girls are less likely to get pregnant in adolescence. They are more likely to graduate high school, go to college, and get a good job and pay taxes. And they are less likely to go to prison.

If we really want to address future deficits, we would be pouring money into training early childhood educators. Instead, in his budget in the Congress, the Trump administration proposed major cuts to early childhood education. We could easily put more money into these programs if we weren't giving enormous tax cuts to the wealthy and to powerful corporations.

We also need to make sure that as our kids get older, they can rely on quality afterschool programs. Last spring, I visited Roosevelt High School in Minneapolis. During my tour of the school's afterschool program, I saw students rehearsing for a production of the "Addams Family." I saw students getting critical academic support like tutoring and college prep. In fact, Roosevelt's successful afterschool programs contributed to their graduation rate going from less than 50 percent to over 70 percent in just 3 years. That is pretty incredible. That is why I fought to renew the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program in the reform of No Child Left Behind. It is a program that keeps schools open after school.

If we all agree that education should be a priority, we should be willing to put our money where our mouths are and fund these programs. I am proud that during the course of my time here, we have had a bipartisan commitment in doing just that. We made progress—not enough, but we made progress. Again, however, that progress was put at risk under this administration. That

afterschool program was zeroed out in its proposed budget. What is more, this administration seems to be outright hostile to the idea that we have responsibilities to provide children with a quality public education.

I am proud of the work we have done to support and improve our public schools, but the Department of Education is now led by a Secretary with a long history of actively undermining public education. Secretary DeVos and her family have spent millions and millions of dollars advocating for an ideology that would steal funds from public schools in order to fund private and religious education.

Now, let's take a moment to talk about what that means. Secretary DeVos ran a political action committee called All Children Matter, which spent millions in campaign contributions to promote the use of taxpayer dollars for school vouchers. The argument was that these vouchers would allow low-income students to leave the public school system and attend private schools of their family's choice. Secretary DeVos has been pushing to expand vouchers for years, even though research clearly shows that voucher programs don't work. In fact, the academic outcomes for students who use vouchers to attend private schools is abysmal.

A New York Times article from February of this year reported on three different studies of large State voucher programs in Indiana, Louisiana, and Ohio. Each study found that vouchers negatively impact results in both reading and math. In fact, in Louisiana's voucher program, public elementary school students who started at the 50th percentile in math and then used a voucher to transfer to a private school dropped to the 26th percentile in a single year. Harvard education professor Martin West said this negative effect was "as large as any I've seen in the literature," and he was talking about all literature, the entire history of American education research.

Secretary DeVos is a serious threat to our public school system and a threat to the quality of education in this country overall. I have pushed as hard as I can to protect our students from what this administration has been trying to do. I have sent the Secretary over a dozen letters this year on protecting students from harassment, helping defrauded students, and holding for-profit schools accountable. It is my hope that my colleagues will continue to be vigilant in overseeing the Department of Education and making sure our public education system is not dismantled.

Our public education system was designed to give all kids a real chance in life, but teachers and administrators often lack the resources they need to give the kids the opportunities they deserve. Every year, I push appropriators to increase funding for a number of critical education programs like early childhood, STEM, and professional development for teachers, and I hope my

colleagues will continue that fight to increase resources for these programs.

Improving our education system isn't just about funding and accountability. If we want to keep the promise of opportunity to every child, we have to recognize that some kids face obstacles others do not, and we have to do more to make sure they are not left behind. For example, particularly kids who grow up poor are far more likely to suffer what are called adverse childhood experiences, not just the stress of living in poverty itself but exposure to domestic violence, abuse or neglect, drug and alcohol abuse, the incarceration of a parent, the death of a sibling. All of those adverse childhood experiences affect brain chemistry and the ability to learn. If we want to improve education, we need to do a better job of helping these children overcome these traumas and a better job of addressing economic inequality so fewer have to deal with the trauma in the first place. This is another reason we need more high-quality, early childhood programs and more training for childcare providers so they can better support kids who have experienced trauma.

Here is another example, foster kids. It is not uncommon for foster children to have 10, 11, 12 sets of foster parents during their childhood. This wreaks havoc on their education. Sometimes foster kids fall through the cracks of our education system. If a child's new foster parents live in a different school district, the foster child is yanked out of school and sent to one in the new school district. Kayla VanDyke, who at the time was an incredibly impressive high school senior from Minnesota, testified before the HELP Committee that she had been in seven foster homes, and she did fall through the cracks. She missed fourth grade entirely. For foster kids, school is often the one constant in their life—maybe they have a teacher they really like or an extracurricular activity that means everything to them or maybe they have these things called friends. That is why I wrote a provision in the Every Student Succeeds Act to require school districts to work with child welfare agencies to make sure foster children who are changing homes are not forced to change schools. I would like to think that somewhere there is a foster child running cross-country or developing a passion for history because of a great teacher or doing homework with a good friend because of legislation I worked on, legislation that passed with a strong bipartisan majority.

Here is yet another example—kids in Indian Country. When I first came to the Senate, I asked for a seat on the Indian Affairs Committee. Serving on that committee, you are confronted with the tragic disparities from which Native people in our country suffer. One of them is the huge disparity in educational resources for Native kids compared to their peers. That inequity in education plays out in many ways,

but you can literally see it in the school buildings some Native kids are forced to learn in. Indian school buildings are often unsafe, harmful to the health of children and teachers, and ultimately a barrier to the education of the students.

So going back to early 2009, I had been fighting for funding to fix the Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig High School on Leech Lake Reservation in northern Minnesota. When I first visited the school, I saw exposed wiring, mold, roof leaks, rodents, uneven floors, poor lighting, and sewer problems. I learned the students had faced these horrendous conditions in their classrooms for years. It was deplorable and was a terrible place to learn, so I worked for the better part of a decade to rebuild that school. I sent my colleagues a series of powerful editorials about conditions at the school as written by the Minneapolis StarTribune. I raised this issue at what seems like countless Indian Affairs hearings. After a lot of work from the community, the Tribe, and the Obama administration, we were able to secure the funding to rebuild the Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig school.

I am thrilled so many bright, young students in Leech Lake will be able to feel safe and comfortable in a brandnew school, which will be opening this coming March, but this is one school, one reservation, and there are hundreds of schools like the Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig High School that are not suitable for learning, and we need to do so much more for our Native kids.

In Indian Country, we know that historical trauma has a huge impact on our children. We have seen the ripple effects of intergenerational trauma, and we know it can lead to other types of trauma experienced in childhood.

That is why, when we look at these adverse childhood experiences, particularly within the Native community, we can't dismiss their effects on kids' ability to learn. Kids in Indian Country are woefully underserved when it comes to housing and economic opportunity. A report by Wilder Research states that this can "threaten their educational success, health and mental health, and personal development." I am pleased Senator HEITKAMP of North Dakota has been focused on addressing this issue.

One more example: LGBT students deserve to learn in an environment free from discrimination, and they deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. Far too often, LGBT kids endure harassment and discrimination. More than 30 percent of LGBT kids report missing a day of school in the previous month because they felt unsafe. You can't learn when you dread going to school, and when that happens, those students are deprived of an equal education.

In America, we have passed laws that guard against harassment in our schools on the basis of race, national origin, sex, and disability, but LGBT students continue to face bullying and intimidation without recourse. I have a bill called the Student Non-Discrimi-

nation Act that would merely provide LGBT students the same legal remedies available to other kids under our Federal civil rights laws. It says, schools would have to listen when a parent says "my child isn't safe," and the school has to do something about it. It would ensure that LGBT kids have the same protections as every other child. I worked very hard to get this provision into the final law, and I was greatly disappointed it wasn't included, even though it got 52 votes on the Senate floor.

It is our responsibility, not just as Senators but as adults, to protect children and help them flourish, and I sincerely hope every one of my colleagues will take up this fight and work to get this across the finish line.

The last thing I want to mention on the subject of education is this. For a long time, we thought about learning as something that started when you went to kindergarten and continued until you got your high school diploma and either went off to college or went off to work. We now know education is a lifelong pursuit, but we also know we need to do more to make it possible for it to continue long after 12th grade.

College used to be an affordable and accessible step into the middle class for so many Americans. I always think of my wife Franni and her family. You see, when Franni was 17 months old, her dad, a decorated World War II veteran, died in a car accident, leaving her mom widowed with five kids. Neil, her brother, went into the Coast Guard and became an electrical engineer, but all four girls went to college, and they went on combinations of Pell grants and scholarships. You see, back then, a Pell grant covered about 80 percent of the cost of a public college education. Today, it is less than 35 percent.

So today kids have to work while they go to college. That is not new, but when I have done roundtables at colleges across Minnesota, many of them tell me they are working full time, in addition to going to school full time, which seems like it might make it harder to focus on your studies or to stay awake. That is why I have been working to bring down the cost of college, increase financial aid to students, and make textbooks cheaper. We need to help millions of Americans refinance their student loan debt at lower interest rates, and we need to help low- and middle-income students go to college debt-free. This is something we could easily be doing if we weren't giving giant tax cuts to the superwealthy and to powerful corporations.

It is important to remember, too, that young people don't necessarily need to start at a 4-year college to become successful in life or to build a secure middle-class lifestyle. In many career and technical programs, students complete their education after they have been employed in good jobs because they had the credentials to get those jobs—good jobs with benefits that promise a secure career. Some of

those benefits are often that company paying for the rest of your education—finishing, maybe, your associate's degree or your bachelor's degree or graduate school.

We need to overcome the assumption that career and technical schools are a ceiling to future success. They are a ladder to careers with good wages and benefits that can support a comfortable lifestyle.

There is a high demand for these workers now. That is because we have what is called a skills gap in this country. Every Senator has it in their State. It is one of the things I hear about frequently when I travel around Minnesota, especially when I talk to businesses. I hear about job positions employers can't fill because they can't find qualified workers or workers with the right skills. At the same time, I hear from students who are anxious to start a career but lack specific technical skills.

To remain competitive in today's global economy, we need a better trained workforce. That is why I introduced the Community College to Career Fund Act. The grants would help create public-private partnerships that support Learn and Earn on-the-job training programs. Employers would develop a workforce with the specific skills they need to grow their businesses, and everybody wins.

Here is how it works. You go to get a credential. That credential gets you a job. Then the employer will pay for you to continue your education as you continue to work and make a living. I have seen this time and again, and it works.

We also need to reauthorize the Perkins Career and Technical Education law, which includes support for public-private partnership training programs in K-12.

I think some of the things we need to do to make college more affordable and accessible and valuable for students are pretty clear. But let's be honest. The Trump administration—after nearly a year in office—has been going in a very different direction and has been working against the best interests of college students. One of the most unfortunate aspects of this is that predatory for-profit colleges have been able to get even more of a foothold in our higher education system since Secretary DeVos took over.

The good news when it comes to education is that America still has teachers and principals and school board members and superintendents who work hard every day to take responsibility for every student under their care and deliver on the promise of a great education. We still have parents and neighbors and coaches who look out for our children's well-being and who work to equip them with the skills they need to succeed in school and beyond.

As anyone who has spent any time in a school lately can tell you, our kids themselves still have some pretty impressive potential. What is more, we

still have people on both sides of the aisle in the Senate who care passionately about education and are willing to do the hard work of bipartisan legislating in order to improve our schools and keep that promise of opportunity for the next generation.

If the last 8½ years have taught me that progress on education is possible, even in a divided Washington, this past year has taught me that further progress isn't inevitable and that the progress we have already made may not be safe.

It will be up to my colleagues not to address just the policy challenges posed by an education system that faces a big transition and a budget that forces hard choices but also the political challenges of the moment. It is my hope and prayer that they will be up to the task. Our children's future depends on it.

Thank you.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

LIBYAN SLAVE TRADE

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Mr. President, I rise today to bring to this body's attention and to the attention of all Americans what can best be characterized as a modern-day slave trade. It is an outrage that is hard to fathom but that still exists today.

I was recently speaking to a group of pastors from my home State of Illinois who do wonderful work advocating on behalf of human rights and human dignity. One of them, Rev. Walter Johnson of the Greater Institutional Church in Chicago, shared his frustration that abuses and atrocities being inflicted upon migrants and refugees in Libya have received not nearly enough attention or outrage in the American public, government, or in the press. I couldn't agree more. That is why I have come to the Senate floor today to speak on this alarming human rights crisis.

Every American should be appalled by chilling images of modern-day slave auctions. Earlier this month in an investigative piece, CNN released video of an auction taking place. It was not an auction for a piece of art or another item one might bid on but an auction for human beings—human beings sold for the equivalent of \$400.

The reports were a wake-up call for the world about the gravity of this situation in North Africa as migrants fleeing danger and economic hardship face new horrors on their journey to seek a better future. The wars in the Middle East and instability in North Africa have upended huge swaths of the region, displacing thousands of vulnerable men, women, and children. Thou-

sands of people fleeing Africa and the Middle East make their way through Libya, hoping to cross the Mediterranean. Unfortunately, many of them face horrifying human rights abuses and danger along the way.

Because of Libya's limited capacity to govern, its restrictive policies against migrants, and its inability or refusal to accommodate the migrants, conditions are ripe for exploitation and abuse in their detention centers. Particularly horrifying have been reports from survivors about the exploitation at the hands of smugglers who are openly engaging in human slavery, preying on the most vulnerable, who have surrendered everything for a shot at the future. Migrants have been subjected to horrible human rights abuses in Libya over the past few years, including forced labor, torture, and sexual violence.

The administration must put this issue front and center when we engage with Libyan officials and demand accountability and progress. Sadly, it appears the administration missed such an opportunity to address this issue during Prime Minister Fayiz al-Saraj's visit to Washington earlier this month.

The United Nations-backed Government of National Accord in Tripoli, however, has taken an important step in acknowledging these abuses and is requesting international support. The European Union and African Union evacuation plan to repatriate the detained migrants that was agreed upon in the Ivory Coast is a move in the right direction.

In 2016, the United States provided emergency funding for the International Organization for Migration—the IOM—to help shut down migrant detentions centers in Libya. While the EU rightly picked up the majority of funding to repatriate migrants, the United States should once again consider another emergency infusion to the IOM to help accelerate the closure of these facilities in addition to the \$31 million in foreign operations funding for Libya that the administration requested this year.

Additionally, we have a former American Ambassador, William Lacy Swing, who is the Director General of the International Organization for Migration. He is on the frontlines of this fight and stands ready to work with Libyan authorities, the European Union, and African Union countries so that he can help address this crisis. The United States can play an important role in supporting Director General Swing and other international efforts to protect these migrants from exploitation and abuse.

Human rights are essential to the functioning and well-being of our global community, and that community is threatened when migrants fleeing persecution are forced into inhumane, exploitative conditions and slavery. Given this country's own dark history with slavery, we cannot afford to remain silent in the face of such suffering. We must stand together with

the help of the United Nations and other international partners to eradicate slavery and the conditions that precipitate it.

Thank you.
I yield back.

DACA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise today to speak to an issue that I have spoken to many times on the floor of the Senate. It is the issue of the DREAM Act, a measure which I introduced in the Senate 16 years ago.

Sixteen years ago I tried to find a way to give young people brought into the United States, who grew up here in this country but did not have legal status, a chance—just a chance—to earn their way to legal status, to earn their way to citizenship. We set a number of hurdles in their path. We made it clear that they had to complete their education. We made it clear that they had to pass a serious criminal background check. We gave a timetable when they would be able to reach legal status and not fear deportation.

That was 16 years ago, and it still is not the law of the land. Unfortunately, there are hundreds of thousands of young people who fit the description that I have just given.

When President Obama was in the White House, I wrote him a letter and said: Mr. President, can you do something to help them? And he did. He created something called DACA, or Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. It was an Executive order that said to these young people: If you fit that definition of the DREAM Act and if you will come forward and pay a filing fee of \$500 or more, if you will submit yourself to a criminal background check and give us all of your background information about you and your family, then, we will give you temporary, renewable status to stay in America, not be deported, and be allowed to work.

It was a big leap for many of these young people to do it because they had grown up in families where, in whispered conversations in the evening, their parents told them: Be careful. If you get arrested and they come to see this family, many of us will be forced to leave this country. Be careful.

These young people decided to trust the President of the United States, to trust the Government of the United States, and to run the risk of disclosing everything—giving the most sensitive, personal information about themselves and about their families. They trusted us, and they trusted this country to treat them fairly and justly.

So 780,000 have come forward. They submitted their filing fees. They paid for the expenses of the government. They did it knowing that even with this new status—this DACA status under President Obama's Executive order—they didn't qualify for one penny of Federal Government benefits,

and by working, they would be forced to pay taxes, which they were glad to do. Again, 780,000 came forward.

Then came the last election—the election of a President of the United States who had made immigration the centerpiece of his election message and who had really sewn doubt, and even fear, about allowing immigrants into our Nation of immigrants. It is not a new message in America. It is hardly a new message around the world. Being suspicious and fearful, even hateful, of immigrants has been a part of human experience from the beginning of time.

So what would happen to these DACA-protected 780,000 young people? President Trump announced, through his Attorney General, Jeff Sessions, on September 5 of this year, that DACA protection was ending. As of March 5 of next year, 2018, no one could sign up for DACA protection, and as the protection expired for each of them, there was no renewal for 780,000 young people.

The President then challenged Congress and said: Do something. If I believe, he said, that DACA is wrong, pass a law; take care of the problem. He said that on September 5. Here we are in December, just days away from the end of the year, and we have done nothing—nothing. And what has happened?

Across America, these young people, their families, and the people who believe in them have begged us to step up and do something. They have said: In the name of justice, in the name of fairness, in the name of morality, do something. And we have done nothing—nothing.

Many of them have decided in desperation to bring their message here to the Capitol. Right now, as I stand and speak on the floor of the Senate, there are thousands outside on the Mall, roaming through the corridors, trying to stop people who they believe might be Congressmen or Senators, to beg for the passage of the Dream Act, to beg for the reinstatement of the DACA protection. Some of them have made great sacrifices. I have gone out to talk to a lot of them. They have never been to Washington before. They have never been inside this Capitol Building. They don't know what it means to lobby. They can't afford a lawyer or a lobbyist. They are coming here to beg for their lives and to beg for their families. Some people are shunning them, refusing to talk to them. Others are gracious and warm and welcoming. They get on people's nerves because there are a lot of them and they want to talk to people about solving the problem. Some of them have sat in our offices—even my office—and I understand it. As awkward as it may be, I welcome them. I want them to know what America is about—a place where people in this country have the right to speak, to assemble, to petition their government. They believe this is their government. They look at that flag and they say: That is my flag too.

Legally, they are wrong. They are undocumented. Many have no country at all to which they can turn.

Who are they? Who are these 780,000 young people? I can tell you who 900 of them are. Nine hundred of these undocumented young people stood up and took an oath to a country that will not legally recognize them to serve in our military and risk their lives for each and every one of us. What greater proof can we ask about their commitment to this country? Nine hundred of them did this. If we fail to provide DACA or Dream Act protection to them, these 900 will be forced to leave the military of the United States of America. They will be turned away, despite the fact that they have volunteered their lives for this country.

Twenty thousand of them teach in our classrooms around America. I have met many of them. They are teaching in inner city schools through a program called Teach For America, which sends them to some of the poorest school districts in America. They are spending their lives, as undocumented in America, trying to help the least of those of the population, those in desperate need of their assistance.

Among them are thousands who are going to school now and college. Let me tell you that their challenge in college is a heck of a lot harder than the challenge for most young people. They don't qualify for any Federal assistance to go to college—no Pell grants, no Federal loans. They have to go to work. They have to work and earn the money to pay for tuition. That is what their lives are all about.

So for those who would dismiss these as lazy people who really can't offer much to the future of America, take a minute to get to know them.

Yesterday, one of my Republican colleagues looked me in the eye and said: We are talking about amnesty; these are people who violated the law. You are talking about forgiving them for violating the law.

Some of them, by his definition, violated the law when they were carried in their mothers' arms to the United States at the age of 2. Does that sound right? Does that sound just? Does it sound fair to say that these are people who have broken the law in America? I don't think so.

Let me say a word about their parents. There are some people who say: OK, I don't hate the Dreamers, but I get to hate their parents, right? They did break the law.

Technically, they probably did. I will not argue the point, but I will tell you something. As a father, I would risk breaking the law for the life, future, and safety of my children. I would, and most people would, and they did. It wasn't for any selfish motive. It was so that their kids had a chance. That is what it was all about, and that is why they came to this country. They knew that at any minute it could fall apart and they would be asked to leave, or worse. They risked it for their children. So I am not going to stand in

moral judgment of these parents of Dreamers. As to legal judgment, the case is clear. But as to a moral judgment, no, I just will not do it.

What I have done 101 or 102 times is to come to this floor and just tell a story—a story about a Dreamer—so that people know who they are. Today I would like to tell you the story of this young lady whose name is Karen Reyes. Karen Reyes is the 104th Dreamer whom I have introduced on the floor of the Senate, brought to the United States from Mexico. She grew up in San Antonio. She had a childhood like other American kids—Girl Scouts, summer camps, church groups, volleyball. Karen didn't even know she was undocumented until she was in junior high school.

She was a good student. She graduated with honors from high school. She was a member of the marching band. Here is what she said about growing up in America:

I might be an undocumented American, but I am an American. I came to this country when I was 2 years old. The only recollection that I have of Mexico is when I visited as a young child. I have not gone back in 20 years. I grew up here. I formed a life here. I made friends here. I received my education here.

After high school, Karen went to San Antonio College and then transferred to the University of Texas San Antonio. She made the President's Honors List and the Dean's List.

She found time to volunteer at the University Health System and at the San Antonio Youth Literacy project. She tutored second grade students in reading, and she worked with communities and schools where she mentored and tutored elementary students.

In 2012, Karen graduated with a bachelor of arts in interdisciplinary studies. She went on to the Deaf Education and Hearing Science Program at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio.

In 2014, Karen graduated with a master's degree in deaf education and hearing science.

Today, she is working as a special education teacher in Austin, TX. Here is a picture of her with the kids. She teaches 3- and 4-year-old kids who are deaf or hard of hearing. She teaches kids with disabilities. Here is what she said about DACA, the program that was abolished by President Trump, which allows her to live in the United States and to work as a teacher:

DACA made me visible. DACA made it possible for me to teach children who are deaf and hard of hearing. I am helping these students and families on their journey to being able to communicate and achieve their dreams. Before I didn't think I had a voice, but now I do. . . . I get to change lives every single day.

Twenty thousand other DACA students and recipients like Karen are teachers in our schools. Because DACA was repealed, Texas stands to lose 2,000 teachers. I ask the State of Texas: Are you ready to lose Karen? Are you ready to lose 2,000 more just like her because

the Senate and the House of Representatives refused to act, refused to legislate, refused to provide protection to her?

As for Karen, her DACA expires in August of next year. This will be her last school year. If Congress doesn't step up and meet its responsibility and pass the Dream Act, her time teaching these deaf and hard of hearing children will come to an end.

In a few days we are going to go home and celebrate Christmas with our families. It is a big, important time of year. My wife and I are looking forward to it. We get to see all of the grandkids in one place. It is going to be pure bedlam, but we are going to love every second of it. Christmas means that much to our families. Being together means so much to our families.

Think for a moment about those who are protected with DACA. This may be their last Christmas in the United States. They don't know where they will be next Christmas because the President abolished the protection program and because Congress refuses to act. They don't know where they will be and they don't know whether they will be with family or not. That is the reality.

What a reflection on our Nation that we have reached this point to punish someone like Karen, a giving, caring, educated professional person who is spending time helping little boys and girls who desperately need her help.

Some in this Chamber—and I have seen them face to face—are ready to tell her to leave: We don't need you anymore, Karen. Go back to wherever you came from. Just get out of here. That is their attitude. It is not mine nor the majority of Americans.

Over three out of four Americans believe Karen deserves a chance. Over three out of four Americans believe she should be allowed to stay and earn her way to legal status and citizenship. Incidentally, 60 percent of those who voted for Donald Trump happen to believe that same thing.

But there are voices of division and fear and hatred in this administration. I have seen them. I have heard them. I know what they have to say. The question is, will they prevail? Will they define this President in terms of his treatment of people who are just asking for a chance to be part of America's future? The answer to that question is really not in the President's hands. It is in our hands. We owe it to these young people to do the right thing.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I first thank our distinguished leader from Illinois, not only for his eloquence and passion but his unfettered commitment to the young people who were brought here as children, who maybe had never set foot in the country their parents came from and may not know the language. They are here, and a promise was made to them in our country.

I spoke yesterday on the floor about two young people from Michigan. We have 10,000 young people in Michigan—some serving in the military, some in jobs, some in school—who don't know any other country. They love our country, and they just want our country to keep its promise to them. That is what I view it as, keeping our promises. So I thank the Senator.

VETERANS DESERVE BETTER ACT

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I want to speak about keeping promises to a very important group of Americans as well; that is, our men and women who are serving us as veterans and serving us in the military.

Representing Michigan in the U.S. Senate is a great honor. I know it is for all of us. One of the best parts of the job is being able to work on behalf of Michigan's veterans.

From the Civil War to the World Wars, to the Korean war, to Vietnam, the Cold War, the Gulf war, and our fight against terrorism, Michigan's veterans have given us their all. Our veterans have always been the first in line to defend our democracy. That is why they should never be at the back of any line—for a job, healthcare, housing, or a world-class education.

Unfortunately, there are times when our veterans aren't getting the benefits they deserve, have earned, and have been promised. When that happens, it is our duty to fight for those who fought for us. That is why, in 2014, Congress passed something called the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act, called the Veterans Choice Program.

This legislation aimed to reduce wait times and provide medical services to veterans in their communities after we heard of very serious issues and horrible situations that had occurred for veterans in some parts of our country.

The Veterans Choice Act was created to meet a real need—getting our veterans prompt healthcare in locations that are convenient for them. This program is especially critical for veterans in rural communities throughout Michigan as well as throughout the country—people in rural areas who were previously required to travel long distances, hours and hours, for services.

However, since it was enacted, providers across my State and in many parts of the country have not been getting paid, rural hospitals have pulled out, and this program in Michigan has not been working.

Worst of all, too many Michigan veterans and veterans across the country are struggling to get the appointments and the healthcare they need. That is why, last week, I introduced a bill I am calling the Veterans Deserve Better Act.

This bill will help our veterans in three ways to be able to correct what is occurring right now in Michigan with a private contractor—a private provider

who has not been doing the job. I have talked to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs who understands the problem and agrees this has to be fixed.

My bill will improve the scheduling process for veterans seeking healthcare. They shouldn't have to wait weeks or months to be able to get an appointment with a doctor.

Our military operates under the simple creed, "Leave no person behind," but far too many of our veterans in need of healthcare are languishing in a system that simply isn't accountable to them. Through this private contracting process, that certainly has been the case.

My bill would require the VA, and any outside contractors who are setting up healthcare appointments through the Veterans Choice Program, to provide veterans with more and better information, and if veterans are still struggling to get appointments, they will be told exactly how to file a complaint so it can get fixed.

Second, my legislation will hold third-party contractors accountable. We have excellent service through our VA medical facilities, but this new system—which is supposed to make it better, quicker, and faster—has not been working, and third-party contractors, at least in Michigan, have not been held accountable.

The VA will track all appointments made through outside contractors who must schedule appointments within 5 days. Any appointments not scheduled within 5 days will be sent to the VA for followup.

Within 30 days of this legislation being signed, third-party contractors will be required to submit a list of the veterans who have been waiting for more than 15 days for their appointments. I know of many waiting much longer. We don't leave soldiers on the battlefield. We shouldn't leave veterans to fight alone to get their healthcare needs met.

Third, this legislation ensures that Veterans Choice Program providers receive prompt payment or denial of payment. If payment is denied, the healthcare provider will need to be told why and what information they need to submit in order to get the claim processed.

The VA will also be required to submit a report to Congress on the number of unpaid claims to Veterans Choice Program providers and to take action on those claims within 45 days.

What do I mean by providers? I am talking about our hospitals in northern Michigan, in the Upper Peninsula, in the northwest side of the State, and the northeast side of the State signed up under this program to be able to provide the care for someone who is more than 40 miles away from a VA medical center; then, they find they are not getting paid for their services to the tune of millions and millions of dollars.

Veterans who have served their country and the medical providers who

treat them deserve nothing less than getting this system right. Appointments should be made quickly, payments should be made for service, and there has to be continual accountability. Unfortunately, we know they aren't always getting what they need.

One of those veterans is Jerry, a former National Guardsman who was stationed in Greenville, MI, on the west side of the State. He now lives in Sumner Township in Gratiot County.

Last January, Jerry received a scary diagnosis. He had a lesion on his brain. He needed to see a specialist right away. Veterans Choice was supposed to make an appointment for Jerry to see an endocrinologist, but when he showed up for the appointment, unbelievably, he discovered he was mistakenly sent to a urologist. After that, Veterans Choice sent Jerry to a family practitioner who had no record that he even had an appointment. It was 2 days off of work and travel to visit doctors that Jerry should have never been sent to in the first place.

By this time, Jerry was understandably very upset. He reached out to my office, and I am glad he did, so we could help. We were able to contact Veterans Choice on his behalf and get him the appointment he needed with the right specialist. Now, this is after his spending 5 months—5 months—trying to get to the right doctor. There is no excuse for this.

However, Jerry's issues weren't over. When he saw the same specialist a second time, Jerry learned the doctor had never been reimbursed for his previous visit. As Jerry said, "It shouldn't take five months to see a specialist, especially with something this scary and serious. And I shouldn't have to worry about whether or not Veterans Choice will pay for my care that I have earned."

Yes, Jerry, you have earned and been promised that care.

Jerry is exactly right. Unfortunately, he is not alone in Michigan—I know this from talking to colleagues in other areas—particularly with this same provider. I have heard from many other Michigan veterans who can't get appointments, are getting the wrong appointments, are having to travel long distances to appointments—which, this was supposed to stop veterans from having to drive long distances for appointments—or whose healthcare providers aren't being paid for their services and then deciding they don't want to participate in the Veterans Choice Program.

My colleagues on the Veterans' Affairs Committee are working on comprehensive reforms to the Veterans Choice Program, and we are staring down another funding deadline. It is important this gets done, and we need to do it right away. We need to fix the problems veterans are having to deal with on a daily basis. I am looking forward to working with colleagues to fix this as quickly as possible. Our veterans deserve better. It is time we pass

this legislation and make sure they get it.

I would like to end with the words of a man who knew something about service and sacrifice on behalf of our country.

Before he was President, before he was a member of this very Chamber, John F. Kennedy was a veteran who served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. On August 2, 1943, the PT boat he commanded was struck by a Japanese destroyer in the South Pacific. The entire crew ended up in the water, and two of his men died. Although Lieutenant Kennedy badly injured his back in the collision, he helped his men find safety on an island several miles away, where they were rescued a week later. Kennedy later was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal for his leadership. He once said: "As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them."

I believe that is our responsibility. It is not enough to praise our veterans on special days, although they have certainly earned every word of praise. Instead, we must work together to uphold each and every promise we have made to them.

Veterans like Jerry and so many others have always been first in line to defend us. It is time to make sure they are not at the back of the line when it comes to getting the healthcare they need.

CHIP AND COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, on a different subject, talking about keeping promises; that is, other people who are counting on us to be able to act in order to get their healthcare.

We have had 81 days since the funding ended for the Children's Health Insurance Program and community health centers. Each State is a little different because of the various combinations of funding and so on, which meant not everyone lost care immediately right after. There are three States this month, others in the first of the year, and so on.

I literally received just a few moments ago a notice from our State saying it is very likely that if we don't act, in January, families in Michigan are going to get a notice that what we call MICHild, which provides healthcare for 100,000 children in Michigan of working families who don't qualify for help through Medicaid or other assistance—they are working and maybe at work they are getting healthcare, but it doesn't cover their children, or maybe they are not getting healthcare, and they want to at least be able to cover their children, that is what MICHild is all about.

It has been 81 days since the deadline of September 30, which stopped the Federal funding from going forward. This affects 9 million children nationwide and 100,000 children in Michigan.

In addition to that, community health centers across the country serve 25 million patients every year; 300,000 of them are veterans, and 7.5 million of them are children.

I had the opportunity last Friday to visit two wonderful facilities—one in Flint, which is in Genesee County, and one in western Wayne County—and see the great work they do and talk to some of the people who were there to get care. People are counting on community health centers and they are counting on the Children's Health Insurance Program in order to make sure they have the care they need for themselves and their families.

It is important that we act. We could act right now. This is bipartisan. We passed a bipartisan bill out of the Finance Committee in September, before the deadline. I want to thank the chairman, Senator HATCH, and the ranking member, Senator WYDEN. I was pleased to join with them. We passed it out of committee with only one "no" vote. We have bipartisan support to get this done. Senator BLUNT and I offered a bill that is bipartisan and has had the support of 70 Members of this body in signing a letter saying to continue funding for community health centers.

Our plan all along was to pass the children's health insurance bill out of committee in September and add health centers and then pass it before the deadline so that it would take away the anxiety, worry, and fear that families now have about what is going to happen.

Every day that goes by, people are worried about what is going to happen. Are they going to be able to take their child to the doctor, be able to get their asthma treatments, handle their juvenile diabetes, cancer treatments, or the normal things that happen to kids every day?

I am not sure if there will be any votes today. We could, today, pass the Children's Health Insurance Program and community health centers and let families across America know they are going to be able to have the medical care they need for themselves and their children coming into the new year.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

DACA

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I rise to speak about an urgent crisis that Congress must solve now for nearly 800,000 Dreamers in this country. I am proud to represent New York State in the U.S. Senate. One of the things I am most proud of is that my State is home to tens of thousands of Dream-

ers—tens of thousands of young people who have never known any other country as home but this one.

When President Trump announced that he wanted to end the DACA Program, it was one of the most inhumane actions of his entire Presidency. Let me be clear about what ending DACA will do. Ending DACA will force thousands of Dreamers to lose their jobs. It will force them to go into hiding. It will force them to have to make the unimaginable choice between staying here undocumented or being forced out of the United States.

I ask my colleagues, are you really OK with letting that happen when you personally have the power to prevent it from happening right now? Attacking Dreamers like this goes against our most basic values as Americans, our most basic sense of right versus wrong.

I know this Chamber is divided about how to fix our broken immigration system, but just for a second, forget about ideology and think about what it actually means for these young people who have spent their entire lives here. They are waiting and wondering if Congress actually has the guts to stand up to President Trump and do what is right.

If the President will not lead, then Congress must lead, and we need to lead now. We have to protect our Dreamers, and we need to pass the Dream Act.

Most of all, we should never allow our Dreamers to be used as political pawns. We should simply do what both parties have said is the right thing to do, which is to pass the Dream Act. This is a matter of basic human rights and human dignity. It is about people's lives, and I am not going to compromise on that.

Mr. President, are you willing to compromise on that?

We need to fix this problem, and we don't have a lot of time to do it. Every week that Congress refuses to take action, more Dreamers lose their DACA status. Very soon, we are going to have to pass a long-term spending bill just to keep the government running, but the Republican leadership has not yet committed to including a provision in the bill to protect our Dreamers.

I want to say this very clearly: If my Republican colleagues refuse to do the right thing and protect our Dreamers in the upcoming long-term spending bill, I will vote no. I will ask my colleagues to join me in this fight. I will ask all of them to see that this issue is not a political question. It is a basic question of whether or not we are a country that protects children.

I am never going to compromise when it comes to our Dreamers, not when their lives are literally hanging in the balance. Time is desperately running out. I urge my colleagues to do what is right. We must protect the Dreamers.

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

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

TAX REFORM BILL

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, it is a historic day for our country, for the Senate, and for the Congress.

As we speak, the President of the United States is about to sign the bill that we passed on the floor of the Senate last night, which was the agreement on the conference report—the largest tax reform in the history of our country or, certainly, the largest since 1986. It is historic in many other ways because we are fighting wars overseas, we are dealing with terrorism, and we are looking at the economic climate for the future and trying to inspire our country to be better and be everything that it can be. We are talking about all of those types of things, and we are getting ready for Christmas.

TRIBUTE TO JIM MCCOOL

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, we are busy about lots of things, but there is one thing that you should never be too busy to do, and that is to pause and stop and say thank you—thank you to someone or some entity or some institution that has made a difference in your life or in the life of your country.

I don't often come down here on points of personal privilege. I do it, but I don't often do it. When I do do it, it is special for me, and I hope it is special for the people I am talking about.

A good friend of mine is retiring from the Southern Company in the next few months. His name is Jim McCool.

Now, most of you probably don't know Jim McCool. Jim is one of those people who some people refer to as a lobbyist and others refer to as a professional advocate. I refer to him as my good friend. I met him in the 1980s. He had started his own formal wear business. He then sold that business and went to work for Mississippi Power. It was later one of the Southern Company's companies. He then worked as a liaison to Washington for the Southern Company, for Georgia Power, for Mississippi Power, and for Alabama Power.

I got to know Jim in lots of ways. First of all, it was when I was in the Georgia State Senate and the Georgia State House. On the industry committee, we worked on issues that dealt with electric utilities. I didn't know anything about those, as I was a real estate broker. My knowledge of electricity was that when I threw that switch, I wanted it to come on. Once it got beyond that, I didn't have knowledge of it.

Jim was one of those people who didn't just come and say: This is my company's position. We want you to do it. He asked: What is it about my company's position that I can help explain

for you to make a decision? He never, ever asked me to do anything for him or anyone. He always offered to give me the information that I needed to make the decision myself. That is not a rarity in that profession, but it is certainly something that the average person doesn't think of when you hear of a lobbyist or a professional advocate.

Jim McCool is, has been, and, for me, always will be very special. He takes his job seriously, his company seriously, and his country seriously. Jim and his wife, Kathy, raised three great sons. They are proud of their dad, and he is proud of them. I have seen him in enough situations with his family to know that his family comes first for Jim McCool. Golf, unlike what most people think, is not first. It is only second. The Southern Company is third. I have played a lot of golf with Jim McCool, and that is why I put that in there.

Over the years, I have worked with Jim on many, many projects. Right now, we are working on a nuclear production tax credit, in addition to the tax extenders bill, which, hopefully, will pass the Congress within the next 2 weeks, after January 1, to continue the construction and the completion of units 3 and 4 at Plant Vogtle in Georgia. For me, ironically, this was such a special moment because I had worked on Vogtle units 1 and 2 when they were built in the early 1980s and when Jim was an advocate, at that time, for Mississippi Power. He later joined the Southern Company team.

Jim and I have watched Plant Vogtle go from a dream and an aspiration for the Southern Company to a reality in terms of units 1 and 2. If we get our work done here soon, units 3 and 4 will be online. For a long time after Jim McCool is gone and I am gone and all of you are gone, Georgia will have reliable, safe energy from a renewable source called nuclear, and we will continue to be a pioneer and a leader in the southern United States.

When I heard that Jim was retiring, obviously, I knew it was a special moment for him and his family. I wish him all the best, and I know that he is going to do great. I started thinking back over all of those times that we had worked on all of those issues that had such an impact on his job and his employer and, for me, on my State and his State. Jim never wavered in his commitment to doing the best job he could possibly do in always representing the best interests of his company while never losing the best interests of those who were served by his company—the customers.

On this day today, when the President of the United States signs major, sweeping tax reform and as we approach Christmas—a special holiday for all families—I rise on the floor of the Senate to take note of Jim McCool from the State of Mississippi, employee of the Southern Company, professional advocate, father of three, and husband

to a great lady. Jim McCool has gone the long way down the long road, and he has done it with style, with class, and he has delivered every single time.

Washington doesn't have a better advocate working in this town than Jim McCool. We are going to miss him, but I am going to get to play a lot more golf with him in the years ahead because he is going to have more free time than he has right now. So I wish Jim and his family the best. I thank him for all he has done for us as Georgians.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TAX REFORM BILL

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I rise today to note this Congress's historic achievement in reforming the Nation's tax system for the first time in 30 years. I congratulate the hard-working teams, the staffers, and others from the Budget, Finance, and Energy Committees and their colleagues in the House for the work they have done.

It is not easy to modernize a Tax Code that has languished for over 30 years. Many groups have worked for a long time to solidify their special benefits, and they don't want to see those perks or special benefits go away. Many others just don't know how to work things under the status quo and think that must be the only way to do things, is to find a new status quo that represents the old status quo.

Reforming the Tax Code is not easy, but it is important. It is important to America's economy. It is important to America's working families. It is important to Colorado. It is important for a lot of reasons. For instance, right now, we waste 6 billion hours and \$263 billion just to file our taxes every year. After this reform, 92 percent of taxpayers will take the standard deduction. That simplifies the code, cuts those hours, and eliminates wasted dollars.

Perhaps most importantly, it will shake our economy out of its slow-walking recovery. While there are booming areas in our country—and undoubtedly Colorado's Front Range represents some of the best examples of booming areas in our Nation—there are many areas of the country that haven't seen the growth and have, quite frankly, been left behind. They haven't seen their wages go up for a long time. In fact, yesterday the Denver Post published two stories about wages. Those stories point out that median wages in Colorado in 2016 were still below the levels of 2007 and even 2000. While I appreciate these reports, the fact is, we

knew it wasn't anything unheard of. It certainly isn't new to those Coloradans who live outside of the Front Range and who they haven't seen their wages grow. It is a reality they have been dealing with for far too long.

Over the years, wages have become detached from corporate profits, and this chart is a good example of what has occurred. Prior to 1990, a 1 percent increase in corporate profits led to a greater than 1 percent increase in worker wages. But from 2008 to 2016, a 1 percent increase in corporate profits led to only a 0.3 percent increase in wages.

What you can see right here is the corporate rate over time. You can see that in 1990, 1986, the U.S. rate remained at 35 percent, what is today, for at least a little bit longer, the highest statutory tax rate in the world when it comes to business rates. You can see OECD nations have dramatically dropped theirs beginning in 1990 and going down through today. That is what has happened. Over that same period, our once-competitive corporate tax system has gotten more and more out of date. Our corporate rate today, as I said, is about the same as it was 30 years ago—35 percent. Meanwhile, foreign countries, such as Germany, France, Italy, and even Socialist Greece, have lowered their tax rates. Now America has the highest corporate tax rate in the industrialized world, and Europe has an average statutory rate of around 18.5 percent. So American businesses have shifted their work overseas. New factories were built in Poland, not Pueblo. New offices opened in Dublin, not Delta. With fewer opportunities, American wages stagnated.

The empirical data on this is clear. We have another chart to talk about this. High-tax countries see anemic wage growth—well under 1 percent a year—but low-tax countries see much stronger growth—between 1 and 4 percent.

You can see right here on the red line—this line represents the highest statutory corporate rates in the world, the 10 countries with the highest statutory corporate rates. They have less than 1 percent wage growth. You can see the lowest statutory corporate rates—the countries that represent the bottom 10 statutory rates in the world have wage growth at 4 percent a year. That is clear data—growth between 1 and 4 percent in low-tax countries.

Make no mistake, America is on the red line because we have an out-of-date corporate Tax Code—an out-of-date Tax Code that we have begun to address.

Lowering the corporate tax rate has historically had support on both sides of the aisle, including something President Obama said back in 2011 in his State of the Union Address at a joint session of Congress. But suddenly, over the last couple of months, that is not the case anymore, and sadly I suspect that opposition to tax cuts has more to do with partisan politics than the merits of the proposal.

Whatever the reason, instead of reaching out and working together, we have heard a parade of horrors: It will run up deficits. It only benefits the wealthy. Instead of investing in workers to make more profits, businesses will just hoard their money. We have even heard that provision after provision will literally kill people.

As we heard objections get more and more outlandish, including the Biblical end of time, we heard the critiques get even more petty. We even heard the other side use procedural rules to complain about the title of the bill. What we haven't heard is how those opposed to this bill would solve the wage problem. They don't have a theory about why wages have stagnated or a vision for how to get them moving again, but we do. We passed it last night, and this reform will start to move wages again. This reform makes our corporate tax rates competitive again. It removes the incentive to invest abroad rather than right here at home.

It is no surprise that the Business Roundtable, the Chamber of Commerce, the National Federation of Independent Business—the organization that represents small businesses across this country—the National Retail Federation, the National Association of Home Builders, and the American Farm Bureau Federation support this bill.

In fact, you can see this small portion of a stack of letters I received from hundreds of farmers from across the State of Colorado who wrote to my office and said: I would like to join Colorado Farm Bureau to support tax reform that works for Colorado's farmers and ranchers. There are hundreds of people saying: Please help reform our Tax Code; cut our taxes. These letters came from real Coloradans, people from all four corners of the State who know how important real reform is to them. These groups know that this reform—these individuals know that this reform translates into more growth for the American economy, higher wages for American workers.

The Tax Foundation has estimated that this reform will bring 339,000 new, full-time equivalent jobs, increase GDP, and raise workers' wages. I have heard a lot of doubt about that part. I have heard a lot of people say that no wage growth is going to occur, that no money will come from these greedy corporations. But look at the news today, because today companies across America have already started to respond to this pro-growth tax reform.

Just hours ago, AT&T announced that it will invest an additional \$1 billion in the United States in 2018 and that it will give more than 200,000 of its U.S. employees a bonus of \$1,000—all because of the tax relief bill that we have been working on that we passed today. Similarly, today Boeing announced that it will make a \$300 million investment in charitable giving, worker training and education, and infrastructure and facility enhance-

ments. Both of these companies made it very clear that these investments—over \$1 billion of investment and 1,000 to 200,000 employees in the United States—are because of the tax bill that the House passed today and that we passed early this morning.

There is more on the way, but the business side isn't the only way it brings relief to American families and it is certainly not the most important. The reforms we have made on the personal side will deliver relief to Americans across the Nation.

A family of four earning the median American income of \$73,000 will see their tax bill go down by \$2,000, and that is nearly 60 percent next year from what it was this year. A single parent with two children and an income of \$52,000 will see a tax cut of nearly \$1,900. In a nation where too many people can't pull together \$100 in 24 hours, these tax reductions alone are an enormous benefit. These are real benefits to the American people.

Although there may be some naysayers in Washington who apparently have plenty of money, to people in Colorado, people in the West, people across this country, that is a big deal. These are benefits to real people, and I am glad to be a part and honored to be a part of delivering this real relief.

I am also proud to have done this in a way that creates many provisions that are especially important to Colorado. We have made it easier to take advantage of the medical expense deduction. We have expanded the child tax credit and the 529 programs. We have protected other education provisions, such as the student loan interest deduction and tax breaks for America's teachers. We have made sure our farming co-ops are treated fairly, and we have made sure our growing brewing and distilling industry is treated fairly as well. We have made a dent in the unfair death tax, and that is a big deal for the hundreds of farmers and ranchers who have contacted my office. We have ended the ObamaCare individual mandate, so no longer will the people in Colorado who earn less than \$50,000 be subjected to a tax fine, a penalty by the IRS, simply because they can't afford an unaffordable ObamaCare policy. We have helped ensure America's energy security by opening up new resource opportunities in a responsible manner, making sure that we simultaneously ensure that Colorado's renewable energy industry continues to flourish by making sure that today's credits for wind, solar, and refined coal are still available. That is what we did in this legislation.

Mr. President, this is historic reform. I am proud to be a part of it. I am proud to have voted for it. We can already see today that as a result of the work we have done, Americans are seeing the benefit.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and 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. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I am here now for the 190th "Time to Wake Up" speech to talk about an issue that falls at the intersection of climate change and jobs and consumer power and protection. You would think that a policy that simultaneously reduces the carbon emissions responsible for climate change and boosts American industrial competitiveness and puts thousands of dollars back into the pockets of American consumers would be pretty universally popular. Unfortunately, you would be wrong.

The corporate average fuel economy standards, known as the CAFE standards, set a minimum threshold for the average fuel economy of cars and light trucks that are sold in the United States. In 2011, the major automakers here in America—Ford, GM, and the others—enthusiastically endorsed voluntary new fuel efficiency standards which would gradually increase the fuel economy for their cars and light trucks to 54.5 miles per gallon on average by 2025.

Think about that for a second. In 2011, average fuel economy for these vehicles was stuck below 30 miles per gallon. The CAFE standards hadn't budged in years, and as a result, our automakers had stopped innovating to make cars more fuel efficient. They didn't have to make them more fuel efficient. And when gas prices soared in the mid-2000s, it was consumers who were on the hook.

Today, thanks to the voluntary agreement that was reached by the automakers, the CAFE standard is presently over 40 miles per gallon for cars and over 30 miles per gallon for light trucks. Consumers have already saved \$42 billion at the pump because of those increased fuel economy standards. Consumers who purchase a new car in 2025, on average, will save about \$8,000 on gas over the lifetime of that car because of those new fuel economy standards.

Of course, it is not just the consumers who win under the new CAFE standards; the environment also wins. Already the American auto fleet's increased average fuel economy has resulted in 195 million fewer metric tons of carbon emissions, and, of course, with the carbon emissions come all the rest of the pollution out of a car's tailpipe, so it is a big environmental benefit. Over the life of the CAFE standards program, total carbon emissions reductions should total 6 billion metric tons. This is huge because transportation is now the largest source of carbon emissions in the United States, and carbon emissions from cars and

light trucks account for almost one-sixth of the Nation's total.

If we are to be successful in keeping the average global temperature increase under 2 degrees Celsius—the upper bound, beyond which scientists tell us the consequences of climate change will likely be irreversible—then we have to significantly reduce our auto emissions. That is the target of the Paris climate agreement, which is represented here in this graph, from business as usual here, to all of the carbon emissions savings and efficiencies necessary to reach our Paris goal right here. Of all of this—power sector, industrial sector, efficiencies, home sector—all of it—this gold wedge right here represents the piece of it that we achieve by meeting these CAFE standards. So it is pretty important to meet those standards if we are going to hit the Paris climate goals, and it is pretty important to hit the Paris climate goals if we don't want to condemn our children and grandchildren to a very hazardous future.

Here is what is strange. The exact same set of industry players who voluntarily signed onto and supported the stronger fuel efficiency standards just 4 years ago through their trade association are now working hand in hand with EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt—when something bad is happening for the environment, you can almost always find him around—to weaken them, to undo what they voluntarily agreed to and promised the American people.

Following the election of Donald Trump, the Auto Alliance—the trade group that represents automakers like Ford, General Motors, Toyota, and Volvo—claimed that the very same standards the automakers had voluntarily supported just a few years before now reflect what they call an “extraordinary and premature rush to judgment.” Shortly after Pruitt came into office, the Auto Alliance asked him to revisit the standard.

By the way, just before I gave this speech, I googled “Auto Alliance.” I went to their website, and I hit the search engine on it. I typed in “climate change” and hit “search.” Those words “climate change” do not appear on the Auto Alliance's website, to give you an idea how seriously they take this problem, at least at the trade association level.

So the Auto Alliance, when Pruitt came in, asked him to revisit this CAFE standard that their member companies had all agreed to. Pruitt, who, as Oklahoma's attorney general, had been notoriously compliant to industry, gladly complied.

The Auto Alliance has a long history as the trailing edge of the automotive industry, opposing seat belts, opposing air bags, and opposing catalytic converters. Now, in the polluter-friendly Trump administration, it sees a tempting chance to sell more gas-guzzlers. But is that smart? Over the long term, does this risk actually consign American automakers to global irrelevance?

We sell these cars in an international market, so let's look at what that international market is moving to. Countries around the world have realized that the future of the automobile lies not with the gasoline-powered internal combustion engine but with alternative sources of power—electricity or hydrogen fuel cells, for instance.

By the way, I just got a Chevrolet Bolt, the all-electric car. Not only is that good for the environment, it is a wonderful car to drive. It is a fun car to drive. It is great vehicle.

China, the world's largest car market, recently announced that by 2025, 20 percent of new cars sold there must run on alternative fuels, and it is on its way to an eventual total ban of the sale of gasoline and diesel-powered cars. That is where the biggest car market in the world is headed.

The European Union is the world's third largest car market. The Netherlands has announced that starting in 2030, all cars sold must be emissions-free. Belgium is considering a similar measure. France and the United Kingdom will ban sales of new gasoline and diesel-powered cars starting in 2040. Norway, while not a member of the EU, is very much part of that European economy. They are even more ambitious. By 2025—just over 7 years from now—all new cars sold in Norway must be emissions-free.

Moving on to Japan, the world's fourth largest car market—Japan now has more electric charging stations than it has gas stations. India is the fifth largest car market. It has announced that by 2030, all new cars sold there must be electric or hybrid vehicles. So with the entire world moving toward cleaner, newer technology and innovative vehicles, why does this automotive lobby group—the Auto Alliance—suddenly want to renege on the promise its members made to the American people to raise and abide by those CAFE standards?

We should hope that our business leaders would be honorable enough to keep their word. That is a fairly basic proposition. But if the future of the industry lies with ever more fuel-efficient cars—hybrids, electric cars, fuel cell cars—why would the auto industry in America be furiously lobbying the Trump administration to go backward? Breaking your word to go backward doesn't seem to make sense, even from a business point of view.

Electric vehicles and alternative fuel vehicles represent the future of the auto industry. China and other countries get this. The Chinese are trying to poach our electrical engineers to develop their automotive industry so that it can one day beat ours. Meanwhile, executives at our automakers are scheming with Pruitt to head back to the past, to get out of the promise that they made to build more innovative, fuel-efficient cars.

Investing in the technologies of the future will help ensure that the electric vehicle revolution, which is on our

doorstep, doesn't leave America behind, doesn't leave American innovators behind, doesn't leave American workers behind, and doesn't leave American automakers behind.

A midterm review of these CAFE standards found that the automakers already have the technology to meet the new standard and that the new standard will save money for their customers. It is to the benefit of their customers to keep going with the CAFE standards they agreed to.

An independent analysis by the non-profit organization CERES found that the CAFE standards provide automakers and their suppliers the certainty they need to increase investment in the cleaner technologies that are necessary for the long-term health of the industry, and with that certainty that leads to increased investment, the increased investment leads to jobs.

This ought to be a no-brainer. A policy that protects consumers and the environment while promoting innovation and making American companies more competitive for the global market should be something we can all agree on. But there is also a simpler, more old-fashioned principle at stake here: Keep your word.

Ford, GM, and the others told the American public that they would compete for car buyers' business by delivering quality, energy-efficient vehicles. That is what they told the American public, and they said it voluntarily. This wasn't forced down their throats through a regulatory proceeding; this was a voluntary agreement that they signed up for and were enthusiastic about at the time.

They should keep their word. Why is that asking too much of American corporate leadership? Keep your word. How basic a principle is that? They should stop their trade association lobbying to water down the CAFE standards promises that they made.

It is a recurring problem around here, as many of us have noticed, that the trade association is usually on the trailing edge of the industry; it is like the worst voice of the industry. That is surely the case here, where the trade association for our American automakers is trying to get them to set it up so they will break their word to the American people about a promise that they made—a very simple one, which the technology is already there to achieve.

Even if you don't care one whit about climate change, even if you laugh that off, even if you go down the Trump road that it is a Chinese hoax, we still ought to be honoring those CAFE standards for American jobs, for American ingenuity, and for American innovation.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

2017 SERGEI MAGNITSKY SANCTIONS LIST

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I wish to take this time to talk about two matters of human rights, which I know the Presiding Officer has been very much engaged with as an active member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I want to share this information with our colleagues.

This month marks the fifth anniversary of the 2012 Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law and Accountability Act. Today, with the publication of five new sanctions designations, the citizens of the Russian Federation—many of whom strive for a future governed by the rule of law—can claim a small victory over oppression. I hope that today's news provides a semblance of justice for the family of Sergei Magnitsky and those who continue to fight against corruption and human rights abuses across the country.

The Magnitsky list now includes 49 names—an important testament to the central importance that accountability and human rights should play in U.S. foreign policy.

I think the Members of this body are familiar with the circumstances surrounding Sergei Magnitsky's death. He was a young lawyer in Russia representing a company. He discovered corruption, and he did what any lawyer should do. He reported it to the authorities. As a result, he was arrested. He was tortured, denied medical care, and died in prison.

As a result of that, legislation was introduced. I was proud to sponsor it with my good friend Senator MCCAIN. It was enacted into law, as I said, 5 years ago. It holds those who perpetrate these violations of human rights accountable by denying them the right to visit our country—visa applications—or to use our banking systems.

The five additions to this list include Andrei Pavlov, Yulia Mayorova, and Alexei Sheshenya for their roles in the Magnitsky case and Ramzan Kadyrov and Ayub Kataev for gross violations of human rights. I appreciate the work of career officials at the Treasury and State Departments for their work in investigating and designating these important cases.

Andrei Pavlov is a Russian lawyer who played a central role orchestrating the false claims used in the \$230 million tax fraud that Sergei Magnitsky uncovered. His addition to the Magnitsky list is long overdue, as he played an essential role in the plot.

Yulia Mayorova is the former wife of Pavlov and a Russian lawyer. She also reportedly played a role in helping to facilitate the fraud uncovered by Sergei Magnitsky.

Alexei Sheshenia also reportedly played key roles in both the 2006 theft of the \$107 million in taxes paid by RenGaz and in the 2007 theft of the \$230 million of taxes paid by Hermitage. I understand that in both tax thefts, shell companies beneficially owned by Alexei Sheshenia used forged backdated contracts to obtain judgments against companies that paid a significant amount of taxes.

Ramzan Kadyrov is a renowned human rights abuser who has brutally run the Republic of Chechnya for more than 10 years. Under his rule, human rights offenders have been murdered, and gay men have disappeared. He has destroyed any semblance of the rule of law in the Republic. Over the course of his time in power, there have been credible allegations of his directing assassinations deployed across Russia and Europe. Human rights groups have documented many cases of torture and extrajudicial killings by forces under his control.

Ayub Kataev is a prison warden and head of the branch of the Chechen internal affairs ministry. Earlier this year, Chechen authorities reportedly set up concentration camps for gay men under his control. He certainly belongs on this list.

Since 2012, Senator MCCAIN and I have conducted rigorous oversight to ensure robust implementation of the Magnitsky law. In 2016, we wrote to the State Department with certain suggestions for inclusions on the list relevant to the death of Sergei Magnitsky. We also expressed concerns that the allegations of torture in Chechnya against gay men and other human rights violations in the North Caucasus should be investigated. I am pleased they took action that was responsive to both of our inquiries.

I want my colleagues to know that I do believe this administration has conducted the review on the Magnitsky list the way it should have been—keeping in close contact with Members of the Senate. I think the result speaks to the quality of work that was done in this year's list.

America's values are our interests. As a country, we must remain steadfastly committed to the principles embedded in the Magnitsky law—accountability, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. The American people expect U.S. policymakers to advance these principles in all aspects of our diplomatic relations. I welcome today's announcement and also expect the first publication of the "Global Magnitsky" sanctions designations this week.

As the Presiding Officer is well aware, we have recently passed the "Global Magnitsky" law that applies similar standards for human rights violations globally. That list should be made available, we hope, sometime this week.

VENEZUELA HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, a second subject that I wish to talk about today on human rights deals with the collapse in Venezuela. I come to the floor to speak about Venezuela's growing humanitarian tragedy and accelerating economic collapse.

Late last June, here on the Senate floor, I described Venezuela as a nearly failed State, where authoritarian leaders profit from links to corruption and drug trafficking, while the Venezuelan people are subject to precarious humanitarian conditions and human rights abuses. Disturbingly, the situation has only deteriorated since the time I was last on the floor talking about the circumstances.

With Venezuela's humanitarian crisis growing daily, conditions facing Venezuelan children are particularly dire. This week, the New York Times published a heartbreaking investigation of how Venezuelan children dying of hunger. It states:

Parents go days without eating, shriveling to the weight of children themselves. Women line up at sterilization clinics to avoid having children they cannot feed. Boys leave home to join street gangs that scavenge for scraps. . . . Crowds of adults storm dumpsters after restaurants close. Babies die because it is hard to find or afford infant formula, even in emergency rooms.

That is in our hemisphere in Venezuela.

The Catholic relief organization Caritas has determined that over 50 percent of the children are suffering from nutritional deficiencies. They project that 280,000 Venezuelan children could eventually die of hunger without an urgently needed humanitarian response.

As the Venezuelans increasingly suffer the ravages of hunger, the country's hospital system is collapsing. Essential medicines are in short supply, and more than half of the Nation's operating facilities no longer function or have sufficient supplies. Disturbingly, international relief organizations have found that over 60 percent of the Venezuelan hospitals don't even have potable water.

Amid these crisis conditions, Venezuelan President Maduro repeatedly denies the existence of this country's humanitarian crisis. He has even taken to the unprecedented step of setting up a party-controlled food distribution system referred to as CLAPS, and his government now uses food as a tool of political patronage.

The result is that the United States and our partners in the hemisphere now confront the situation where the Maduro regime would rather see its people go hungry than accept the foreign assistance the Venezuelans desperately need. This man-made tragedy is absolutely unacceptable.

Today I have written to Ambassador Nikki Haley, our Ambassador to the United Nations, to urge her to call an emergency special session of the U.N. Security Council to evaluate which United Nations mechanisms, including U.N. Security Council resolutions, should be pursued to alleviate the humanitarian suffering inside Venezuela.

As humanitarian concerns mount, human rights abuses of Venezuela are rampant. Last month, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights told the U.N. Security Council that this year Venezuelan security forces “systematically resorted to the arbitrary detention of more than 5,000 protestors.”

A more recent report by Human Rights Watch and Foro Penal, a Venezuelan nongovernmental organization, documents how Venezuelan security forces have subjected political opponents to “torture involving electric shock and asphyxiation.”

In response, Luis Almagro, the Secretary General of the OAS, has convened a series of hearings to receive testimony to ascertain whether members of the Venezuelan Government have committed crimes against humanity that should be referred to the International Criminal Court for prosecution. These efforts deserve our attention and our support.

Against this alarming backdrop, we require no explanation for why the United States has received more asylum requests from Venezuela than from any other nationality for 2 years straight.

These challenges will only grow as Venezuela’s economy continues to collapse. The country is in a selective default on its bonds. Hyperinflation and rapid currency devaluation are ravaging family incomes. This week, the country’s parallel exchange rate reached 12,000 times the official rate, meaning that the average Venezuelan now earns less than \$10 a month.

The reasons for this collapse are simple. Venezuela’s economy is plagued by endemic corruption and gross mismanagement. As this calamity grows, Senators need to be aware that Venezuela will eventually need a major IMF program that may well surpass the \$17 billion intervention that Ukraine required in 2014. The international community will have to respond, which will also include, of course, the United States.

We also need to recognize that Russia and China are now major stakeholders in Venezuela, in our hemisphere, and will be at the table as the international community copes with the pending collapse.

Russia, in particular, is playing geopolitics with the situation—refinancing Venezuela’s debt, offering loans in return for financial stakes in U.S.-based CITGO, securing stakes in Venezuela’s oil industry, and expanding its influence in our hemisphere.

In response to these growing challenges, the Trump administration has

applied greater pressure by imposing targeted sanctions against a number of individuals, including President Maduro. With this designation, President Maduro has joined the list of notorious heads of state on U.S. sanction list, including the likes of North Korea’s Kim Jong Un, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, Zimbabwe’s former President Robert Mugabe, and Panama’s former President Manuel Noriega.

President Trump has also imposed financial sanctions blocking the issuance of new bonds to fund the Maduro regime’s ongoing repressive and economic mismanagement. The bond market has been one of the last lifelines for the Maduro government. Investors are right to lose trust in Venezuela’s ability to pay its debt.

We must recognize, however, that sanctions alone will not resolve the challenges the people of Venezuela are facing. We need a comprehensive strategy that utilizes all elements of U.S. diplomacy. We must provide critical foreign assistance to help mitigate the humanitarian crisis and bolster essential support for human rights and democratic civil society.

In May I introduced S. 1018, a bipartisan bill that lays out a comprehensive strategy for U.S. policy. My bill includes humanitarian assistance and funding to protect and promote human rights and democracy. It also includes a more aggressive approach to tackling the endemic corruption.

Earlier this month, the House of Representatives approved its version of this bill. It is time for the Senate to act. While I see an opportunity for bipartisanship in the Senate on U.S. policy toward Venezuela, I must say that I was alarmed by President Trump’s statement in August about a potential military option. Such cavalier comments are not helpful and, once again, call into question whether he has the temperament and judgment for dealing with serious national security challenges.

We must rise to the challenge of Venezuela as a great nation, bringing our full diplomatic resources and skills to bear and avoiding stooping to mere saber rattling.

I urge our colleagues to take on this challenge, to help the people of Venezuela, who are suffering from this humanitarian crisis, and to allow America’s entire toolkit to be used to help resolve this problem in our hemisphere.

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

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

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I rise today concerned about the threats to

the special counsel’s critical investigation of Russian interference in the 2016 election.

Over the last several weeks, a growing chorus of irresponsible and reckless voices have called for President Trump to shut down Special Counsel Mueller’s investigation. At first, these calls came from the fringes of our political discourse—those who refuse to put our country and our security before base political instincts.

Earlier this year, many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle were right to push back on these misdirected calls and urge that the special counsel be allowed to do his job without interference. However, in recent weeks, those voices seem to be growing in stridency and in volume. Just this weekend, one major news organization suggested that Special Counsel Mueller could be involved in a coup against the President. One senior adviser at the White House has now outrageously alleged that “the fix was in against Donald Trump from the beginning.” Those statements are reckless. They are inappropriate, and they are extremely worrying. They are also at odds with the President’s own lawyers who have pledged to cooperate with the special counsel.

Beyond being irresponsible, the seemingly coordinated nature of these claims should alarm us all—particularly since, in recent days, these baseless accusations have been repeated by several Members of the House of Representatives.

I believe it is up to every Member of this institution, Republican or Democratic, to make a clear and unambiguous statement that any attempt by this President to remove Special Counsel Mueller from his position or to pardon key witnesses in any effort to shield them from accountability or shut down the investigation would be a gross abuse of power and a flagrant violation of executive branch responsibilities and authorities. These truly are red lines, and we simply cannot allow them to be crossed.

Let’s take a moment to remember why Special Counsel Mueller was appointed in the first place and why it remains so critical that he be permitted to finish his job without obstruction.

Recall, last spring, when we were all reeling from a series of confounding actions by this President, beginning with the firing of FBI Director Jim Comey on May 9. Mr. Comey was fired just 2 months after publicly revealing the FBI’s ongoing investigation of the Trump campaign and—as we would find out later—after several attempts by this President to improperly influence Director Comey.

Try to put yourself back into those dangerous days. Director Comey’s dismissal was met with confusion and widespread condemnation. We needed a stabilizing action from our Nation’s law enforcement leadership. We needed some certainty that the facts would be found and brought to light, regardless of what they were.

Eight days after Mr. Comey's firing, Trump appointee and Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein appointed Robert Mueller to oversee the investigation into "any links and/or coordination between the Russian government and individuals associated with the campaign of President Donald Trump" and "any matters that arose or may arise directly from the investigation."

His appointment reassured Americans that there will be a full and thorough law enforcement investigation. The announcement was met with support on both sides of the aisle and received nearly universal praise. In fact, many of the same people who are attacking him today praised Mr. Mueller's appointment just months ago.

Indeed, there is much to praise. The fact is, Robert Mueller has impeccable credentials as a man of the law. He has assembled a team that includes some of the Nation's best investigators, and he is leading the investigation with the professionalism it deserves.

Mr. Mueller is a dedicated Vietnam war veteran and a lifelong Republican, appointed to his current role by Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, also a Republican. In fact, all of the major players to date in this investigation—former Director Comey, current FBI Director Rosenstein, and even Attorney General Sessions, who has had to recuse himself—are all Republicans. The charges that some have made that somehow Democratic political bias has crept into this investigation are baseless, given the makeup of the leadership team.

In recent weeks, much has been made of some political opinions expressed by an FBI agent during the election last year. This specious line of argument conveniently ignores the fact that as soon as Mr. Mueller learned about those comments, he immediately removed that agent in question from the investigation. If anything, this incident only adds to Mr. Mueller's credibility as a fair and independent investigator.

I stand here as the vice chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee. We are in the midst of our own investigation into Russian incursion, and I am proud of the way Chairman BARR and our committee has taken on this very difficult task.

We have made tremendous progress uncovering the facts of Russian interference in our elections. Our committee's work helped expose the dark underbelly of disinformation on many of our social media platforms. We have successfully pressed for the full accounting of Russian cyber efforts to target our State electoral systems, and, despite the initial denials of any Russian contacts during the election, this committee's efforts have helped uncover numerous and troubling high-level engagements between the Trump campaign and Russian affiliates, many of which have only been revealed in recent months.

We have a lot of work to do. Our committee has gone out of its way to ensure continued bipartisan backing for this effort, and I am committed to seeing the effort through. However, it should be very clear that our committee cannot and will not stand as a substitute for Mr. Mueller's investigation.

As Chairman BARR and I have noted on numerous occasions, the FBI is responsible for determining any criminal activities related to this inquiry. As such, Mueller has already moved to indict two individuals and has negotiated two additional guilty pleas. This was an investigative path reserved solely for law enforcement, and it is essential that it be permitted to go on unimpeded.

The country no doubt remains severely divided on the question of the last election. However, the national security threat facing us today should demand that we rise above partisan differences. No matter the political divide, surely each of us—and all Americans—should want to know the truth of what happened during last year's election, and, no doubt, we want to know that as quickly as possible.

The President has long called the investigation into Russian meddling into the 2016 election a witch hunt, and he has done much to discredit the intelligence community's unanimous assessment of Russian interference in our election. The failure of this White House to lead a whole-of-government approach to prevent this type of election interference in the future—either by the Russians or some other adversary—defies understanding. The President's refusal to accept the intelligence community's assessment and his blatant disregard for ensuring that Russia never again infiltrates our election process has been unnerving and cause for significant concern.

In recent days, the President has said he is not considering removing Special Counsel Mueller, but the President's track record on this front is a source of concern. I am certain most of my colleagues believed he wouldn't fire Jim Comey either.

Firing Mr. Mueller, or any other of the top brass involved in this investigation, would not only call into question this administration's commitment to the truth but also to our most basic concept, the rule of law. It also has the potential to provoke a constitutional crisis.

In the United States of America, no one—no one—is above the law, not even the President. Congress must make clear to the President that firing the special counsel or interfering with his investigation by issuing pardons of essential witnesses is unacceptable and would have immediate and significant consequences.

I hope my concerns are unfounded—in many ways, I had hoped I would never have to make this kind of speech—but there are troubling signs. It is critical that all of us, as elected

officials and as citizens, speak out against these threats now before it is too late.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, I rise to deliver the second in a series of floor speeches that I offer as I close out my time in the Senate.

This afternoon, I want to talk about Americans' relationship with telecommunications and technology companies and what that means for their access to essential services and for their privacy.

When I entered the Senate in July of 2009, then-Majority Leader Harry Reid asked me to serve on the Judiciary Committee. I pointed out that there are a lot of lawyers in the Senate and that I wasn't one of them, but he said he needed Members with my perspective on the committee. I wondered how my background could possibly serve me on Judiciary, but it did—almost immediately—when in December of that year, Comcast announced its intention to acquire NBCUniversal.

I happened to know a lot about the effects of media consolidation because I used to work in media. When powerful corporations are permitted to acquire other powerful corporations, it is the American consumers who are left facing higher prices, fewer choices, and even worse service from their telecommunications providers. I questioned why an already powerful company should be allowed to get even bigger and thus extract more leverage over consumers and the businesses reliant on its platform.

It was through my work on Comcast and NBCUniversal that I learned about the rising costs of internet, phone, and TV services, as well as the importance of preserving net neutrality. I also became interested in how giant telecommunications companies, as well as ever-evolving tech companies, were treating the massive troves of user data they were collecting on a perpetual basis.

I believe consumers have a fundamental right to know what information is being collected about them. I believe they have a right to decide whether they want to share that information and with whom they want to share it and when. I believe consumers have a right to expect that companies that store their personal information will store it securely.

I also believe all Americans deserve affordable access to high-quality telecommunications services—services they depend on to communicate with the world, get an education, and find a job. I believe the internet should remain the open platform for innovation, economic growth, and freedom of expression it has always been.

Perhaps it was the complex nature of these issues or even the financial incentive to turn a blind eye, but when I came to the Senate, very few Members of Congress were talking about corporate consolidation, commercial privacy, or net neutrality—issues that have gained much deserved attention in more recent years. Whatever the reason for other Members' hesitance, I felt it was incumbent upon me to get into the weeds on these issues so I could be a leader in the Senate and ultimately address the concerns of ordinary Minnesotans.

That is why, when the interests of the American consumers have clashed with the desires of powerful telecommunications and technology companies, I have always tried to put the public first and to fight on their behalf by shedding light on corporate abuses and using all the tools at my disposal to curb them.

Again, it is through my work on the Judiciary Committee—and, more specifically, my work on media and technology policy—that I believe my perspective from my previous career has been of most value.

Comcast's proposal to acquire NBCU immediately made me uncomfortable because I had seen their motives for this deal before. In 1993, during my 13th season at "Saturday Night Live," the Big Three networks—NBC, CBS, and ABC—pressured Congress to change the rules that had previously prevented them from owning any of the shows they aired in prime time. The purpose of the rules had been to prevent the networks from prioritizing their own shows over others or otherwise harming competing programming.

Unsurprisingly, after the rules were repealed, the networks—contrary to their guarantees and assurances they had given Congress—began giving the shows they owned preferential treatment. At the time, "Seinfeld," which aired on NBC, was not owned by NBC and had been produced before the rules had changed—was the No. 1 show on television, which made the Thursday night timeslot following "Seinfeld" the most valuable real estate on television. I watched as shows that eventually wound up in that premium location were all owned, at least in part, by NBC.

So when I became a Senator, one of the first major deals I opposed was Comcast's acquisition of NBCUniversal. As in the case of AT&T's current bid to buy Time Warner, this deal was about giving one company the ability to control both the programming and the pipes that carry it. I knew from my time in media

that a combined Comcast-NBCUniversal would have strong incentives to favor its own programming over that of others and restrict competing distributors from accessing that programming. I knew these incentives would hurt competing content creators, inhibit the free flow of information, and ultimately harm consumers.

Unfortunately, I was not wrong. In the years after its acquisition of NBCUniversal, Comcast repeatedly violated the terms of its agreements with the FCC and the Department of Justice, favoring its own news programming over its competitors in Comcast's channel lineup and failing to live up to its promises regarding offering affordable standalone broadband, racial diversity in programming—they did not live up to their promises there—and online video distribution. Because merger conditions are extremely difficult and costly to enforce, competition and consumers were harmed in the process.

Comcast's behavior in the wake of acquiring NBCUniversal was one of the major reasons I then opposed its proposal to turn around and buy Time Warner Cable a couple years later. It was also one of the major reasons I believe that later deal was ultimately dropped after objections from the FCC and the Department of Justice.

For a long time in the Senate, it was a lonely battle. For over a year, I was the only Senator to oppose Comcast's proposals to buy Time Warner Cable—a deal that would have given the combined company 57 percent of the broadband market—but advocates and ordinary citizens raised their voices, and together we were able to stop the deal.

Most recently, I have led my colleagues in scrutinizing AT&T's proposed acquisition of Time Warner, and I have once again called on regulators to move to block the deal for the inevitable harm it will cause to competition and consumers.

I have been proud to lead these efforts, and I leave here in a much different environment than when I arrived. I know there are strong voices in the Senate that will carry on the fight when I am gone.

These efforts to slow down and halt media consolidation are part of a very important, larger development we have seen in our country. In recent years, there has been a resurgence in the American public's—and, in turn, Congress's—interest in combating corporate consolidation.

When I first entered the Senate, I wasn't sure most Americans understood what was at stake when these powerful companies wanted to combine. Vertical integration and anti-trust laws sounded like obscure, almost boring, topics, but more and more Americans are getting educated about these issues, and more and more Members of Congress are working to get Washington focused on how they affect the lives of real people.

Just look at the fight for net neutrality. For many of the same reasons that I opposed Comcast's acquisition of NBCUniversal, I have long supported strong net neutrality rules to ensure that the internet remains a level playing field where everyone can participate on equal footing, free from discrimination by large internet service providers like Comcast, Verizon, and AT&T.

Net neutrality preserves the internet as the engine for innovation that it has always been and allows businesses of all sizes to thrive—even when they are up against the largest, most profitable corporations. Here is just one example I found useful in explaining net neutrality:

In 2005, three guys set up shop over a pizzeria in a strip mall in San Mateo, CA, where they launched the now-ubiquitous YouTube. Video-sharing websites were in their infancy, but these guys already faced competition from something that preceded it called Google Video, but Google Video wasn't very good. Because of net neutrality, YouTube was able to compete with Google Video on a level playing field. The giant internet service providers treated YouTube's videos the same as they did Google's, and Google couldn't pay them to gain an unfair advantage, like a fast lane into consumer homes.

They were treated the same, neutrally. The content was neutral—net neutrality. People really liked YouTube. They preferred YouTube to Google Video, and YouTube thrived. In fact, in 2006, Google bought it for stock valued at \$1.65 billion. That is a nice chunk for three guys over a pizzeria in San Mateo.

It is not just tech companies and small businesses that rely on open internet. In a submission to the FCC in 2014, a coalition that includes Visa, Bank of America, UPS, and Ford explained that "every retailer with an online catalogue, every manufacturer with online product specifications, every insurance company with online claims processing, every bank offering online account management, every company with a website—every business in America interacting with its customers online is dependent upon an open Internet." I have repeated this quote on the floor and at rallies time and time again over the years because I think it perfectly exemplifies the importance of this issue.

Preserving net neutrality is only controversial for the few deep-pocketed entities that stand to financially gain without it.

If FCC Chairman Pai ultimately has his way, we will be entering a digital world where the powerful outrank the majority, a world where a handful of multibillion-dollar companies have the power to control how users get their information, and a world where the deepest pockets can pay for a fast lane while their competitors stall in the slow lane.

For nearly 9 years, I have been calling net neutrality the free speech issue

of our time because it embraces our most basic constitutional freedoms. And ironically, the kind of civic participation that has aspired so many of us in recent months—and has effected real change, like in the fight for net neutrality and the successful efforts to save the Affordable Care Act—has depended in no small part on a free and open internet.

In 2015, the FCC's vote to reclassify broadband providers as common carriers under title II of the Communications Act didn't just mean good things for net neutrality; it also had important implications for consumer privacy. It gave the agency the authority and the responsibility to implement rules to protect Americans' privacy by giving consumers greater control of their personal data that is collected and used by their broadband providers. That was a big win. Republicans didn't see it that way. One of the first things they did this Congress was to repeal those rules, which was a huge blow to Americans' right to privacy.

For my part, I have long believed that Americans have a fundamental right to privacy. I believe they deserve both transparency and accountability from the companies that have the capacity to trade on the details of their lives. And should they choose to leave personal information in the hands of those companies, they certainly deserve to know that their information is being safeguarded to the greatest degree possible. This transparency and accountability should come from all the companies that have access to Americans' sensitive information. This includes internet service providers like Comcast and AT&T but also edge providers like Google, Facebook, and Amazon.

In 2011, I served as chair for the inaugural hearing of the Judiciary Subcommittee on Privacy, Technology and the Law—a subcommittee that I founded after it became abundantly clear that our Nation's privacy laws had failed to keep pace with rapidly evolving technologies.

When people talked about protecting their privacy when I was growing up, they were talking about protecting it from the government. They talked about unreasonable searches and seizures, about keeping the government out of their bedrooms. They talked about whether the government was trying to keep tabs on the books they read or the rallies they attended. Over the last 40 or 50 years, we have seen a fundamental shift in who has our information and what they are doing with it. That is not to say that we still shouldn't be worried about protecting ourselves from government abuses, but now we also have relationships with large corporations that are obtaining, storing, sharing and in many cases selling enormous amounts of our personal information.

When the Constitution was written, the Founders had no way of anticipating the new technologies that would

evolve in the coming centuries. They had no way of anticipating the telephone, for example, and so the Supreme Court ruled over 40 years ago that a wiretap constitutes a search under the Fourth Amendment. The Founders had no idea that one day the police would be able to remotely track your movements through a GPS device, and so the Supreme Court ruled in 2012 that this was also a search that required court approval. All of this is a good thing. Our laws need to reflect the evolution of technology and changing expectations of American society. This is why the Constitution is often called a living document. But we have a long way to go to get to the point where our modern laws are in line with modern technology.

My goal for the subcommittee was to help members understand both the benefits and privacy implications of emerging technologies; to educate the public and raise awareness about how their data is being collected, used, and shared; and, if necessary, to legislate to fill gaps in the law. When politics prevented legislation, I repeatedly pressed companies—many of them more than once—to be more transparent about how they were treating their customers' private information, including users' location data, web-browsing histories, and even their finger and face prints.

As consumer awareness has evolved, these companies have taken important steps to improve transparency of their use of Americans' personal information. But unfortunately, accumulating massive troves of information isn't just a side project they can choose to halt at any given time; for many of them, it is their whole business model. We are not their customers; we are their product.

Recently, we have seen just how scary this business model can be. In October of this year, the Judiciary Committee examined Russia's manipulation of social media during the 2016 campaign, and both the public and Members of Congress were shocked to learn the outsized role that the major tech companies play in so many aspects of our lives, based primarily on the mass collection of personal information and complex algorithms that are shrouded in secrecy. Not only do these companies guide what we see, read, and buy on a regular basis, but their dominance—specifically in the market of information—now requires that we consider their role in the integrity of our democracy. Unfortunately, this fall's hearings demonstrated that they may not be up to the challenge that they have created for themselves.

The size of these companies is not—in isolation—the problem, but I am extremely concerned about these platforms' use of Americans' personal information to further solidify their market power and consequently extract unfair conditions from the content creators and innovators who rely on their

platforms to reach consumers. As has become alarmingly clear in recent months, companies like Google, Facebook, and Amazon have unprecedented power to guide Americans' access to information and potentially shape the future of journalism. It should go without saying that such power comes with great responsibility.

Everyone is currently and rightfully focused on Russian manipulation of social media, but as lawmakers, it is incumbent upon us to ask the broader questions: How did big tech come to control so many aspects of our lives? How is it using our personal information to strengthen its reach and its bottom line? Are these companies engaging in anticompetitive behavior that restricts the free flow of information in commerce? Are they failing to take simple precautions to respect our privacy and to protect our democracy? And finally, what role should these companies play in our lives, and how do we ensure transparency and accountability from them going forward?

Modern technology has fundamentally altered the way we live our lives, and it has given us extraordinary benefits. As these companies continue to grow and evolve, challenges like those we have recently confronted in the Judiciary Committee will only grow and evolve with them. So we must now muster the will to meaningfully address the tough questions related to competition, privacy, and ultimately the integrity of our democracy.

I will not be here to ask those questions. I will do what I can to find the answers from the outside, but it is my colleagues in the Senate who must prioritize them going forward. There is simply too much at stake. I know that they will do so with the help of a tireless advocacy community and the brilliant minds who have long contemplated these incredibly complex issues and ensured that lawmakers pay attention. And more importantly, they will do so with the support and encouragement of the American people.

I have witnessed significant highs and significant lows in the fight to protect consumers' rights, but the most important lesson I have learned along the way is that ordinary Americans can wield extraordinary power when they raise their voices. For this reason and despite significant setbacks in recent months, I know that it is the public's interests that can ultimately prevail.

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

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

REPUBLICAN TAX BILL AND ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF THE MIDDLE CLASS

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I understand that my Republican colleagues and President Trump are busy celebrating the passage of the tax bill that was voted on at 1:30 in the morning. They are very excited, and they are very happy about it. I understand that. I guess, if one is a billionaire like President Trump or is a wealthy campaign contributor, you do have a whole lot to celebrate. Maybe, if you are 1 of the 6,000 lobbyists here in Washington, DC, who helped to write the bill, you are celebrating a lot today. Yet, if you are one of the vast majority of the American people who is in the middle class, you should not be celebrating today. In fact, you should be pretty nervous.

The passage of this legislation marks a great victory for the Koch brothers and other wealthy campaign contributors who will see, at a time of massive income and wealth inequality, huge tax breaks for themselves. In other words, the wealthiest people will become much wealthier. Meanwhile, the deficit—what is owed by our kids and our grandchildren—will increase by \$1.5 trillion as a result of this bill. The largest and most profitable corporations—companies like Apple, Microsoft, Pfizer, and General Electric—despite record breaking profits, are going to see very, very large tax breaks to the tune of many billions of dollars.

Now, at a time when the very wealthy are becoming much richer, tens of millions of American families are struggling to keep their heads above water economically. There are 40 million Americans who are living in poverty. The nonpartisan Tax Policy Center tells us that in terms of this legislation, 83 percent of the tax benefits will go to the top 1 percent by the end of the decade, who are already doing phenomenally well, and that 60 percent of the benefits will go to the top one-tenth of 1 percent. Meanwhile, at the end of 10 years, some 92 million middle-class households will be paying more in taxes.

On top of all of that, as the only Nation—major country—on Earth not to guarantee healthcare to all people, this bill will result in 13 million Americans losing their health insurance. I understand the President was really excited about this. Hey, what a great day. There are 13 million more Americans who are losing their health insurance when we are the only major country on Earth not to guarantee healthcare to all people.

In the ending of the individual mandate, what all of the experts tell us is that our healthcare premiums will go up. If you are an average person out there, your healthcare premiums will very likely go up as a result of this legislation. Meanwhile, starting next year—I am not talking about 10 years from now—some 8 million middle-class families will pay more in taxes.

Doesn't it say a lot about Republican priorities when they make permanent the tax breaks for corporations; yet they make temporary the tax breaks for working families, which will expire in 8 years?

Furthermore, I would hope that every American is listening closely to what Speaker of the House PAUL RYAN is talking about. I have to give RYAN credit for being pretty honest about the intentions of the Republican Party. Just this morning, he was on ABC, saying what he has said for quite a while, and that is that the Republican plan is a two-step approach. Step No. 1 is passing the legislation that passed last night here and today in the House. Step No. 2 is, having run up a deficit of \$1.5 trillion, they are now going to come back and offset that deficit by making massive cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid.

According to RYAN, they have a two-step program. Step No. 1 is to give massive tax breaks to the rich and large corporations and to run up the deficit by \$1.5 trillion. Step No. 2 is to offset that deficit by cutting Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid.

How unspeakable and outrageous is this plan? How much does it go against what the American people want? This gives huge tax breaks to billionaires—to the Trump family, to the Koch brothers—and then pays for those tax breaks by cutting Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid.

There are millions of senior citizens and people with disabilities in Vermont and all across this country who, today, are struggling to buy food, to heat their homes, and to buy the prescription drugs that they need because they are trying to survive on \$12,000, \$13,000, \$14,000 a year in Social Security. There are people who have worked their entire lives and have exhausted themselves as they approach retirement. Do not tell those people who live on \$12,000, \$13,000 a year in Social Security that you are going to cut their benefits through a Chained CPI or by some other mechanism in order to give tax breaks to billionaires. How outrageous that would be.

Don't tell older workers—many of them with health problems after their having worked 20, 30, 40 years—that you are going to give billions of dollars in tax breaks to Microsoft, Pfizer, or General Electric, but then you are going to ask them to work more years in order to be eligible for Medicare.

I understand that every Member of the Congress would like to go home for the holiday season, and so would I. This is the time of year during which Vermont is very, very beautiful. The truth is that it would really be unconscionable for us to leave Washington after giving tax breaks to billionaires and large corporations while we ignore the enormous problems that are facing the middle class and working families of our country.

When Donald Trump ended the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals

Program, the DACA Program, nearly 800,000 lives were thrown into chaos and uncertainty. Without the legal protections afforded by the DACA Program, hundreds of thousands of young people today are living in terrible fear and anxiety about losing the legal status they currently have in the only country they have ever known. These are young people who grew up in the United States, went to school in the United States, are working in the United States, and are in our military. This is their home. It would be unspeakable to take away their legal status and subject them to deportation.

Since the President's announcement in September, more than 11,000 people have already lost their protections under DACA, with approximately 22,000 set to lose their legal protections by the March 5, 2018, deadline. These are hundreds of thousands of wonderful young people. We cannot turn our backs on them. We must deal with DACA before we leave for the holiday break. Any end-of-the-year spending agreement must address the fear and uncertainty caused by the administration's reckless actions, and a clean Dream Act must be signed into law.

This is not just what BERNIE SANDERS wants; this is what the American people in overwhelming numbers want. A Quinnipiac poll came out just the other day in which 77 percent of the American people supported maintaining legal status for these young people and allowing them to move forward toward citizenship—77 percent—and that is consistent with other polls that have been taken. A vast majority of Democrats, Republicans, and Independents understand that it would be incredibly cruel and harmful to our country in so many ways to deny legal status to the Dreamers. We cannot turn our backs on the Dreamers. We must address their crisis right now.

It has been almost 3 months since funding for community health centers has lapsed. Our Nation's 1,400 community health centers serve more than 27 million people in roughly 10,000 communities throughout the country. In my home State of Vermont, one out of four Vermonters gets their primary healthcare, dental care, low-cost prescription drugs, and mental health counseling at a community health center.

How does it happen that the Republican leadership can spend months on a bill to give tax breaks to billionaires but not address the lack of funding, the reauthorization of the Community Health Centers Program or the Children's Health Insurance Program, which provides healthcare to 9 million children?

In this country, there are 1.5 million workers and retirees in multi-employer pension plans who could see the pensions that they worked for over their entire lives cut by up to 60 percent. People were promised these pensions a few years ago, and in a disastrous act, Congress took away that promise, and

working people could lose the pensions they were promised by up to 60 percent cuts in those pensions. Congress needs to act before the end of the year to make sure that no one in America in a multi-employer pension plan will see their pension cut.

Those are real issues impacting real people, but there are more. There was an article recently in the Washington Post, and it said that because of major cuts to the Social Security Administration, people with disabilities are not getting their claims processed in a timely manner. The result was that in 1 year, if you can believe it, 10,000 people with disabilities died before they got their claims processed.

What the Republicans have been very active on is making sure that the Social Security Administration does not get the funding it needs, which means that it is harder for people who have retired and people who have disabilities to get the information they need or the claims that they have processed in a timely manner. We must make sure that every senior and person with a disability gets treated with dignity. We have to restore adequate funding to the Social Security Administration.

One of the great outrages that currently is taking place in this country and really is quite beyond belief is that at a time when we live in a competitive global economy and when we need the best educated workforce in the world to be able to do the new jobs that are being created, which require more education, we have over 40 million people in our country who have left college or graduate school in debt and sometimes deeply in debt. I am talking about people I have met who have gone to medical school or dental school and are \$300,000 or \$400,000 in debt. People graduate college \$100,000 or \$150,000 in debt. This is a crisis that is impacting millions of people. It is impacting our entire economy. It is an issue that must be addressed. Maybe, just maybe, before we give tax breaks to billionaires, we might want to significantly lower the debt burden so many people in this country have in their student debt.

This is the year 2017, soon to be 2018. This is the wealthiest country in the history of the world. Yet there are communities in Vermont, Utah, and communities all over this country that do not have adequate broadband service. How does a business start up in a community if that community does not have rapid broadband or good cell phone service? The answer is, it doesn't. It can't. That is one of the reasons why rural America is hurting so badly. We must invest in rural infrastructure to make sure every community in this country has quality, affordable broadband.

There is an opioid epidemic sweeping this country, impacting Vermont, my neighboring State of New Hampshire, West Virginia, Kentucky, and all parts of this country are seeing people dying from overdoses from opioids and heroin. This is an epidemic that must be

addressed. We can't simply walk out of here and leave people all across the country without the resources they need to treat people who are addicted and to prevent our young people from becoming addicts. We need to invest in treatment and prevention for the opioid epidemic.

As we speak, there are over 30,000 vacancies in the Veterans' Administration. That means that we have to make sure every veteran in this country who goes to the VA gets the quality and timely healthcare he or she needs. We can't turn our backs on the veterans. We have to invest in the VA.

The bottom line is that, as much as all of us would like to get out of Washington and go home, we simply cannot turn our backs on tens of millions of working people and people in the middle class. It is not good enough to pass tax breaks for billionaires and then leave town. So I hope the Republican leadership will immediately bring to this floor the legislation that we need to address the many crises facing the middle class of this country.

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 legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TRIBUTE TO MARK E. MILLER

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, today I wish to honor Mark E. Miller, for his distinguished public service and professional assistance to the Senate Finance Committee, as well as to the rest of Congress.

Mr. Miller served as the executive director of the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission, or MedPAC, for the last 15 years. During that time, he dedicated himself to our country, ensuring Congress received impartial, data-driven, and sound policy advice to transform the Medicare Program while protecting our Nation's seniors and the disabled.

MedPAC was established by Congress in 1997 as part of the Balanced Budget Act. It is a nonpartisan agency that provides analysis and policy recommendations regarding the Medicare Program, including payment, beneficiary access to care, and quality of care for traditional fee-for-service Medicare and Medicare Advantage. As all of us know, the analysis we get from MedPAC is critical in how we, as Members of Congress, debate, address changes, and ultimately make improvements to the Medicare Program.

Throughout his service, Mr. Miller ensured that MedPAC consistently fulfilled its mission of providing objective, empirically driven policy analysis and advice to Congress.

Mr. Miller himself also testified, answered calls, and otherwise provided invaluable advice on complicated Medicare payment issues to both majority and minority leaders, Finance Committee chairmen and ranking members, as well as other committee members, and other Member offices regarding all things healthcare. Throughout his years of service, Mr. Miller has proven himself a trusted source of objective information.

Mr. Miller gave years of his life, including countless long nights, weekends, and early mornings to make sure Congress has the best and most reliable information it can get. In turn, that analysis has guided many ideas and recommendations into legislation that made its way to a President's desk for signature. Mr. Miller's professionalism, expertise, energy, patience, humor, and dedication make him an example to all of us as we work the process of designing and ultimately enacting legislation. Mark has been there from the beginning, watching an idea being born, helping to develop policy to achieve that idea, and providing valuable policy counsel as it works its way through the legislative process to ultimately becoming law.

Thanks to his sense of purpose, dedication, and love for this country, Mr. Miller should be seen as just as much an influence on our current Medicare policy as most Members in this body. Mark is a consummate professional, and he will be missed. I wish him all the very best as he takes the next steps in his successful career.

May we ever remember Mark's service, and may MedPAC ever be guided by the same sense of duty and purpose Mr. Miller instilled in his 15 years leading that organization.

TRIBUTE TO STEVE JOHNSON

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, Cesar Chavez, the great champion of justice and human dignity, once offered this advice about friendship: He said; "If you really want to make a friend, go to someone's house and eat with him. . . . The people who give you their food give you their heart."

The Senate Dining Room isn't Steve Johnson's house, but for the 22 years that he has worked there, Steve has poured his heart into his job, and he has become a friend—or at least a friendly face—to Senators, our families, staff members, and visitors.

As general manager of the Senate Dining Rooms and two other eateries in the Capitol, Steve works hard to create places where people who might not normally talk to each other can sit down at adjoining tables, eat a meal, and maybe swap stories or jokes.

In the Senate Dining Room, with its white linen table cloths and crystal chandeliers, you might see Republican and Democratic Senators and staff members asking after each other's families. In the refectory on the first floor, reporters and visitors to the Capitol stand in line together to grab a

quick bite. Downstairs, in the carry-out, you can find the whole Capitol family, as Steve calls them; “the white collars, the blue collars, the green collars, and the Capitol Police,” all eating together.

It is a little like stepping back into a better, less partisan time.

On Friday, December 22, Steve Johnson is leaving the Senate. He is retiring. Before he does, I want to take a moment to thank Steve for his many years of good and loyal service to the Senate.

Until 1995, when Steve began working as a maitre d’ in the Senate Dining Room, he had never seen the inside of the U.S. Capitol, but he had seen the outside of this magnificent building many times.

You see, Steve grew up in Freehold, NJ, home of “The Boss,” Bruce Springsteen. He was one of six kids. His mom trained as a nurse, and his dad was a director of a YMCA.

In 1963, Steve’s Dad, Herbert, attended the March on Washington, where Martin Luther King gave his “I Have a Dream” speech. The experience made a profound impression.

During Steve’s childhood and teen years, whenever there was a big march or rally in Washington, the whole Johnson family—mom, dad, and six kids—would pile into the family station wagon, drive to Washington, DC, for the day, and drive back to Freehold that night.

During those childhood trips, Steve developed a reverence for this building. After 22 years of working here, he still has it. He is still awed when he sees the Capitol dome gleaming in the sun as he arrives at work, or sees the Capitol Christmas tree lit up at night.

It is a feeling that many of us share.

Steve started his career in food service nearly 40 years ago, shortly after he graduated from Glassboro State College in New Jersey with a bachelor’s degree in business administration. He went to work at a restaurant in his hometown.

A few years later, he and a business partner took over running a more than 200-year-old inn, the Liberty Tavern, in New Jersey’s capitol city of Trenton. They gave it their best try, with clever marketing and a hard-working staff, but couldn’t make good of it.

Fortunately for us, Steve’s wife, Joanne, took a job with the Federal Government in Washington, and Steve made the move with her.

Before the Senate, he worked at the Mayflower Hotel, another Washington legend. As I mentioned, he started in the Senate Dining Room as maitre d’ and worked his way up to assistant general manager and finally general manager.

He works incredibly hard, from early in the morning until evening or later. With his calm demeanor, he makes a tough job look almost easy.

That calm may have something to do with the fact that Steve is a dedicated marathon runner. He has run 18 mara-

thons, including seven Boston Marathons.

He is a modest man in a sea of big egos, a scrupulously nonpartisan man in era of sharp partisan lines. He and his dedicated staff are important members of the Senate family.

There is a line in a Bruce Springsteen song where Bruce says, “I’m ready to grow young again.”

Sadly, none of us can actually do that.

But Steve has decided that he is ready to be a rookie again and try something completely new and different. In this next chapter of his life, he will work as a volunteer literacy tutor for adults who speak English as a Second Language.

It is another way, I think, of making people feel at home and cared for, something that Steve Johnson is so good at.

In closing, I want to thank Steve again for his many years of service to the Senate, and I want to wish Steve and Joanne the very best of luck as they start this new chapter in their lives.

HONDURAS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, on Monday, the head of the Honduras Supreme Electoral Tribunal declared Juan Orlando Hernandez the next President of Honduras. Shortly thereafter, the Secretariat of the Organization of American States, one of the principal international observers, announced that it could not certify the election as free and fair and called for a new election. Yesterday, after his top advisers rebuked the OAS for infringing on Honduras’s sovereignty, President Hernandez, stating that “the Honduran people have spoken,” declared himself President-elect.

On December 5, I spoke at length about the Honduran election, and I have made several statements since then. I will not repeat what I and many others have already said about the troubling process orchestrated by President Hernandez and his associates over the past several years to lay the groundwork for his reelection for an unprecedented second Presidential term, nor about the many irregularities that have caused masses of people to take to the streets in protest since the vote on November 26. As of today, at least 12 protesters, and perhaps as many as 20, have been killed and many more injured, mostly from military police firing live ammunition. I was disappointed that, in his speech yesterday, President Hernandez made no mention of those tragic deaths.

As we await the Trump administration’s decision on whether to support the OAS’s call for a new election or accept President Hernandez’ claim to a second term, I want to make three points.

First, if this flawed election had been held in a country not led by a President whose consolidation of power and

reliance on the military and police have had the strong backing of the White House and the State Department, it is doubtful that it would be accepted as free and fair. Instead, the White House, which has been willing to excuse the Hernandez government’s corruption scandals and crackdown on the press and civil society, would likely be calling for a recount or, if the integrity of the ballots could not be assured, a new election.

Second, the OAS deserves the thanks of people throughout this hemisphere for the role it has played as an impartial observer and for standing up for a free and fair election in Honduras at a time when democratic processes, freedom of expression and association, and independent judiciaries are threatened not only in Honduras but in many parts of Latin America. Next year, Presidential and Parliamentary elections are scheduled in many countries in Central and South America, and the OAS, which has been a strong defender of democracy and human rights in Venezuela, has a vital role to play in seeking to ensure that those elections meet international standards of fairness and transparency. It is therefore particularly important and reassuring that the OAS Secretariat has insisted on such standards in Honduras by calling for a new election, and it is just as important that the United States stands with the OAS at this time.

Third, it is ultimately for the people of Honduras to decide what kind of a government they want and whether to accept the result declared by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal, which has little credibility outside of President Hernandez’s National Party. It is clear that the country is sharply divided politically, socially, and economically. Absent an electoral process that is widely accepted as free and fair, that divisiveness will imperil the progress that is urgently needed in combating poverty, violence, organized crime, corruption, and impunity that pose immense challenges for the future.

But the international community and particularly the people of this hemisphere also have a stake in this election and in Honduras’s future. In the past decade alone, the United States has provided many hundreds of millions of dollars in aid to Honduras, much of which I supported, but that aid has not achieved the results that the Honduran people and we wanted, and the reason for that, I believe, is primarily because successive Honduran Governments were not serious about addressing many of the key problems I have mentioned, yet the aid kept flowing. Unfortunately, I am not convinced that the current government is sufficiently serious about this, either.

Honduras today desperately needs a freely and fairly elected leader who can unite the country. Unfortunately, this election lacked the conditions of fairness and transparency necessary to produce that result. If a new election is

held under such conditions, it is entirely possible that President Hernandez may win—or he may not. But for him, or any candidate, to obtain the mandate required to unite the country and make a credible case that his government is a deserving partner of the United States, it will need to be by rejecting the serious flaws of this election and demonstrating to all the people of Honduras and this hemisphere what real democracy looks like.

I ask unanimous consent that today's Bloomberg View editorial calling for a new democratic election in Honduras be printed in the RECORD.

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

THE U.S. SHOULD BACK NEW ELECTIONS IN HONDURAS

(By James Gibney and Michael Newman)

LATIN AMERICA NEEDS TO START ITS BIG ELECTION YEAR ON THE RIGHT FOOT

There is only one way out of Honduras's deepening political crisis, and that is a new presidential election. It's a solution the U.S., with its long history in Latin America, should help bring about—although it would help if it had an ambassador there.

The certification this week of incumbent President Juan Orlando Hernandez's contested victory in last month's election has brought Hondurans into the streets, continuing a wave of violent demonstrations that have claimed at least 24 lives. It comes after a deeply flawed ballot-counting process that included long delays, after which Hernandez's early deficit mysteriously disappeared. (The final tally put him ahead by about 1.5 percent.) The vote was denounced by numerous observers—including the Organization of American States, which has called for new elections.

Yet the U.S., which has no ambassador in Tegucigalpa or an assistant secretary of State for the hemisphere, has been only mildly critical. When Hernandez's victory was certified, it urged opposing political parties to "raise any concerns they may have." And just after the disputed election, the State Department renewed aid to Honduras—a move widely interpreted as tacit support for Hernandez.

Hernandez has won friends in Washington with his willingness to crack down on crime and illegal migration to the U.S., and his investor-friendly policies. At the same time, his administration has been responsible for ugly human rights abuses and been implicated in several high-profile corruption scandals. Moreover, he has extended his tenure only by packing Honduras's Supreme Court to lift the country's one-term limit for presidents. The head of the court responsible for certifying election results is one of Hernandez's close allies.

Even before last month's flawed vote, Honduras was notable for the lack of popular confidence in its electoral mechanisms. And if it's stability that Washington seeks, these disputed results don't promise to achieve it. Protracted unrest will only make fighting drugs and illegal migration harder.

The contrast between the OAS and the U.S. could also hurt U.S. influence and credibility. The U.S. has rightly supported the OAS in its efforts to hold Venezuela accountable for its electoral crimes. If it fails to do the same in Honduras, it risks setting a dangerous double standard. This would be especially damaging in a year when nearly two out of three Latin Americans are scheduled to go to the polls.

As the administration's just-released National Security Strategy says, "Stable, friendly, and prosperous states in the Western Hemisphere enhance our security and benefit our economy." The best way to ensure that Honduras becomes one is to support free, transparent and fair elections.

NOMINATION OBJECTION

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I intend to object to any unanimous consent requests at the present time relating to the nominations of David J. Ryder, of New Jersey, to be Director of the Mint, and of Isabel Marie Keenan Patelunas, of Pennsylvania, to be Assistant Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis, Department of the Treasury.

I will object because the Department of the Treasury has failed to respond to a letter I sent on September 29, 2017, to a bureau within the Department seeking documents relevant to an ongoing investigation by the Senate Committee on the Judiciary. Despite several phone calls between committee staff and Treasury personnel to prioritize particular requests within that letter, the Treasury Department has to date failed to provide any documents.

My objection is not intended to question the credentials of Mr. Ryder or Ms. Patelunas in any way. However, the Department must recognize that it has an ongoing obligation to respond to congressional inquiries in a timely and reasonable manner.

ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, in 2008, the Senate took up the question of whether to drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. I wasn't here at the time, but I remember the issue prompted a rigorous debate.

The Senate spent months on the topic. Experts weighed in, and the American people had a chance to share their views in a fairly open process.

It is worth pausing to recall the context for that discussion. In 2008, America produced nearly 7 million barrels of oil a day and imported another 12 million. The price of oil was roughly \$150 a barrel. There was talk about the world hitting "peak oil."

In that context, one side claimed that drilling in the Arctic Refuge was needed to boost domestic production, reduce foreign imports, and lower prices at the pump. The other side countered that any economic benefit from drilling was far outweighed by the need to preserve the Arctic Refuge, a jewel of our public lands, a vital habitat for wildlife, and a sacred place for the Gwich'in people—a place so sacred they are reluctant to even enter it.

In the end, after weighing the facts and considering the costs, 56 Senators, included 6 Republicans, voted to protect the Arctic Refuge from drilling.

That was 2008. Now fast forward to 2017. The Arctic Refuge remains a jewel of our public lands. It remains a vital

habitat for so many flora and fauna. It remains a sacred place for local tribes, and one of America's most spectacular wild places. The case for preservation has not changed.

By contrast, the case for drilling has never been weaker. Compared to 2008, domestic oil production has nearly doubled. Oil imports are down 22 percent. The price of oil has fallen 50 percent. Terminals we built to import oil and gas are now being used to export oil and gas.

For all these reasons, unlike 2008, oil companies are not clamoring for more opportunities to drill. Just last week, oil companies had the chance to bid on 10.3 million acres open for drilling in Alaska. In the end, less than 1 percent of the land was leased.

Think about that. We are not even using all of the land now available for drilling in Alaska. It defies reason that we would open up even more, especially in a place as treasured as the Arctic Refuge.

All of this is to say that, if it made little sense to drill in 2008, it makes no sense to drill now.

So it should surprise no one that the other side doesn't want a real debate. That is why they tucked this into their massive tax bill, hoping to sneak it in under the hood.

Their justification? We need revenue from the oil to pay down the deficit that we are creating with this tax bill.

There are two problems with that. First, the Congressional Budget Office found that, because of low demand, revenue from drilling would be far less than projected, potentially hundreds of millions less.

Second, the only reason we are having this conversation is because the other side wants to spend \$1.4 trillion on tax cuts for corporations and the wealthiest Americans.

Consider this: Their plan spends \$37 billion to give an average tax cut of \$64,000 to those lucky enough to make over \$1 million a year.

To help pay for that, we are about to drill in one of the most stunning places in America.

I am not opposed to oil and gas production. We need transition fuels as we move toward low-carbon, renewable energy. I also recognize that, for many small towns across America, the oil and gas sector is a rare source of steady, high-paying jobs.

In Colorado, we have managed to increase energy production to meet our growing demand. But we have done so in a way that protects our public lands and creates jobs, for those in oil and gas and our thriving outdoor economy. We have found a way for all sides to win.

If my colleagues from Alaska want to increase energy production, create jobs, and spur growth, I stand ready to help, but let's not pretend that drilling in the Arctic Refuge is the only way to do that.

There are places in America where you can set up an oil rig, lay down

roads, and run pipelines in responsible way. The Arctic Refuge is not one of those places. It is a treasure we should leave for our children, not a place to drill for no good reason.

Sadly, the Senate voted to allow drilling in the Arctic Refuge when it took up the broader tax bill.

For every American who opposed this move, know that this isn't over.

Senator MARKEY and I have authored a bill, which now has 41 cosponsors, that would shield the Arctic Refuge from drilling.

So I urge everyone to keep fighting, to keep speaking out for America's public lands, which are the envy of the world, to keep standing up for the beautiful places in America we must pass on to the next generation, as our parents and grandparents did for us.

TRIBUTE TO CAPTAIN LUDVIG K. TANDE

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President: I wish to pay tribute to a member of my staff, Kris Tande, who is retiring from the Senate at the end of this year. This is not the first time he has retired from public service as retired Navy Capt Ludvig K. Kris Tande spent a career as a naval aviator prior to working for several legislators from the State of Florida.

Captain Tande currently serves as my senior State military director, and I am the fourth Florida Senator to have had Captain Tande help me represent northwest Florida. Starting in 1998, Captain Tande served as regional director for Senator Connie Mack, later serving in the same position for Senators Mel Martinez and George LeMieux. Former Congressman Jeff Miller tapped Captain Tande as his district director from 2001–2005. Captain Tande has served the constituents of Northwest Florida for the past 19 years, a term that notably included the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission, which saw Florida gain vital military missions such as the relocation of 7th Special Forces Group from North Carolina and the standup of multiservice F-35 Joint Strike Fighter training at Eglin Air Force Base. During my time, when our country lost one of its brave troops, Captain Tande helped connect me with the families to whom we owed a great debt. When disaster struck, Captain Tande was instrumental in assisting Floridians adversely affected by the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill that resulted in substantial economic damage in northwest Florida.

Former Senator Mel Martinez has this to say about Kris: "Captain Tande was one of the most valued members of my Senate staff. My service in the Senate came at the beginning of the 'War on Terror'. Kris provided me valuable insight into the military issues we were confronting. He particularly helped me to understand the plight of military families impacted by long deployments, and the physical cost of

war on our troops. He was much more than a regional representative. He was an integral part of my Senate life. Kris became a friend and trusted advisor and was a genuine pleasure to know. My visits to the Panhandle were always great because of good, cheerful company and a car full of snacks! Captain, enjoy a well-earned retirement and thank you for your many years of dedicated service to our country."

For many people, this could be considered a full career. For Kris Tande, this was his second act. Captain Tande was designated a Naval aviator in 1970 and subsequently flew 4,000 hours in helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft and deployed on several aircraft carriers. He is a plankowner of the amphibious ship USS *Wasp* LHD-1. Tande held several commands, most notably as commanding officer Naval Air Station Whiting Field, 1993–1995, in Milton, FL, and commander Training Wing Five (1995). His flight helmet sits in the reconstructed NAS Cubi Point Officers' Club, originally in the Republic of the Philippines, now at the National Naval Aviation Museum in Pensacola, FL.

As he leaves the service of his country and heads into retirement with his wife of 47 years, J.J., his four children, and six beloved grandsons, I wanted to thank Captain Tande for his service to his country and particularly to northwest Florida. The business, military personnel, veteran and their families who make up so much of the Florida Panhandle will miss this good public servant's steady hand.

Best wishes to Kris and J.J. as they embark on a well-earned retirement.

TRIBUTE TO KATIE MURRAY

Mr. ROUNDS. Mr. President, today I recognize Katie Murray for all of her hard work on behalf of myself, my staff, and the citizens of South Dakota while working in my Rapid City and Sioux Falls, offices.

Katie is a joy to work with, and she has been an excellent public servant. We wish her the best in all of her future endeavors.

The citizens of South Dakota, my staff, and I are grateful to Katie for her service. We are a better State because of her hard work.

TRIBUTE TO MICHELE MUSTAIN

Mr. ROUNDS. Mr. President, today I recognize Michele Mustain for all of her hard work on behalf of myself, my staff, and the people of South Dakota while working in my Sioux Falls, SD office.

We are grateful for the excellent work she has done for other elected leaders and for all of the help she has given to the citizens of the United States.

Because she has helped so many soldiers and their families, it is fitting that she will now be working for the Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve.

My staff and I wish her the best in the future. We will always appreciate her and her willingness to help us become better public servants.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO FREDERIKA S. JENNER

• Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, it is with great pleasure that, on behalf of Delaware's congressional delegation, I wish to honor the exemplary service of educator and Delaware State Education Association leader Frederika S. Jenner. She has served Delaware as a teacher and education advocate since 1972, and during that time, she worked to effectively improve our education system and shape thousands of young children's lives. Frederika has now retired after more than four decades of serving in Delaware's schools and advocating on behalf of its students and teachers. She is a selfless education advocate and adviser, as well as a devoted wife and mother. Delaware's education system and countless Delawareans will benefit from her life's work for decades to come.

Frederika is a graduate of A.I. DuPont High School in Wilmington, DE. She earned her bachelor's degree in education from Goucher College in Baltimore and then returned to Delaware where she taught elementary school for 39 years. She had such a dedication to education that she furthered her own while she was teaching and ultimately received her master's in instruction from the University of Delaware. Although she started as an English and reading specialist, Frederika took a leap to become a science teacher along the way, teaching herself and earning her certification all in the first year in her new position. From then on, science remained an intense passion of hers, as well as a focus of much of her work both in and out of the classroom. Throughout her career, Frederika also encouraged a love of reading among her students and took great pride in her voluminous classroom library, with over 2,000 books on its shelves.

Throughout her many years in the classroom, Frederika became a trusted voice among her fellow educators. From day one, she was involved as a building representative for the Delaware State Education Association, and her activism grew from there. Later, she would serve as president of the 1,200-member Red Clay Education Association and then went on to serve as an executive board member of the Delaware State Education Association for 3 years. In 2011, Frederika was elected president of the Delaware State Education Association. In that role, she emerged as a strong and fair leader, working to shape education policy decisionmaking. For many years, she served as the bridge between DSEA members and public officials as the State worked to create and implement

new educational standards that we use today and to chart a course to reach them.

Frederika also took on the task of improving science education in Delaware. She worked for 5 years as a Coalition science specialist and helped school districts all over Delaware integrate new State science standards and innovative teaching practices, including the Smithsonian Kits Programs. She regularly traveled the State, training teachers and delivering necessary supplies—everything from magnets and batteries to live crayfish, all in the interest of ensuring that students receiving hands-on science training. In 2010, Delaware Governor Jack Markell recognized her immense capabilities and appointed Frederika to the State Employee Advisory Committee.

There is a reason why, as Governor of Delaware, I was laser-focused on education and strengthening families. I believe these are two areas where we can make a lasting difference in the trajectory of a young person's life. Frederika shares this belief and dedicated her career to the young people of Delaware. On behalf of both U.S. Senator CHRIS COONS and U.S. Representative LISA BLUNT ROCHESTER, I want to thank Frederika S. Jenner for her service to the people of Delaware. Her love of children, along with her leadership and dedication to the notion that all children can learn, have improved the quality of education for countless Delawareans who were fortunate enough to be in her classroom and many who were not. However, all Delawareans have benefitted from the educational system she has worked so hard to help improve.

We are delighted to offer today our heartfelt congratulations to Frederika Jenner on a job well done, and we want to convey our thanks as well to her husband, Charles, and their sons Andrew and Nick for sharing with the children of Delaware a remarkable woman and educator. ●

TRIBUTE TO CHARLES DALTON

● Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I am genuinely honored to recognize before the U.S. Senate and the Nation Charles Dalton of Greenville, SC, on the occasion of his retirement as chief executive officer and president of Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative and Blue Ridge Security Solutions.

Born and raised on a farm in Pickens, SC, Charles from an early age developed a love for antique cars, Clemson football, and serving the Upstate of South Carolina. Charles cofounded and operated a furniture company in Pickens with his brother, Allison Dalton, before starting his career with Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative.

Charles was elected chief executive in 1982 and has committed his time to serving the State of South Carolina by bringing power to remote, mountainous communities in five counties in the Upstate. His leadership over the

last 36 years has helped the energy provider's membership to more than double, growing from 29,000 members to approximately 66,000. Charles has a reputation as a humble, accessible leader. In fact, he has been known to give out his home phone number to Blue Ridge members in an effort to provide constant service and maintain relationships in the communities in which he serves.

In addition to contributing to the Upstate's growing economy during his tenure at Blue Ridge, Charles has also served in multiple capacities on non-profit boards, including the Greenville chapter of the American Red Cross, Peace Center, and Cannon Memorial Hospital. He was selected to serve as a commissioner for the South Carolina Department of Transportation and cofounded the Upstate South Carolina Alliance, an organization committed to establishing the Upstate as a prominent economic region competing in the global economy. After his retirement, Charles and his wife, Libby, are looking forward to remaining engaged and active in the Upstate.

Charles has received statewide recognition for his contributions to business, regional collaboration, and community service in South Carolina. In 1998, he was selected by Governor Beasley to serve as South Carolina's "Ambassador for Economic Development." As a proud graduate of Clemson University, Charles was recognized with the 2014 Distinguished Service Award by the Clemson Alumni Association for serving as an exceptional role model for present and future students. Last year, Charles was awarded the Spirit of the Upstate Award for consistently exhibiting exceptional leadership and dedicating his personal and professional life to strengthening the Upstate region in South Carolina. These accolades serve as a testament to the profound role Charles has played in improving the lives of South Carolinians in the Upstate, and I am confident that he will continue to do so in this next chapter of life.

It is a distinct honor to recognize Charles Dalton on this important milestone. I ask that my colleagues join me in thanking Charles for the many contributions he has made over the course of his career, and I wish him all the best. ●

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF BETHEL AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

● Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the 150th anniversary of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal—A.M.E.—Church in Saginaw, MI. This occasion commemorates the humble beginnings of Bethel A.M.E. from a church of 6 to now more than 1,000 congregants, celebrating 150 years of faith, fellowship, and family.

Bethel A.M.E. Church, the first African-American church in Saginaw, began in the home of Mr. and Mrs.

Allen Ford, with six congregants in 1867. The church began to rapidly grow and became the social and religious foundation and place of refuge for African Americans in the community. As Bethel A.M.E. rose in prominence, it attracted the attention of notable figures, including abolitionist and women's rights activist Sojourner Truth in 1871.

Over the past 150 years, more than a dozen pastors have led Bethel A.M.E. and have left lasting contributions to the church's fundamental mission and community outreach. Reverend J.A. Dean's passion for ministering to youth laid the foundation for youth programs such as the Daily Vacation Bible School and the Carver Center of National Youth Organization in Saginaw. Each pastor had a hand in the expansion of the church. Reverend Isaiah Snelling spearheaded the development of a new church complex. After 12 years, the construction was completed under Rev. Harold C. Huggins' tenure in 1967. Bethel A.M.E. celebrated the church's centennial and dedication of the new development within the same year.

Bethel A.M.E. has had many successes over the years and has also endured great tragedy. Kenneth Bowman stepped into the role of substitute pastor when Rev. R.C. Boyd, who served from 1949 to 1954, became ill. Pastor Bowman accomplished many goals within his 1-year tenure, until he was killed in an automobile accident on March 13, 1954. Soon after, Pastor Boyd passed away on March 18, 1954, succumbing to his illness.

Through the tragedies, Bethel A.M.E. held true to its motto: "Love Conquers All," by providing for the physical and spiritual needs of the Saginaw community with steadfast and compassionate stewardship by organizing missions, youth programs, and prison ministries. Bethel A.M.E. also feeds the hungry, assists residents experiencing homelessness, and operates both a credit union and daycare center.

Today Bethel A.M.E. Church, led by Pastor Dennis Laffoon, is the oldest African-American church in the Great Lakes Bay Region. Their membership has grown from its six founding members into a proud and active body of more than 1,000 strong. In its 150 years, Bethel A.M.E. has been a community institution, spiritual refuge, and civic leader in Saginaw.

I am pleased to rise today to ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing the historic milestone of the 150th anniversary of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church. From modest beginnings in that little home on Fourth Street to expanding its square footage and its mission to pass on the blessings they have received onto the community, Bethel A.M.E. has much to celebrate. I wish the leadership and congregation continued success and prosperity in the years ahead. ●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Ms. Ridgway, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

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

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

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 11:02 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, without amendment:

S. 1536. An act to designate a human trafficking prevention coordinator and to expand the scope of activities authorized under the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's outreach and education program to include human trafficking prevention activities, and for other purposes.

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

H.R. 3312. An act to amend the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act to specify when bank holding companies may be subject to certain enhanced supervision, and for other purposes.

H.R. 4254. An act to amend the National Science Foundation Authorization Act of 2002 to strengthen the aerospace workforce pipeline by the promotion of Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program and National Aeronautics and Space Administration internship and fellowship opportunities to women, and for other purposes.

H.R. 4323. An act to promote veteran involvement in STEM education, computer science, and scientific research, and for other purposes.

H.R. 4375. An act to provide for a report on broadening participation in certain National Science Foundation research and education programs, to collect data on Federal research grants to science agencies, and for other purposes.

At 1:48 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House agreed to the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 1) to provide for reconciliation pursuant to titles II and V of the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2018.

MEASURES REFERRED

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

H.R. 3312. An act to amend the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act to specify when bank holding companies may be subject to certain enhanced supervision, and for other purposes; to the

Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

H.R. 4254. An act to amend the National Science Foundation Authorization Act of 2002 to strengthen the aerospace workforce pipeline by the promotion of Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program and National Aeronautics and Space Administration internship and fellowship opportunities to women, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

H.R. 4323. An act to promote veteran involvement in STEM education, computer science, and scientific research, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

H.R. 4375. An act to provide for a report on broadening participation in certain National Science Foundation research and education programs, to collect data on Federal research grants to science agencies, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. HATCH, from the Committee on Finance, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute:

S. 1827. A bill to extend funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 115-197).

By Mr. HOEVEN, from the Committee on Indian Affairs, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute:

S. 1333. A bill to provide for rental assistance for homeless or at-risk Indian veterans (Rept. No. 115-198).

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. YOUNG (for himself and Ms. BALDWIN):

S. 2255. A bill to reauthorize title VI of the Higher Education Act of 1965 in order to improve and encourage innovation in international education, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. HATCH (for himself, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. THUNE, and Mr. ISAKSON):

S. 2256. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend expiring provisions, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. COONS (for himself and Mr. GRAHAM):

S. 2257. A bill to establish the IMPACT for Energy Foundation; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. PORTMAN (for himself, Mr. COONS, and Mr. KING):

S. 2258. A bill to provide for the discharge of parent borrower liability if a student on whose behalf a parent has received certain student loans becomes disabled; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. BOOKER (for himself, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. BROWN, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. FRANKEN, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. KAINE, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. SANDERS, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. MERKLEY, and Mr. WYDEN):

S. 2259. A bill to establish certain duties for pharmacies to ensure provision of Food and Drug Administration-approved contraception, medication related to contraception, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

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

By Mr. RUBIO (for himself and Mr. NELSON):

S. Res. 362. A resolution recognizing the service of the Los Angeles-class attack submarine the USS Jacksonville and the crew of the USS Jacksonville, who served the United States with valor and bravery; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. NELSON (for himself and Mr. RUBIO):

S. Res. 363. A resolution expressing profound concern about the growing political, humanitarian, and economic crisis in Venezuela and the widespread human rights abuses perpetrated by the Government of Venezuela; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 515

At the request of Mr. CASEY, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Ms. HETTKAMP) was added as a cosponsor of S. 515, a bill to require the Secretary of Labor to maintain a publicly available list of all employers that relocate a call center overseas, to make such companies ineligible for Federal grants or guaranteed loans, and to require disclosure of the physical location of business agents engaging in customer service communications, and for other purposes.

S. 1580

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the names of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) and the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) were added as cosponsors of S. 1580, a bill to enhance the transparency, improve the coordination, and intensify the impact of assistance to support access to primary and secondary education for displaced children and persons, including women and girls, and for other purposes.

S. 1615

At the request of Mr. NELSON, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. 1615, a bill to authorize the cancellation of removal and adjustment of status of certain individuals who are long-term United States residents and who entered the United States as children, and for other purposes.

S. 1693

At the request of Mr. PORTMAN, the names of the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI) and the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) were added as cosponsors of S. 1693, a bill to amend the Communications Act of 1934 to clarify that section 230 of that Act does not prohibit the enforcement against providers and users of interactive computer services of Federal and State

criminal and civil law relating to sex trafficking.

S. 1774

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the name of the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. PAUL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1774, a bill to provide protections for workers with respect to their right to select or refrain from selecting representation by a labor organization.

S. 1914

At the request of Mr. WARNER, the name of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. YOUNG) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1914, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act in order to strengthen rules in case of competition for diabetic testing strips, and for other purposes.

S. 2070

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from Wisconsin (Ms. BALDWIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2070, a bill to amend the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, to reauthorize the Missing Alzheimer's Disease Patient Alert Program, and to promote initiatives that will reduce the risk of injury and death relating to the wandering characteristics of some children with autism.

S. 2105

At the request of Mr. BOOZMAN, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2105, a bill to modify the presumption of service connection for veterans who were exposed to herbicide agents while serving in the Armed Forces in Thailand during the Vietnam era, and for other purposes.

S. 2147

At the request of Mr. BROWN, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2147, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to create a Pension Rehabilitation Trust Fund to establish a Pension Rehabilitation Administration within the Department of the Treasury to make loans to multiemployer defined benefit plans, and for other purposes.

S. 2152

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2152, a bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to provide for assistance for victims of child pornography, and for other purposes.

S. 2236

At the request of Mrs. GILLIBRAND, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2236, a bill to require covered discrimination and covered harassment awareness and prevention training for Members, officers, employees, interns, fellows, and detailees of Congress within 30 days of employment and annually thereafter, to require a biennial climate survey of Congress, to amend the enforcement process under the Office of Congressional Workplace

Rights for covered discrimination and covered harassment complaints, and for other purposes.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 362—RECOGNIZING THE SERVICE OF THE LOS ANGELES-CLASS ATTACK SUBMARINE THE USS JACKSONVILLE AND THE CREW OF THE USS JACKSONVILLE, WHO SERVED THE UNITED STATES WITH VALOR AND BRAVERY

Mr. RUBIO (for himself and Mr. NELSON) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 362

Whereas the USS Jacksonville (SSN 699) is named after Jacksonville, the largest and most populous city in Florida, and is the first ship to bear that name;

Whereas the slogan of the city of Jacksonville, Florida, is "The Bold New City of the South" and inspired the nickname of the USS Jacksonville, which is "The Bold One";

Whereas, on August 10, 2017, the USS Jacksonville returned to the home port of the USS Jacksonville at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam in the Western Pacific after 209 days out to sea, thus completing the 15th and final deployment of the USS Jacksonville;

Whereas, on the last deployment of the USS Jacksonville, the USS Jacksonville steamed more than 48,000 nautical miles while conducting—

(1) maritime security operations in the areas of operation of the Fifth Fleet and Seventh Fleet of the United States; and

(2) joint exercises with the Maritime Self-Defense Force of Japan and the navy of the Republic of India;

Whereas, since the commissioning of the USS Jacksonville on May 16, 1981, the USS Jacksonville has completed 2 around-the-world cruises, visited ports on nearly every continent, and completed countless critical missions; and

Whereas, on September 11, 2001, while the USS Jacksonville was attached to the Enterprise Battle Group, the USS Jacksonville—

(1) was in the Mediterranean Sea; and

(2) stayed on-station to provide critical intelligence support as the United States prepared to retaliate in response to the terrorist attacks carried out on that day: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate recognizes the service of the Los Angeles-class attack submarine the USS Jacksonville and the crew of the USS Jacksonville, who served the United States with valor and bravery.

SENATE RESOLUTION 363—EXPRESSING PROFOUND CONCERN ABOUT THE GROWING POLITICAL, HUMANITARIAN, AND ECONOMIC CRISIS IN VENEZUELA AND THE WIDESPREAD HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES PERPETRATED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF VENEZUELA

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

S. RES. 363

Whereas the crisis in Venezuela continues to ravage the country and the Venezuelan

people suffer from shortages of essential medicines, food, and basic supplies;

Whereas because of the crisis in Venezuela, approximately 1,300,000 people are undernourished and roughly 75 percent of the population has lost an average of 19 pounds since the start of the economic crisis;

Whereas the largest impact of the crisis in Venezuela is felt by children, as 54 percent suffer from nutritional deficiencies, according to the nongovernmental organization Caritas;

Whereas public health organizations in Venezuela report that only 38 percent of essential drugs are present in the country and more than 60 of the hospitals in Venezuela no longer have potable water, leading to a rise in chronic diseases, as well as in communicable diseases such as malaria and diphtheria;

Whereas the crisis forces thousands of Venezuelans to leave the country in vulnerable conditions and the number of Venezuelans seeking asylum in 2017 was almost double that in 2016, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees;

Whereas President of Venezuela Nicolas Maduro has repeatedly denied the existence of Venezuela's humanitarian crisis and rejected offers of international humanitarian assistance;

Whereas, instead of responding to the needs and demands of its people, the Government of Venezuela has prioritized the consolidation of power, undermined Venezuela's democracy, and engaged in a campaign of repression and human rights abuses;

Whereas the Government of Venezuela curtails freedom of expression, harasses journalists, and limits the ability of the Venezuelan people and the world to learn about the crisis and its effects;

Whereas, starting in April 2017, Venezuelan citizens staged massive, nationwide protests for more than four months in direct opposition to President Maduro's efforts to consolidate power and undermine Venezuela's democracy;

Whereas the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights reports that 124 deaths have been investigated by the Venezuelan Attorney General's Office in connection with the 2017 protests, with at least 46 victims allegedly killed by security forces and 27 more by members of armed pro-government civilian groups, bringing the total number of extrajudicial deaths to 357 between July 2015 and March 2017;

Whereas the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner concluded that there has been widespread and systematic use of excessive force and arbitrary detentions against demonstrators, as well as violent raids of homes, torture, and ill-treatment of those detained in connection with the protests;

Whereas human rights organizations in Venezuela have identified more than 5,000 arbitrary detentions between April 1, 2017, and October 31, 2017, and at least 299 political prisoners currently detained;

Whereas Amnesty International documented repeated use of various methods of arbitrary detention, including torture and forced disappearances intended to silence dissidents and limit freedom of expression;

Whereas nongovernmental organizations Human Rights Watch and Foro Penal have documented how Venezuelan security forces have used tactics of torture, involving electric shocks and asphyxiation, against individuals who oppose the Government of Venezuela;

Whereas the Government of Venezuela continues to use the Bolivarian National Guard and National Police to repress and detain protesters and subsequently try them in military courts with at least 198 documented

cases against civilians in military courts; and

Whereas, on July 25, 2017, the Organization of American States Secretary General Luis Almagro convened public hearings to review whether the Government of Venezuela has committed crimes against humanity and should be referred to the International Criminal Court: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) expresses its profound concern about the humanitarian impacts of the crisis suffered by the people of Venezuela, including widespread shortages of basic food commodities and essential medicines;

(2) urges President of Venezuela Nicolas Maduro to permit the delivery of international humanitarian assistance;

(3) calls on the Government of Venezuela to immediately release all political prisoners and to respect internationally recognized human rights;

(4) calls on the Government of Venezuela to ensure the neutrality and professionalism of all security forces and to respect the Venezuelan people's rights to freedom of expression and assembly;

(5) supports the Secretary General of the Organization of American States in his review of whether the widespread human rights abuses in Venezuela warrant an investigation by the International Criminal Court; and

(6) urges the President of the United States to provide full support for OAS efforts in examining the human rights situation in Venezuela and to instruct appropriate Federal agencies to hold officials of the Government of Venezuela accountable for violations of United States law and abuses of internationally recognized human rights.

NOTICE OF INTENT TO OBJECT TO PROCEEDING

I, Senator CHARLES E. GRASSLEY, intend to object to proceeding to the nomination of David J. Ryder, of New Jersey, to be Director of the Mint, and Isabel Marie Keenan Patelunas, of Pennsylvania, to be Assistant Secretary of Intelligence and Analysis, Department of the Treasury, dated December 20, 2017.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I have a request for one committee to meet during today's session of the Senate. It has the approval of the Majority and Minority leaders.

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

SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the Committee on Environment and Public Works is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, December 20, 2017, at 10:30 a.m. in room SD-406 to conduct a hearing entitled "Freight Movement: Assessing Where We Are Now and Where We Need to Go".

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session for the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 489, 498, 509, 531, and 532; that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nominations be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nominations of Bruce D. Jette, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Army; James E. McPherson, of Virginia, to be General Counsel of the Department of the Army; Randall G. Schriver, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense; Thomas Harker, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Navy; and John P. Roth, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Air Force en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 571, 572, 573, 574, and 575.

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

The clerk will report the nominations en bloc.

The legislative clerk read the nominations of Duane A. Kees, of Arkansas, to be United States Attorney for the Western District of Arkansas for the term of four years; Stephen R. McAllister, of Kansas, to be United States Attorney for the District of Kansas for the term of four years; Ronald A. Parsons, Jr., of South Dakota, to be United States Attorney for the District of South Dakota for the term of four years; Ryan K. Patrick, of Texas, to be United States Attorney for the Southern District of Texas for the term of four years; and Michael B. Stuart, of West Virginia, to be United States Attorney for the Southern District of West Virginia for the term of four years.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc

with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nominations be printed in the RECORD.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Kees, McAllister, Parsons, Patrick, and Stuart nominations en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at a time to be determined by the majority leader, in consultation with the Democratic leader, on January 3, 2018, the Senate proceed to executive session for the consideration of the following nomination: Executive Calendar No. 508. I ask consent that there be 30 minutes of debate, equally divided in the usual form; that following the use or yielding back of time, the Senate vote on the nomination with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nomination be printed in the RECORD. I further ask that notwithstanding rule XXXI, the nomination be held in status quo into the second session of the 115th Congress.

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

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of Executive Calendar Nos. 560 through 569 and all nominations placed on the Secretary's desk; that the nominations be confirmed; that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order; that any statements related to the nominations be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate then resume legislative session.

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

The nominations considered and confirmed are as follows:

IN THE AIR FORCE

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Air Force to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be lieutenant general

Maj. Gen. Anthony J. Cotton

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Air Force to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 624:

To be brigadier general

Col. Sharon A. Shaffer

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Air Force to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 8069:

To be brigadier general

Col. Robert J. Marks

The following named officers for appointment in the United States Air Force to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 624:

To be brigadier general

Col. Ronald G. Allen, Jr.
Col. Mark R. August
Col. Charles E. Brown, Jr.
Col. Joel L. Carey
Col. Brenda P. Cartier
Col. Darren R. Cole
Col. Heath A. Collins
Col. Douglas S. Coppinger
Col. Matthew W. Davidson
Col. Todd A. Dozier
Col. Peter M. Fesler
Col. Eric H. Froehlich
Col. Michael A. Greiner
Col. Andrew P. Hansen
Col. Michelle L. Hayworth
Col. Thomas K. Hensley
Col. Stephen F. Jost
Col. Jeffrey R. King
Col. Leonard J. Kosinski
Col. Thomas E. Kunkel
Col. Laura L. Lenderman
Col. Rodney D. Lewis
Col. Robert K. Lyman
Col. David B. Lyons
Col. Michael E. Martin
Col. Joseph D. McFall
Col. David N. Miller, Jr.
Col. Christopher J. Niemi
Col. Clark J. Quinn
Col. George M. Reynolds
Col. Douglas A. Schiess
Col. David W. Snoddy
Col. Adrian L. Spain
Col. Ernest J. Teichert, III
Col. Alice W. Trevino

IN THE ARMY

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Army to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be lieutenant general

Maj. Gen. Christopher G. Cavoli

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Army to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be general

Lt. Gen. Stephen J. Townsend

IN THE NAVY

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Navy to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be vice admiral

Rear Adm. Nancy A. Norton

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Navy to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be vice admiral

Rear Adm. Richard A. Brown

IN THE AIR FORCE

The following named officer for appointment in the Reserve of the Air Force to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 12203:

To be brigadier general

Col. Mitchel Neurock

The following named officers for appointment in the Reserve of the Air Force to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 12203:

To be major general

Brig. Gen. Hubert C. Hegtveldt
Brig. Gen. Timothy P. Kelly
Brig. Gen. Albert V. Lupenski
Brig. Gen. Samuel C. Mahaney
Brig. Gen. John B. Williams

NOMINATIONS PLACED ON THE SECRETARY'S DESK

IN THE AIR FORCE

PN1296 AIR FORCE nomination of Arianne R. Morrison, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of December 1, 2017.

PN1297 AIR FORCE nomination of Richard A. Hanrahan, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of December 1, 2017.

PN1298 AIR FORCE nominations (2) beginning ALECK A. BROWN, and ending JOHN D. RITTER, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of December 1, 2017.

IN THE ARMY

PN1142 ARMY nomination of Jennifer A. Mahoney, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of October 16, 2017.

PN1143 ARMY nominations (2) beginning YON T. CHUNG, and ending MICHAEL B. PAYNE, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of October 16, 2017.

PN1265 ARMY nominations (2) beginning NATHELE J. ANDERSON, and ending BRIAN R. HORTON, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 27, 2017.

PN1266 ARMY nominations (2) beginning THOMAS W. GREEN, and ending KENNETH M. KOOP, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 27, 2017.

PN1267 ARMY nomination of Adam R. Liberman, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 27, 2017.

PN1268 ARMY nomination of Michael E. Steelman, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 27, 2017.

PN1269 ARMY nomination of Gerald D. Gangaram, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 27, 2017.

PN1270 ARMY nomination of Brian R. Johnson, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 27, 2017.

PN1271–1 ARMY nominations (18) beginning SCOTT T. AYERS, and ending TYESHA L. SMITH, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 27, 2017.

PN1272 ARMY nomination of Peter J. Armstrong, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 27, 2017.

PN1273 ARMY nomination of Ali S. Zaza, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 27, 2017.

PN1274 ARMY nomination of Phillip T. Buckler, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 27, 2017.

PN1275 ARMY nomination of Vernice K. Favor-Williams, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 27, 2017.

PN1300 ARMY nomination of Heather M. Lee, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of December 1, 2017.

IN THE NAVY

PN1245 NAVY nominations (50) beginning WILLIAM L. ARNEST, and ending KAREN J. WOOD, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 14, 2017.

PN1301 NAVY nomination of Sharif H. Calfee, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of December 1, 2017.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now resume legislative session.

THE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of the following bills en bloc: Calendar No. 124, S. 117 and Calendar No. 56, S. 501. I further ask unanimous consent that, where applicable, the committee-reported amendment be agreed to, the bills, as amended, if amended, be considered read a third time and passed, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, all en bloc.

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

ALEX DIEKMANN PEAK DESIGNATION ACT OF 2017

The Senate proceeded to consider the bill (S. 117) to designate a mountain peak in the State of Montana as “Alex Diekmann Peak,” which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, with an amendment, as follows:

(The part of the bill intended to be stricken is shown in boldface brackets and the part of the bill intended to be inserted is shown in italics.)

S. 117

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Alex Diekmann Peak Designation Act of 2017”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

[(Congress finds that Alex Diekmann—
(1) was a loving father of two and an adoring husband who lived in Bozeman, Montana, where he was a renowned conservationist who dedicated his career to protecting some of the most outstanding natural and scenic resource areas of the Northern Rockies;

(2) was responsible during his unique conservation career for the protection of more than 50 distinct areas in the States of Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho, conserving for the public over 100,000 acres of iconic mountains and valleys, rivers and creeks, ranches and farms, and historic sites and open spaces;

(3) played a central role in securing the future of an array of special landscapes, including—

[(A) the spectacular Devil's Canyon in the Craig Thomas Special Management Area in the State of Wyoming;

[(B) crucial fish and wildlife habitat and recreation access land in the Sawtooth Mountains of Idaho, along the Salmon River, and near the Canadian border; and

[(C) diverse and vitally important land all across the Crown of the Continent in the State of Montana, from the world-famous Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem to Glacier National Park, to the Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystem, to the recreational trails, working forests and ranches, and critical drinking water supply for Whitefish, and beyond;

[(4) made a particularly profound mark on the preservation of the natural wonders in and near the Madison Valley and the Madison Range, Montana, where more than 12 miles of the Madison River and much of the world-class scenery, fish and wildlife, and recreation opportunities of the area have become and shall remain conserved and available to the public because of his efforts;

[(5) inspired others with his skill, passion, and spirit of partnership that brought together communities, landowners, sportsmen, and the public at large;

[(6) lost a heroic battle with cancer on February 1, 2016, at the age of 52;

[(7) is survived by his wife, Lisa, and their 2 sons, Logan and Liam; and

[(8) leaves a lasting legacy across Montana and the Northern Rockies that will benefit all people of the United States in our time and in the generations to follow.

SEC. 3. DESIGNATION OF ALEX DIEKMANN PEAK, MONTANA.]

SEC. 2. DESIGNATION OF ALEX DIEKMANN PEAK, MONTANA.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The unnamed 9,765-foot peak located 2.2 miles west-northwest of Finger Mountain on the western boundary of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness, Montana (UTM coordinates Zone 12, 457966 E., 4982589 N.), shall be known and designated as “Alex Diekmann Peak”.

(b) REFERENCES.—Any reference in a law, map, regulation, document, record, or other paper of the United States to the peak described in subsection (a) shall be considered to be a reference to “Alex Diekmann Peak”.

The committee-reported amendment was agreed to.

The bill (S. 117), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 117

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Alex Diekmann Peak Designation Act of 2017”.

SEC. 2. DESIGNATION OF ALEX DIEKMANN PEAK, MONTANA.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The unnamed 9,765-foot peak located 2.2 miles west-northwest of Finger Mountain on the western boundary of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness, Montana (UTM coordinates Zone 12, 457966 E., 4982589 N.), shall be known and designated as “Alex Diekmann Peak”.

(b) REFERENCES.—Any reference in a law, map, regulation, document, record, or other paper of the United States to the peak described in subsection (a) shall be considered to be a reference to “Alex Diekmann Peak”.

EAST ROSEBUD WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS ACT

The bill (S. 501) to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate cer-

tain segments of East Rosebud Creek in Carbon County, Montana, as components of the Wild and Scenic Rivers System, was considered, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 501

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “East Rosebud Wild and Scenic Rivers Act”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS; PURPOSE.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

(1) East Rosebud Creek is cherished by the people of Montana and visitors from across the United States for its clean water, spectacular natural setting, and outstanding recreational opportunities;

(2) recreational activities, including fishing, hunting, camping, paddling, hiking, rock climbing, and wildlife watching, on East Rosebud Creek and the surrounding land generate millions of dollars annually for the local economy;

(3) East Rosebud Creek—

(A) is a national treasure;

(B) possesses outstandingly remarkable values; and

(C) merits the high level of protection afforded by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. 1271 et seq.) in order to maintain the benefits provided by the Creek, as described in paragraphs (1) and (2), for future generations to enjoy; and

(4) designation of select public land segments of East Rosebud Creek under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. 1271 et seq.) would recognize the importance of maintaining the values of the Creek while preserving public access, respecting private property rights, allowing appropriate maintenance of existing infrastructure, and allowing historical uses of the Creek to continue.

(b) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this Act is to designate East Rosebud Creek in the State of Montana as a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System to preserve and protect for present and future generations the outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, and geologic values of the Creek.

SEC. 3. DESIGNATION OF WILD AND SCENIC RIVER SEGMENTS.

(a) DESIGNATION.—Section 3(a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. 1274(a)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(213) EAST ROSEBUD CREEK, MONTANA.—The portions of East Rosebud Creek in the State of Montana, consisting of—

“(A) the 13-mile segment exclusively on public land within the Custer National Forest from the source in the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness downstream to the point at which the Creek enters East Rosebud Lake, including the stream reach between Twin Outlets Lake and Fossil Lake, to be administered by the Secretary of Agriculture as a wild river; and

“(B) the 7-mile segment exclusively on public land within the Custer National Forest from immediately below, but not including, the outlet of East Rosebud Lake downstream to the point at which the Creek enters private property for the first time, to be administered by the Secretary of Agriculture as a recreational river.”.

(b) ADJACENT MANAGEMENT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Nothing in paragraph (213) of section 3(a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. 1274(a)) (as added by subsection (a)) creates a protective perimeter or buffer zone outside the designated boundary of the river segment designated by that paragraph.

(2) OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES.—The fact that an otherwise authorized activity or use can be seen or heard within the boundary of the river segment designated by paragraph (213) of section 3(a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. 1274(a)) (as added by subsection (a)) shall not preclude the activity or use outside the boundary of the river segment.

ORDERS FOR THURSDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2017

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 10 a.m., Thursday, December 21; further, that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, and the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; finally, that following leader remarks, the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10 A.M. TOMORROW

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

There being no objection, the Senate, at 6:04 p.m., adjourned until Thursday, December 21, 2017, at 10 a.m.

NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate:

THE JUDICIARY

SUSAN PARADISE BAXTER, OF PENNSYLVANIA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA, VICE SEAN J. MCLAUGHLIN, RESIGNED.

JOEL M. CARSON III, OF NEW MEXICO, TO BE UNITED STATES CIRCUIT JUDGE FOR THE TENTH CIRCUIT, VICE PAUL J. KELLY, JR., RETIRED.

COLM F. CONNOLLY, OF DELAWARE, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT OF DELAWARE, VICE SUE L. ROBINSON, RETIRED.

KARI A. DOOLEY, OF CONNECTICUT, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT OF CONNECTICUT, VICE ROBERT N. CHATIGNY, RETIRED.

GORDON P. GIAMPIETRO, OF WISCONSIN, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF WISCONSIN, VICE RUDOLPH T. RANDA, RETIRED.

MARILYN JEAN HORAN, OF PENNSYLVANIA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA, VICE GARY L. LANCASTER, DECEASED.

CHAD F. KENNEY, OF PENNSYLVANIA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA, VICE LUIS FELIPE RESTREPO, ELEVATED.

MARYELLEN NOREIKA, OF DELAWARE, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT OF DELAWARE, VICE GREGORY MONETA SLEET, RETIRED.

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate December 20, 2017:

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

BRUCE D. JETTE, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY.

JAMES E. MCPHERSON, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY.

RANDALL C. SCHRIVER, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE.

THOMAS HARKER, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY.

JOHN P. ROTH, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE.

IN THE AIR FORCE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 601:

To be lieutenant general

MAJ. GEN. ANTHONY J. COTTON

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be brigadier general

COL. SHARON A. SHAFFER

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 8069:

To be brigadier general

COL. ROBERT J. MARKS

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be brigadier general

COL. RONALD G. ALLEN, JR.
 COL. MARK R. AUGUST
 COL. CHARLES E. BROWN, JR.
 COL. JOEL L. CAREY
 COL. BRENDA P. CARTIER
 COL. DARREN R. COLLE
 COL. HEATH A. COLLINS
 COL. DOUGLAS S. COPPINGER
 COL. MATTHEW W. DAVIDSON
 COL. TODD A. DOZIER
 COL. PETER M. FESLER
 COL. ERIC H. FROEHLICH
 COL. MICHAEL A. GREINER
 COL. ANDREW P. HANSEN
 COL. MICHELLE L. HAYWORTH
 COL. THOMAS K. HENSLEY
 COL. STEPHEN F. JOST
 COL. JEFFREY R. KING
 COL. LEONARD J. KOSINSKI
 COL. THOMAS E. KUNKEL
 COL. LAURA L. LENDERMAN
 COL. RODNEY D. LEWIS
 COL. ROBERT K. LYMAN
 COL. DAVID B. LYONS
 COL. MICHAEL E. MARTIN
 COL. JOSEPH D. MCFALL
 COL. DAVID N. MILLER, JR.
 COL. CHRISTOPHER J. NIEMI
 COL. CLARK J. QUINN
 COL. GEORGE M. REYNOLDS
 COL. DOUGLAS A. SCHIESS
 COL. DAVID W. SNODDY
 COL. ADRIAN L. SPAIN
 COL. ERNEST J. TEICHERT III
 COL. ALICE W. TREVINO

IN THE ARMY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 601:

To be lieutenant general

MAJ. GEN. CHRISTOPHER G. CAVOLI

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 601:

To be general

LT. GEN. STEPHEN J. TOWNSEND

IN THE NAVY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 601:

To be vice admiral

REAR ADM. NANCY A. NORTON

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 601:

To be vice admiral

REAR ADM. RICHARD A. BROWN

IN THE AIR FORCE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE RESERVE OF THE AIR FORCE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be brigadier general

COL. MITCHEL NEUROCK

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE RESERVE OF THE AIR FORCE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be major general

BRIG. GEN. HUBERT C. HEGTVEDT
 BRIG. GEN. TIMOTHY P. KELLY
 BRIG. GEN. ALBERT V. LUPENSKI
 BRIG. GEN. SAMUEL C. MAHANEY
 BRIG. GEN. JOHN B. WILLIAMS

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

DUANE A. KEES, OF ARKANSAS, TO BE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF ARKANSAS FOR THE TERM OF FOUR YEARS.

STEPHEN R. MCALLISTER, OF KANSAS, TO BE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY FOR THE DISTRICT OF KANSAS FOR THE TERM OF FOUR YEARS.

RONALD A. PARSONS, JR., OF SOUTH DAKOTA, TO BE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY FOR THE DISTRICT OF SOUTH DAKOTA FOR THE TERM OF FOUR YEARS.

RYAN K. PATRICK, OF TEXAS, TO BE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS FOR THE TERM OF FOUR YEARS.

MICHAEL B. STUART, OF WEST VIRGINIA, TO BE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF WEST VIRGINIA FOR THE TERM OF FOUR YEARS.

IN THE AIR FORCE

AIR FORCE NOMINATION OF ARIANNE R. MORRISON, TO BE MAJOR.

AIR FORCE NOMINATION OF RICHARD A. HANRAHAN, TO BE MAJOR.

AIR FORCE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH ALECK A. BROWN AND ENDING WITH JOHN D. RITTER, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON DECEMBER 1, 2017.

IN THE ARMY

ARMY NOMINATION OF JENNIFER A. MAHONEY, TO BE MAJOR.

ARMY NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH YON T. CHUNG AND ENDING WITH MICHAEL B. PAYNE, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON OCTOBER 16, 2017.

ARMY NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH NATHELE J. ANDERSON AND ENDING WITH BRIAN R. HORTON, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON NOVEMBER 27, 2017.

ARMY NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH THOMAS W. GREEN AND ENDING WITH KENNETH M. KOOP, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON NOVEMBER 27, 2017.

ARMY NOMINATION OF ADAM R. LIBERMAN, TO BE COLONEL.

ARMY NOMINATION OF MICHAEL E. STEELMAN, TO BE COLONEL.

ARMY NOMINATION OF GERALD D. GANGARAM, TO BE MAJOR.

ARMY NOMINATION OF BRIAN R. JOHNSON, TO BE MAJOR.

ARMY NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH SCOTT T. AYERS AND ENDING WITH TYESHA L. SMITH, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON NOVEMBER 27, 2017.

ARMY NOMINATION OF PETER J. ARMSTRONG, TO BE COLONEL.

ARMY NOMINATION OF ALI S. ZAZA, TO BE COLONEL.

ARMY NOMINATION OF PHILLIP T. BUCKLER, TO BE MAJOR.

ARMY NOMINATION OF VERNICE K. FAVOR-WILLIAMS, TO BE LIEUTENANT COLONEL.

ARMY NOMINATION OF HEATHER M. LEE, TO BE MAJOR.

IN THE NAVY

NAVY NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH WILLIAM L. ARNEST AND ENDING WITH KAREN J. WOOD, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON NOVEMBER 14, 2017.

NAVY NOMINATION OF SHARIF H. CALFEE, TO BE CAPTAIN.