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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable RAND PAUL, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

O God, our Savior, help our lawmakers to see eternity beyond time, remaining loyal to You in all things. Awaken in them a desire to represent Your purposes in our Nation and world. Give them grace, O God, to love and to even pray for those who would strive to hurt them. May nothing blind them to Your truth, as You lead them through the night of mortality to the light that never fades. Lord, keep them calm in the quiet center of their lives, so that they may find serenity in life's swirling stresses. And Lord, fill us all with Your peace, as we strive to understand others as we would wish to be understood.

We pray in Your Holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer 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.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, January 10, 2018.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable RAND PAUL, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Kentucky, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

Mr. PAUL thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Thomas Lee Robinson Parker, of Tennessee, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Tennessee.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

TAX REFORM

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, we have been talking all week about the ways our historic tax reform law is immediately helping middle-class families. It has been less than a month since Congress passed and the President signed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, but already more than 1 million Americans are on track to receive special bonuses, permanent raises, and other benefits, and their employers are attrib-

uting these changes directly to tax reform.

In fact, 100,000 employees of American Airlines are each receiving a \$1,000 tax reform bonus; U.S. Bank is raising its minimum wage to \$15 and is also giving \$1,000 bonuses to 60,000 employees; 29,000 employees of Nationwide Insurance are also receiving bonuses, and 33,000 are getting an increase in their retirement match. These are just a few of the 100-plus companies that have already announced new benefits for American workers as a direct result of tax reform. These are only the immediate benefits.

Mainstream economists agree that in the months and years to come, the permanent changes we made in the way we tax businesses will make our economy more vibrant and more competitive. That means greater investment and higher wages for American workers. Of course, all this is in addition to the direct effects the tax cuts themselves will soon have on family budgets.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act will reduce income tax rates and significantly expand key deductions. We took money out of Washington and put it right back in the pockets of middle-class Americans. Starting as early as February, the IRS will withhold less from paychecks, and workers will get to deposit more of their hard-earned money right into their own bank accounts. In 2018 alone, for a typical family of four earning just over 70,000, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act could mean a tax savings of more than \$2,000.

Nearly every day, reports come out about a new way this historic tax reform bill is helping Americans. Here is a subject that is particularly relevant around many kitchen tables this winter: utility bills. All around the country, utility companies that will benefit from our new tax cuts are already discussing plans to pass their savings on to customers.

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



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Major power companies in Illinois, Maryland, and Massachusetts are already proposing plans to give their customers tens of millions of dollars in relief by lowering the rates they charge for energy. And get this: According to CNBC, a South Carolina electric and gas utility is planning to give a cash payment directly to its customers, averaging \$1,000 per household. More are following suit. In Montana, Louisiana, and Indiana, regulators are already working with utilities to determine how households will benefit from the tax savings. In my own State of Kentucky, the Public Service Commission directed a number of the electric, gas, and water companies to track their savings and make plans to cut rates for consumers.

As any mother or father who has to balance a checkbook and pay bills every month can attest, this is welcome news for middle-class families. These reductions will be especially helpful to the most vulnerable in our society.

According to data from the Department of Health and Human Services, energy costs eat up a significantly higher percentage of household income for poor families than for other families. In other words, for a software engineer in Silicon Valley, a lower heating or air conditioning bill may go unnoticed, but for workers who clean that office overnight, this relief will make a real difference.

A drop in utility bills effectively amounts to progressive tax relief. This is just another example of how the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act is rapidly proving to be a serious asset to poor and middle-class families—precisely the people whom my Democratic friends in the House and Senate loudly claimed would get nothing at all from this bill.

It has been 3 weeks—3 weeks—lower utility bills, 1 million special tax reform bonuses and pay raises, and this is only the beginning.

A Republican majority in the House and a Republican majority in the Senate and President Trump listened to the facts instead of the political spin. I am proud that we passed this historic bill and gave families across America the tax relief they have waited decades to receive.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. 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 (Mr. COTTON). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, we have barely over a week to negotiate a broad package of must-pass items, including an extension of government funding, a deal to lift the spending caps

for both defense and urgent domestic priorities, a healthcare package, disaster aid, an agreement to protect the Dreamers, and to provide additional border security.

The path forward on some of these issues is very clear. There are significant bipartisan majorities that would vote to extend CHIP, or the Children's Health Insurance Program, and community health centers. There seems to be a growing consensus on how we can pass the 702 FISA Court program.

I am also confident that we could assemble a disaster aid package that addresses the needs of all of the States and Territories—Texas, Florida, Louisiana, California, the Western States that have been plagued by fires, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands—as well as modifying what the Forest Service does so they don't spend all of their money simply fighting forest fires and not do the job they are intended to do, which is to prevent future forest fires by careful forestry programs.

Even where the path is murkier, the outlines of a deal exist. If we don't lift the spending caps in short order, the sharp ax of sequestration will fall on the military side of the budget and on the domestic side of the budget. That is a scenario everyone wants to avoid.

The majority leader continues to insist that we should raise the budget caps unequally, sparing our military but not critical domestic programs that create jobs, grow our economy, and help the middle class. We Democrats believe we absolutely must provide the resources our men and women overseas need to protect our country. We believe that strongly, but we also know that there are many important issues here at home—combating the opioid crisis, improving veterans' healthcare, shoring up pensions for millions of hard-working Americans who are approaching retirement, and dealing with rural development and rural broadband. These items are all crucial to the middle class.

The deadly scourge of opioid addiction has contributed to the first consecutive-year decline in life expectancy in the great United States of America since the early 1960s. That is an astounding and alarming fact that should rouse everyone in this Chamber to action. It is not occurring in most of our Western country allies.

Some of our veterans have been waiting in line for healthcare at veterans hospitals for over a year. These men and women served our country bravely. We have a solemn responsibility to serve them when they come home, and we are not living up to that responsibility right now.

Over a million Americans paid into pension plans with the expectation that they could retire with basic dignity. For so many of them—teamsters, miners, food workers—pensions have fallen short, and a lifetime of careful savings may be ripped away from pensioners at the last moment. We could

make progress on each of these issues through a budget that lifts the spending caps equally for defense and non-defense.

The Republican majority, which conveniently forgot its long history of opposing deficits when passing a \$1.5 trillion tax bill, cannot, in good conscience, turn around and complain about deficits here. So let's make the investments we all know are essential in both our military and in our middle class.

Even on the most challenging issue we face, the fate of the Dreamers, there appears to be a path forward. Yesterday's immigration meeting at the White House was encouraging for two reasons. First, practically everyone at the table—including some of the most conservative voices on immigration, like the Senator from Iowa—agreed that we must resolve the future of Dreamers by passing DACA protections into law. That is a very positive development.

Second, President Trump appeared to endorse a narrow deal to protect the Dreamers, leaving the thornier issues for a later debate on comprehensive immigration reform—a debate that, personally, I would welcome, the sooner the better.

But first, we have to do this narrow deal. President Trump also backed off his demand that a DACA deal include an expensive and ineffective border wall across the entire length of the southern border. Of course, the devil is in the details. We Democrats have repeated time and again that we are ready, willing, and eager to support an effective, practical border security measure in a deal that enshrines DACA into law. The President yesterday seemed to agree with that. We agree with that. For these reasons, the meeting was encouraging.

Last night, a Federal judge ruled against the Trump administration's handling of the termination of the DACA Program. Let me be very clear. The ruling last night in no way diminishes the urgency of resolving the DACA issue. On this we agree with the White House, which says the ruling doesn't do anything to reduce Congress's obligation to address this problem now. A court case, of course, is no guarantee of lasting security. A higher court can quickly overturn it. Unsurprisingly, the Department of Justice responded to the ruling last night by saying that it "will continue to vigorously defend [this] position, and looks forward to vindicating its position in further legislation." So the fact remains that the only way to guarantee the legal status for Dreamers is to pass DACA protections into law and to do it now. For that reason, a resolution to the DACA issue must be part of a global deal on the budget.

We cannot tolerate delay. Delay is a tactic employed by those who do not wish to see a deal. Let me just say, promises that maybe in the future we will do it—particularly on immigration—have vanished by the wayside.

Unless DACA is on a must-pass deal—a must-pass bill—in terms of a global agreement, people are rightfully skeptical that it will ever happen. Somehow, somewhere, someone will say: I can't do it.

Let's not forget that the House has been a graveyard even for immigration proposals that have had bipartisan consensus here in the Senate. So it must be on a must-pass bill. Otherwise, we are not going to get it.

Congressional negotiators and the valiant group here in the Senate led by Senators DURBIN and GRAHAM are focused on this issue right now. The meeting they had yesterday—I talked to both Senators DURBIN and GRAHAM last night and this morning—provides a clearer picture of the parameters of the deal. The iron is hot. We should strike now. Delay will snuff out the hope of getting an agreement that both sides can live with. Let us press forward. Each side is going to have to give.

I am confident, though, that both sides can come to an agreement on border security. I am convinced now both sides want to find a consensus on DACA. Some will support a deal enthusiastically, others reluctantly, but, nonetheless, an agreement is within reach. We ought to get it done through the Senate, through the House, and onto the President's desk for signature now. So let's get the job done.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

ISSUES BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, here we are at the start of a new year. Last year, the Republican majority decided to dedicate the year to government by and for the powerful and the privileged, but how about this year, 2018? We pay attention to our Constitution, which starts with that vision of government, not for the powerful, not for the rich, not for the privileged, not for the well connected, not for the wealthy but for the people of the United States. It is a vision where power is distributed, and power comes up from each individual citizen to create policies for their general welfare.

Last year, we saw this complete dedication to trying to wipe out healthcare for 20 million to 30 million Americans in order to provide tax benefits for the richest. How big were those tax benefits? Well, if you add up the provisions that are dedicated to the powerful corporations and those benefits for the wealthiest 10 percent, and most of that goes to the wealthiest 1 percent, those provisions stack up to over \$2 trillion—\$2 trillion.

It is very hard to get your hands around \$2 trillion. Those are not numbers we use in ordinary conversation. Let's take that down to the amount of money per man, woman, and child—per citizen in America. Well, that is about \$6,000—\$6,000 taken from the community funds for every man, woman, and child in America to deliver to the wealthiest Americans. That was gov-

ernment by the Republican majority in 2017. It was not "We the People" but we the powerful and we the privileged.

How about we have a new year's resolution that pays attention to the vision of our Constitution, to that vision of government of, by, and for the people?

Ben Franklin once wrote in his "Poor Richard's Almanac":

Be at war with your vices,
At peace with your neighbors,
And let every New Year find you a better man.

Every new year is a chance to recreate and envision where we are headed. Certainly, it is a big vice to use this Chamber, in contravention of our Constitution, to pursue policies for the powerful and privileged rather than for the people. So let's set that vice aside and have a bipartisan year, dedicated to making a foundation for families to thrive and jobs and education and healthcare and a healthier planet.

Right now, we should have an immediate new year's checklist of things to get done, and that checklist starts with the budget. We have just 9 days until funding runs out for the Federal Government, and we all know from experience what that means—parks shut down, medical research stops, passports don't get processed, and businesses can't check in on their I-9 applications for employees. That is the type of conduct that happens in banana republics—basically, in countries that don't have a competent system of government. It should not happen in the United States of America.

We are deep into the financial year, which started on October 1. October passed. November passed. December passed. We are well into January and still the majority leadership of this body is unable to put together a process that addresses just key, fundamental issues. Why is that? Because they were so distracted by delivering trillions of dollars to the richest of Americans and trying to destroy healthcare for millions of Americans that they didn't tend to the fundamentals that need to be tended to. Let's take care of those things now.

The Children's Health Insurance Program. Here we are. It expired on September 30 of last year. Nine million children across America depend on this insurance. This insurance was crafted in a bipartisan manner. It was forged in an agreement between Senator HATCH, a Republican, and Senator KENNEDY, a Democrat, who had very different visions of America but who could agree that families who didn't qualify for Medicaid and weren't affluent enough to buy insurance for their children could still have insurance for their children. These are the working poor of America, the struggling workers of America.

It was forged in a bipartisan manner, but this year my Republican colleagues decided to make these children a bargaining chip for their effort to get more for the privileged and the powerful. That has to end.

When children do not have insurance, they don't get that dental benefit to take care of those cavities. They don't get that medical exam. They don't get those inoculations, those vaccinations. They don't get treatment when they are injured because their parents can't afford to take them to the doctor. They don't get treatment when they are sick for the same reason. Let's take care of children's healthcare.

This is not a partisan issue. It was forged in a bipartisan manner, and it should be so today.

What also expired on September 30 of last year was the legislation authorizing support for our community health clinics. Community health clinics are the front door to healthcare for millions of Americans. It is that friendly place in your rural community, in your urban neighborhood, where you can go through the front door and get assistance.

Talking about millions of Americans who go through those front doors, there are more than 1,400 clinics across the country. These are popular in rural areas. They are popular in urban areas. They are popular in red States. They are popular in blue States. There is nothing partisan about it, but the leadership of this body has no interest, has seen no urgency in reauthorizing the ability for those health centers to stay open.

In Oregon we saw, as a result of the Affordable Care Act, 30 more health clinics established. We saw a lot more resources go into both mental illness and into drug abuse during a period in which the opioid crisis joined the meth crisis and afflicted both rural and urban areas. Lots of folks come to this floor and say: We have to take on opioids. It is not just on the left-hand side of the aisle, but it is also on the right-hand side of the aisle. People base virtually their entire campaigns on taking on opioids. Yet the Republican leadership says this isn't important. Let me tell you, this is important, and we need to get it done.

Then let's turn to the Dream Act. Dreamers are those children raised in our communities, now 16 through their midtwenties. They are productive members of our communities. They have gone through our high schools or are in high school now. They are in college. They are working. They are contributing. They know no other country than ours.

Across both sides of the aisle we hear folks say: We want to take care of them and establish a structure for this, a legal structure for the Dreamers.

The President yesterday hosted a bipartisan conversation at the White House to say: Let's get this done. He expressed his support. In fact, everyone in the room expressed support for getting this done.

Each one of these—the budget, the children's healthcare, the health centers, the Dream Act—are bipartisan efforts. These are things that should have been addressed long ago if my Republican colleagues instead weren't so

obsessed with decimating healthcare for millions of Americans and ripping off the National Treasury to deliver benefits to the wealthiest Americans.

Let's get this done for our Dreamers. More than 100 a day are losing their status, which means they can no longer legally work in our country. It matters. It is urgent. It is productive for our communities. It is bipartisan. Let's get it done.

How about disaster relief? We certainly saw a powerful punch against our States from the raging forest fires in the West to the hurricanes in the South and Southeast. Hurricanes have hit Texas and Florida and Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands—massive destruction. Fires have scourged States from Montana to Idaho, to Washington, to Oregon, to California. Those fires burned well into the winter months of November and December.

These afflictions hit Democrats and Republicans, red States and blue States. Why don't we get this done? These are basic, bipartisan, let's-get-it-done agendas. Let's get it done now.

Let's make sure, when we are addressing the impact of those storms in the South and those hurricanes—Harvey, Irma, and Maria—we simultaneously recognize the destructive impact forest fires have had that have been scourging the West. They have destroyed a lot of the infrastructure in the forest that needs to be replaced. They have affected a lot of communities that need economic help recovering.

Certainly, it made us recognize that we have millions of acres of forests that can become much more fire resilient if they are thinned, if we get rid of the fuel buildup on the floor of the forests. When they become more resilient, they stop the forest fires.

Thinning is a win-win. It produces a steady supply of sawlogs for the mill and stops forest fires when they are raging. There was a forest fire headed right for Sisters, OR, and it hit an area that had been thinned. Guess what. It stopped. The trees were farther apart. The fuels were removed from the floor of the forest.

Now we have created a real fire hazard with our clear-cut strategy of years past—the forestry grows very close together, often replanted. Trees are all the same height. It is very easy for the fire to get into the canopy, and once in the canopy, every tree is touching the next tree. It rages on, and there is no break.

But a natural forest is very different. We can more effectively replicate the fire-resistant nature of a natural forest by thinning these overgrown, second-growth forests. We can then create that supply of saw logs, keep our mills open, keep our people working, and strengthen our economies in rural America. We can do it by funding this reduction, these thinning programs in acreage that has already gone through the environmental process. In Oregon, we have 1.6 million acres already ap-

proved for thinning, if we can pass the funds to get it done.

So let's take this on in 2018. Let's dedicate 2018 to that vision in our Constitution of "we the people." Let's stop passing legislation targeted specifically to help out the richest at the expense of everyone else in America. Let's turn over a new leaf from campaigns and policies and legislation by and for the privileged and the powerful to honor the vision of our Constitution, the vision of our Nation, a Nation of laws which distributes power that produces policies by and for the people of the United States of America, for making families stronger, for building those foundations of jobs and healthcare and education and a healthy planet.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority win.

FUNDING OUR MILITARY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I admit I wasn't here during the entirety of the comments from our friend, and I saw his to-do list. The only thing missing from that to-do list was to fund our military—or at least I didn't see it on there. In all fairness, maybe he mentioned that in his comments.

We now have 9 days to reach an agreement to keep the government funded, to keep the lights on, to keep paying the salaries of our government employees, and, of course, to fund our military, which ought to be our No. 1 priority. If we think about things that government must do, funding our national defense is the only thing that we can do and that government can do. There are a lot of other things that government does that are optional or maybe things we would like to do, but funding our military is the No. 1 priority—or should be.

As the Senate majority leader mentioned earlier this week, our Democratic colleagues persist in the notion that we should only increase defense spending if we increase nondefense spending by the same amount. The parity that the minority leader and the other Democrats call for doesn't make any sense, though. It is apples and oranges. They act as though all government spending is exactly alike and enjoys or should enjoy the same priority, and that is just not true. We know that from our own family budgets or from a small business. There are things we must do, things we want to do, and things we will do if there is money left over. But our friends across the aisle, who are obstructing our ability to get to negotiated budget caps and fund our military, act as though all of that is the same, that must do, want to do, and what you will do if you have money left over—that those are all exactly the same, and that is just not the case. It is not the case in our family budgets, in our small business budgets, nor is it the case for the Federal budget. Not everything is a priority. But we do know that the No. 1 priority must be the safety and security of the Amer-

ican people by making sure our military is adequately funded.

The Budget Control Act signed into law in 2011 was what I would call a necessary evil. The Budget Control Act provided that we would have a bipartisan, bicameral negotiation and try to come up with a grand bargain.

That was what President Obama liked to talk about a lot—the grand bargain. But some people suggested that was kind of like a unicorn, something that people describe but no one has ever seen—a grand bargain. I wish it weren't true.

The Budget Control Act said that in the absence of a grand bargain, we would have budget caps or sequestration imposed on discretionary spending above certain levels. It proposed separate budget caps for defense and non-defense, and if the budget caps are exceeded, there is an automatic enforcement mechanism called sequestration which imposes across-the-board cuts, which I mentioned a moment ago.

The purpose of this sequestration—or these across-the-board cuts—is to do something in the absence of us doing what we should do; in other words, we should take it upon ourselves to figure out what the appropriate spending levels should be for defense and non-defense, and then we should act to appropriate that money. But this is basically a fail-safe mechanism, which operates as a result of our failure to deal with this in a proactive way, and it has hit our defense spending much, much harder than domestic spending.

As we know, neither our defense spending nor tax cuts are the cause of our deficits and debt. It is the 70 percent of spending that happens in the Federal Government on autopilot. It is the entitlements that have been going up well in excess of 5 percent a year and are causing instability and unpredictability in those important programs, such as Medicare and Social Security, but at the same time racking up huge deficits and debt that future generations are going to have to pay back. Somebody is going to have to pay it back, and it won't be the present generation because we won't be around then. It is simply immoral to continue to see this happen without trying to deal with it.

But back on the matter of the Pentagon, as one op-ed writer put it in the Washington Post last month—he said:

The Pentagon and the welfare state have been locked in brutal combat for decades, and the Pentagon has gotten clobbered. . . . Welfare programs—Social Security, Medicare, food stamps and other benefits—dwarf defense spending.

In the 1950s and 1960s, defense spending was roughly 8 to 10 percent of our economy. In 2016, it was just 3 percent. That is a huge change.

James Clapper, the former Director of National Intelligence, said that in his 50 years in the intelligence community, he had never seen a more diverse array of threats confronting the United States around the world—never in his

50 years of experience. So we are simply asking our military and our national security personnel to do too much with too little.

It is no surprise that Secretary of Defense James Mattis said last June that “for all the heartache caused by the loss of our troops during [our] wars [abroad], no enemy in this field has done more to harm the readiness of our military than sequestration.”

More recently, General Mattis said that so far our continuing resolutions have not done even greater damage to our readiness thanks to certain additional or supplemental funding that we voted on. But at the same time, he soberly cautioned that there could be real impact—and it won’t be positive, it will be negative—if the problem persists and if the Department of Defense doesn’t have a real budget sometime this month.

His remarks echo that of practically every service chief. Together, their views mean we have to act. I don’t know who else we would listen to if we are not going to listen to the Secretary of Defense and our service chiefs when it comes to national security because that is their job, and we ought to take their advice and heed their counsel.

Cuts in defense spending have real consequences. Much less money is available for training and necessary maintenance, for example. The length of deployments for our troops grows, and our soldiers are stretched thin. Our military is forced to operate beyond its normal capabilities.

The former Air Force Chief of Staff recently described the Air Force as the smallest, oldest equipped, and least ready force across the full spectrum of operations in our service history. Those are chilling remarks—or should be. More than half of all Marine Corps fixed and rotary-wing aircraft were unable to fly by the end of 2016. I have no doubt that we can turn that around very quickly if Congress were to step up to its responsibilities and adequately fund the military, but that is the status quo unless we act. The Navy fleet currently stands at 275 of the 350 ship requirement. Of our 58 Army brigade combat teams, only 3—3 out of 58—are ready for combat.

Our enemies shouldn’t take any comfort in these numbers because, as I said, the United States always pulls together and Congress always acts when they see a national emergency. But it shouldn’t take an emergency for us to do our job and to make sure that our military is adequately funded and is ready to fight. As General Brooks in Seoul, South Korea, said, their motto is “ready to fight tonight.” That is the kind of world we live in.

Last summer was the perfect example of why, when we draw attention to these numbers, we are not just blowing smoke. Operational accidents in the South Pacific exposed our readiness failures in a dramatic fashion and in a tragic fashion. Ten sailors died when the USS *John S. McCain* collided with a

600-foot merchant vessel off the coast of Singapore. Seven sailors died when the *Fitzgerald* collided with another vessel off the coast of Japan. And the USS *Lake Champlain* collided with a boat near Korea—although thankfully that time no lives were lost. This ought to be a wake-up call to all of us.

Many have drawn credible correlations between these accidents that have taken the lives of our military servicemembers and our readiness failures, citing studies like the 2015 independent investigation by the Government Accountability Office. That study determined that the Navy’s mandate to keep ships afloat in the Pacific was shortchanging crew training and degrading the condition of our ships—in other words, additional readiness failures.

These accidents, by the way, are happening at the same time our national security threats are not going away, as General Clapper’s comments would indicate.

We have seen North Korea continue to improve its nuclear and long-range ballistic missile capabilities beyond the estimates of our intelligence community—much faster—and detonate what is widely considered to be a hydrogen bomb recently.

We have seen large-scale protests in Iran—and I hope they continue—exposing the instability of a regime that continues to use its proxies to advance its aims throughout the broader Middle East; in other words, the No. 1 state sponsor of international terrorism—Iran. We ought to encourage the people of Iran to continue to rise up in protest and to change the regime there into one that does not prey on its neighbors in the region.

We have seen a growing China—something that more and more people are realizing is a threat. I know that when we deal with countries like China, frequently we deal with them in the commercial context where we see a business that hires people and we see investments here in the United States. But what we need to recognize is that they don’t do business the way the United States does business. Sitting at the top of every company in China, in the board room of every Chinese company, is the Communist Party. They operate on an all-of-government basis. And it is not just the government; it is also what we would consider the private sector. But, in truth, there is no private sector in China; it is all an arm of the government. It is posing a rising threat to American wages and labor as they erode our industrial base by stealing our technology. And because of loopholes in the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States—the so-called CFIUS process—they are now able to tailor financial arrangements through joint ventures and others in a way to capture our dual-purpose, cutting-edge technology. They then copy it in China and erode our defense industrial base here in the United States, along with the jobs that go with it. So

it is a very real and present threat to American wages and workers. It is a threat to our intellectual property edge and the innovation that we are the best in the world at, but they are all too eager to steal it, copy it, and to harm the jobs and the investment in those businesses here in the United States.

Of course, when it comes to China, there is the threat to human rights in nondemocratic nations like Venezuela and Zimbabwe, which China often has no qualms supporting.

With this diverse array of dangers, we simply can’t afford to straitjacket our military by arbitrarily cutting the amount of money we appropriate to fund it. But that is what is going to happen unless we act—and act quickly. The current continuing resolution expires on the 19th of this month.

The truth is, even if we are able to come up with negotiated budget caps for defense and nondefense spending, we are probably going to have to have a short-term continuing resolution to give the Appropriations Committees time to put that into bill text. In other words, we can’t just snap our fingers once the decision has been made. It is going to take some time to actually put it on paper.

The bottom line is, if we want to return to having the strong military that we have always had, if we want to continue to lead in the world, if we want to continue to be a force for peace and stability, we have to maintain our military strength. That was the lesson we had to learn again during the last administration when we saw America retreat from its leadership in the world.

There are countries, tyrants, bullies, and dictators all too willing to fill the void left by American retreat, and one way we retreat is when we don’t fund the readiness of our military, when we are not “ready to fight tonight,” as General Brooks has said, and we need to start with ending this cycle of continuing resolutions and defense sequestration.

So I come to the floor today to call on my colleagues from all across this Chamber, but specifically across the aisle, to quit holding our military hostage to other unrelated demands, and I urge this body to come together in agreement on new budget caps 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 senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SUL-LIVAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

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

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

CHIP AND COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to talk about an issue that is critical to patients and families in my home State of Washington and across the country. Today, parents are wondering if they will be able to get the healthcare their kids need, and communities are wondering if they will be able to provide it.

That is unacceptable.

Congress has to swiftly and fully restore the Children's Health Insurance Program, or CHIP, and funding for other services families need, like community health centers, which have been waiting more than 100 days for a long-term solution. They should do so without making deep cuts to successful prevention programs in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that tackle avoidable conditions like heart disease and diabetes.

Democrats have wanted to get this done for months. By focusing on pushing through partisan tax reform at the end of the year, Republicans instead put massive corporations and the wealthiest ahead of making sure our children and their families have the healthcare they need. I hope they are now ready to give these issues their full and immediate attention. In case they aren't, I want to make sure they know exactly what this is about.

It is about children like Stella. Stella lives in Washington State. She is 5 years old. She has two brothers. She has a love of the outdoors, especially swimming and kayaking. She has a typical kindergartner's boundless energy and excitement. But Stella was born with spina bifida, an issue with how her spinal cord was formed. In the past year of dealing with that condition, Stella's family went through 5 catheters a day, almost 2,000 in total. They went on 10 different occasions to have MRI scans. They went to get her new leg braces. Given the cost of all that, they went through their \$5,000 deductible in the first 5 weeks of the year. That is right. It took just 5 weeks. Additionally, this year Stella is also scheduled to have bladder and kidney surgery.

As one can imagine, the expenses are really adding up. Even with both parents working, covering Stella's healthcare needs would be an unimaginable task. Fortunately, Stella does qualify for health insurance through CHIP. CHIP has helped her family afford the treatment she needs, including physical therapy.

Stella's story is just one of many examples of families who rely on this program. There are 60,000 children in Washington State who are now insured through CHIP. Nine million families nationwide rely on it to help address the healthcare needs of their children. Yet Congress has taken over 102 days and counting to restore it. There is no excuse for this inaction.

Families who rely on the CHIP Program are not alone in needing our immediate attention. Thanks to CHIP

and Medicaid, the uninsured rate among children is now at an all-time low. Jeopardizing this accomplishment by letting CHIP twist in the wind is simply unacceptable. This Republican-controlled Congress has also failed to renew other investments that our families rely on for the care they need—programs such as community health centers, which serve 25 million patients, particularly in our rural and poorer communities; the National Health Service Corps, which brings doctors and other healthcare providers to underserved areas through scholarships and loan repayment; and the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education Program, which brings primary care and dental residencies to communities in need. Leaving these programs without long-term extensions a minute longer is utterly irresponsible because this lack of certainty for them is already bringing a negative impact on our communities.

For example, the Northeast Washington Health Programs serve some of the most rural areas in my State, including Ferry County, which has fewer than four people per square mile. They are struggling to hire needed medical staff and managers because of this uncertainty that is now there. Ferry County cannot wait.

The Community Health Association of Spokane runs 12 health center sites and sees more than 70,000 patients a year. They recently began offering very much needed opioid addiction treatment. If Congress does not reauthorize the community health center funding, those efforts will be jeopardized and expansions will be halted. Spokane cannot wait.

Yakima Neighborhood Health Services served over 22,000 patients in 2016. Almost all of those patients were below 200 percent of the Federal poverty line.

If Congress does not act soon, three different clinics, including a clinic in one of the poorest cities in Washington, will be at risk. Yakima cannot wait.

I have heard additional stories of similar hardships from across my State. North Olympic Healthcare Network has had to put expansions on behavioral healthcare on hold. Another health center in Washington may have to reconsider building a new children's dental residency program. A center serving Whatcom County may have to cancel a project for medical, dental, and behavioral healthcare facilities as well.

Across the country there are a lot of examples for community health centers just like the ones I mentioned. Healthcare that people of all ages and backgrounds rely on is being put in jeopardy, all because Republicans prioritized tax cuts for those at the top before the health needs of millions of people at the end of last year.

It is far past time to show these families that we are willing to work to get this done. We need to give them the peace of mind that they can get the

healthcare they need. They deserve that.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The remarks of Mr. NELSON pertaining to the introduction of S. 2292 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. NELSON. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

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

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

DACA

Mr. HEINRICH. Madam President, I rise today to stand up for the hundreds of thousands of young immigrants known as Dreamers, whose lives President Trump has thrown into terrifying uncertainty.

Immigrant communities have long helped write the economic, social, and cultural story of my home State of New Mexico and, for that matter, the entire Nation. That is certainly true for Dreamers, undocumented immigrants who arrived in the United States as children and are vital members of communities across New Mexico.

Over the years, I have had the privilege of meeting many of New Mexico's estimated 7,000 Dreamers. I have met with students who grew up here and are now striving to become doctors, scientists, teachers, and even serve in our military. These young people are our children's classmates. They are our next-door neighbors. They are our colleagues. They are family members, and many are truly rising stars. In fact, I would argue that these Dreamers are the future of a great America.

Every day these young people add to the strength of our economy, to the vitality of our country. More than 97 percent of DACA recipients are in school or in the workforce.

The DACA Program allowed them to work legally, to get driver's licenses, to go to college, to serve in our military and give back to their communities. DACA helped almost 70 percent of recipients secure a job with better pay, and better pay leads to real investments in our communities and our economy.

After their DACA applications were approved, nearly two-thirds of recipients reported buying their first car, and almost one in six reported buying a new home. DACA recipients also paid billions of dollars in Federal, State, and local taxes. Why on Earth would

we kick out these contributors to our economy and our country?

The economic impact of removing nearly 700,000 workers from the U.S. workforce would be staggering. It would cost our economy nearly half a trillion dollars in GDP loss over the next decade. But passing the Dream Act could add an estimated \$281 billion to the U.S. economy over the next 10 years. That, to me, sounds like putting America first.

I stand with these Dreamers, and I always have. One of my first actions when I was in the House of Representatives was to sign on as an original cosponsor of the Dream Act, which would create a pathway to legal status and citizenship for Dreamers who pursue higher education or serve our Nation in uniform. This commonsense, compassionate, and responsible policy is long overdue for a generation of young Americans.

Since President Trump made the heartless decision to end DACA, I have held his administration accountable for their mishandling of renewal applications for DACA recipients. My office has assisted Dreamers in New Mexico through the DACA renewal process and is actively participating in meetings with communities and local advocacy groups throughout the State.

I introduced legislation to safeguard Dreamers' private information, such as addresses and telephone numbers, so the Trump administration can't use those to target them or their families for deportation.

When my office learned that the Department of Homeland Security had arbitrarily rejected hundreds of renewal applications that arrived late because they were delayed by the Postal Service, I pressed the administration to take immediate action to reverse its decision. I am pleased to say that Dreamers whose applications were rejected due to Postal Service delays were allowed to resubmit their renewals for DACA. In fact, just last week, the first two DACA recipients in New Mexico, who brought this to my attention with the help of Catholic Charities, were told that they could move forward with their DACA renewal applications.

President Trump's decision means that until Congress passes the Dream Act, these young members of our communities still face deep uncertainty about whether they will be able to stay in school, keep working and contributing to our economy, and remain in the Nation that they call home.

Congress must pass the Dream Act now. Threatening to deport these young people who grew up in America and want to contribute to their Nation will not fix our broken immigration system. Making the American people foot the bill to build an unnecessary and wasteful border wall—which families in New Mexico's border communities have told me they do not want nor do they need—will not fix our broken immigration system.

President Trump and congressional Republicans wasted an entire year trying to take away American's healthcare and then rushing through tax breaks for the superwealthy in the final weeks of the year. By squandering an entire year, they pushed Dreamers aside and put their lives in jeopardy.

I voted to fund the government through the holidays in hopes that Congress could finally reach an agreement to pass the Dream Act. We also urgently need to reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program, fix wildfire disaster funding, provide disaster relief for Puerto Rico, which is still recovering from Hurricane Maria. Taking care of these long-neglected and bipartisan priorities is the bare minimum of governance. Republican leaders in Congress need to take this opportunity seriously, especially if they expect our support.

I will be fighting every step of the way to pass the Dream Act, and I encourage all of my colleagues to do the same.

Since President Trump shamefully pulled the rug out from under Dreamers when he hastily ended the DACA Program, I have spent time meeting with Dreamers in New Mexico, as well as here in Washington. You cannot hear their stories without realizing how morally bankrupt the administration's current policy is. It is impossible for me to convey the desperation and the fear they are feeling every day that passes without our passing the Dream Act.

Now is the time to give these young Americans a permanent place in this great Nation. Enough is enough. Their patience has worn thin with the President and congressional Republicans using them as political bargaining chips. It is immoral to play politics with the lives of these young Americans.

I will say it again. Congress absolutely must pass the Dream Act, and we have an opportunity to do it now.

We should not stop once we pass the Dream Act. Leaders in Congress have waited far too long to finally address our Nation's overall broken immigration system. I still continue to believe that our Nation urgently needs Congress to pass comprehensive immigration reform, which includes a visa program that meets the needs of our economy. It is a tough but fair path to earn citizenship for the estimated 11 million people in our country who are undocumented and a plan that ensures community safety and security at our borders.

When I think about immigration, I always wonder how different my own life would be if America had turned my father away when he immigrated here as a young boy. Our Nation's enduring spirit has been built by the hard work and the dreams of so many striving young immigrants like my father in the 1930s and like so many Dreamers today. No Member of Congress should be able to rest until Dreamers are able

to rest easy, knowing they will be able to stay and to contribute to literally the only Nation they have ever called home.

Thank you.

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

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

FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, just last week we began the second session of the 115th Congress. We are now safely into 2018, and we should be talking about what we can accomplish for the American people in the new year. We simply face a long list of unfinished business from 2017—last year—and, unfortunately, we have a very short window in which to get it done.

We are 4 months into fiscal year 2018, and we still don't have a budget deal. I am vice chairman of the Appropriations Committee. We should have had this done long before now. Our agencies are operating under last year's funding levels. They have little flexibility to handle the problems they face today.

We still haven't reauthorized the Children's Health Insurance Program, what we call CHIP, so that puts the healthcare of 9 million children at risk. These are American children.

Nearly 800,000 Dreamers live under uncertainty and fear of deportation, living in the country they have known most of their lives. I don't know how anybody, Republican or Democrat, could call this acceptable.

Now, I know the Republicans control the House, they control the Senate, and they control the White House. They are in charge. They have to show responsibility and show leadership on these issues, but instead of addressing these issues, last year the Republican leadership spent time rolling back sensible regulations designed to protect the American consumer, designed to protect our environment, and designed to protect people from harassment in the workplace. They rolled those all back, and then they passed a massive tax cut for big corporations and the wealthiest of Americans.

We Democrats have been calling for bipartisan budget talks since June—7 months ago. We have passed three continuing resolutions since September of last year to give us more time to strike a deal on the budget and Dreamers and CHIP and disaster funding. These are just to name a few, but they are enormously important to the people who are experiencing the disasters or who have children who need healthcare or who are Dreamers. Yet, on the 102nd day of the fiscal year, there are only 9 days until the next fiscal cliff, and we don't have a budget deal.

President Trump said months ago that the country could use a good government shutdown. I don't agree with

him, but I am beginning to think that is exactly what his party is angling for—a manufactured crisis to distract from the fact that they are not doing their job.

The Washington Post seemed to confirm this last December, when it reported the President privately told people that a government shutdown would be good for him politically. In all of my years in the Senate—I have been here under Republican and Democratic Presidents alike—I have never heard such damaging rhetoric come from the President of the United States.

Nobody wants a government shutdown—nobody. It is devastating to people not only throughout the government but to people throughout the whole country. However, that seems to be what they are vying for.

For months, I have been calling for a bipartisan budget deal that is based on parity—equal increases for defense and nondefense programs—that would provide relief from sequestration. I agree with the Republicans and Democrats who say military readiness has suffered under sequestration but so has our Nation's economy, so has our educational system, so has our infrastructure, and so has our care for our veterans.

If we want to combat the problems caused by sequestration, we have to raise the caps on both sides of the ledger. Fixing one side of the equation will not address the needs of our Nation and, even worse, will actually short-change our military.

If we don't invest in our economy, if we don't invest in the education of our youth, the military will not have expert, qualified soldiers, the men and women on whom they rely. If we don't invest in our diplomacy, our Nation and the world become less safe. If we don't improve our cyber security defenses and our physical infrastructure, we become soft targets for those who would do us harm, both in this country and outside this country. If we don't care for our veterans, we are not going to have young men and women who are willing to serve.

This week, the majority leader came to the floor making the case for increased defense spending. He asked us to listen to our nonpartisan military leaders about what they think is needed to keep this country safe. I couldn't agree more.

To that end, I have two letters signed by a combined 560 retired admirals, generals, and other former military members. I ask unanimous consent to have these letters printed in the RECORD following my remarks.

I have no idea what these admirals', generals', and others' political parties are, but they make the case that we have to increase our investment in domestic priorities—including education and childcare, as well as diplomacy—if we are going to keep our country safe and support our military. Secretary of Defense Mattis said even more bluntly: If we do not fully fund the State De-

partment, we should be prepared to buy more ammunition for our military.

The wisdom of our military leaders notwithstanding, Republicans appear to be dug in. They claim equal increases for both defense and nondefense programs would add too much to our deficit and burden our children. It is one over the other. It is hard to have somebody say that with a straight face in the wake of the President signing a tax bill to add \$1.5 trillion to our Nation's debt and to benefit primarily large corporations and the wealthiest Americans. You can't make the argument that we can't afford to take care of our domestic needs. It is simply not credible.

Budget negotiations are not the only place where Republicans haven't engaged in a productive way. President Trump's decision to end the DACA Program has put nearly 800,000 Dreamers in this country in an untenable position. The decision was as cruel as it was senseless. It may make a tweet that people look at, but if you are one of those Dreamers and you are on your way to school and are expecting a scholarship to college and you don't know if you are going to be in this country tomorrow, that is not a tweet.

The President should have worked with Congress. He should have found a permanent legislative solution while keeping DACA protections in place. I believe he terminated the program under false pretenses, yielding to xenophobic voices in his administration, and last night a Federal judge issued an order that said just that: Terminating DACA was not required under the law—far from it. But a court order that only temporarily halts the administration from dismantling DACA provides little comfort to Dreamers. They live each and every day uncertain of the future and with fear of deportation.

Now, I have heard Members of the Senate trying to decide at what time we are going to finish voting for the week. Their big fear is this: Are we going to make our flight home?

Dreamers have to worry if their flight is going to be out of this country and back to a country they don't even know. They worry if they will have to leave the country they know and love.

Dreamers are Americans in every way, except on paper. They were brought here as children, through no fault of their own. They are law-abiding members of our community. They attend school. They serve as doctors and teachers. They defend our homeland as brave men and women in uniform.

This is a crisis of the President's own making. Now, Congress needs to pick up the pieces. I hope, after the meeting yesterday, we will be allowed to pick up the pieces. We have spent months trying to find a path forward, but you can't find one if the administration keeps moving the goalposts.

We need to address the fate of the Dreamers now. You can take a poll in this country. The American people

want us to. Also, look at the broad bipartisan support on display yesterday at the White House. Republicans and Democrats want to fix the mess that the President created. A solution should be within our grasp.

The White House has made unreasonable demands, such as \$18 billion of American tax dollars to build a wall on the southern border, in exchange for Dreamers. The \$18 billion wall is last century's solution. It does nothing for this century.

If they really believe Mexico is going to pay for it, I have a solution. Open a bank account and, as Mexico sends us money, then use it to build a wall. Don't ask the American taxpayers, who are strapped at home, to pay for something the President says the Mexicans will pay for. Open an account, find out if they are telling the truth, let the money come into the account, and then build it.

But, worse, don't use the Dreamers as negotiable commodities. They are not commodities. They are human beings. They are people who deserve to have their dreams. Let's pass a bill—we could do it this week—protecting Dreamers now. Republicans control the House, the Senate, and the White House. This is their government.

We have a week and a half before the next continuing resolution expires. We have a lot to do. Let's get serious. Let's get to work. I am willing to work here every day, every night, right through the weekend. Let's get it done. We are not doing it for us. We are doing it for all the American people. Let's do it for all the American people—not for special interests, not for one party. Let's do it for all the American people. It could be done, if we want to.

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

MISSION: READINESS,
COUNCIL FOR A STRONG AMERICA,
May 30, 2017.

MEMBERS OF CONGRESS: As retired admirals and generals, we know from our experience that no matter how much we spend to build our military and procure the latest and greatest technology, we will never be a secure nation if we do not have qualified and skilled men and women to fill the ranks of our Armed Forces. Therefore, investing in education for our youngest children, which is the foundation of our future national security, is essential. Accordingly, we urge Congress to prioritize investments in early childhood programs, including funding for Head Start, the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), and Preschool Development Grants in FY18 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill.

Mission: Readiness is the national security organization of retired top military leaders that recognize the strength of our military depends on our people. The stunning fact is that today, 71 percent of young adults ages 17 to 24 cannot qualify for military service because they are too poorly educated, medically or physically unfit, or have a disqualifying record of crime or drug abuse. If these issues are not addressed, the Nation risks a shortage of qualified recruits—one that will leave the country vulnerable for years to come.

Mounting research shows that the early years of life have an incredible impact on educational attainment, behaviors and health. High-quality early interventions can help vulnerable children succeed in school, stay on the right side of the law and achieve a healthy weight in the long-term. These outcomes open the doors for many career paths, including military service.

Long-term studies of early education programs show impressive differences in children's educational outcomes. A recent analysis of Head Start outcomes, comparing siblings who did versus did not attend the program, found participants showing increased probability of graduating from high school, attending college, and receiving a postsecondary credential. High-quality state preschool programs have also demonstrated lasting effects on students' elementary-school performance. New Jersey's preschool program, for example, found that children in the program were three-quarters of a year ahead in math and two-thirds of a year ahead in literacy in the fourth and fifth grades.

While Congress faces tough spending choices ahead to secure and protect our Nation, we know that the backbone of our military is, and will always be, our women and men in uniform. As a matter of national security, in order to grow the pool of eligible recruits, Congress must prioritize investments in early childhood programs, including funding for Head Start, the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), and Preschool Development Grants.

Signed by a combined 424 retired admirals, generals, and other former military members.

FEBRUARY 27, 2017.

Hon. PAUL RYAN,
Speaker of the House,
House of Representatives.

Hon. NANCY PELOSI,
Minority Leader,
House of Representatives.

Hon. MITCH MCCONNELL,
Majority Leader,
U.S. Senate.

Hon. CHUCK SCHUMER,
Minority Leader,
U.S. Senate.

DEAR SPEAKER RYAN, MINORITY LEADER PELOSI, MAJORITY LEADER MCCONNELL, AND MINORITY LEADER SCHUMER: As you and your colleagues address the federal budget for Fiscal Year 2018, we write as retired three and four star flag and general officers from all branches of the armed services to share our strong conviction that elevating and strengthening diplomacy and development alongside defense are critical to keeping America safe.

We know from our service in uniform that many of the crises our nation faces do not have military solutions alone—from confronting violent extremist groups like ISIS in the Middle East and North Africa to preventing pandemics like Ebola and stabilizing weak and fragile states that can lead to greater instability. There are 65 million displaced people today, the most since World War II, with consequences including refugee flows that are threatening America's strategic allies in Israel, Jordan, Turkey, and Europe.

The State Department, USAID, Millennium Challenge Corporation, Peace Corps and other development agencies are critical to preventing conflict and reducing the need to put our men and women in uniform in harm's way. As Secretary James Mattis said while Commander of U.S. Central Command, "If you don't fully fund the State Department, then I need to buy more ammunition." The military will lead the fight against ter-

rorism on the battlefield, but it needs strong civilian partners in the battle against the drivers of extremism—lack of opportunity, insecurity, injustice, and hopelessness.

We recognize that America's strategic investments in diplomacy and development—like all of U.S. investments—must be effective and accountable. Significant reforms have been undertaken since 9/11, many of which have been embodied in recent legislation in Congress with strong bipartisan support—on human trafficking, the rights of women and girls, trade and energy in Africa, wildlife trafficking, water, food security, and transparency and accountability.

We urge you to ensure that resources for the International Affairs Budget keep pace with the growing global threats and opportunities we face. Now is not the time to retreat.

cc: Secretary of State Rex Tillerson.
cc: Secretary of Defense James Mattis.
cc: National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster.

Signed by a combined 121 retired admirals, generals, and other former military members.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, my colleague from Vermont, Senator BERNIE SANDERS, wrote what I feel was a terrific op-ed about why we should not and do not need to close down the government, why we can do our work and why we should, and that people rely on us, too.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the op-ed be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the Washington Post, Jan. 8, 2018]

IT'S ON REPUBLICANS TO STOP A SHUTDOWN
(By Bernie Sanders)

I do not know why President Trump and the Republican Party—which controls the White House, the Senate and the House—are so willing to shut down the government. Maybe they think it will be good for them politically. Maybe they believe the chaos created by a government shutdown would be a welcome distraction from the ongoing Russia investigation being conducted by special counsel Robert S. Mueller III. Whatever the motives of the Republican leadership, one thing is clear: A government shutdown would be disastrous for the American people.

A shutdown would harm tens of millions of working-class families who would be unable to access vital services. It would disrupt the lives of hundreds of thousands of federal employees who would not receive the paychecks they expected. It would endanger members of the U.S. military who are putting their lives on the line defending our nation.

Congress has a responsibility to the American people to prevent a shutdown and work in a bipartisan manner to reach a fair budget agreement that addresses the very serious problems facing the working people of our country.

Unfortunately, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) ratcheted up threats of a government shutdown last week by insisting on ending the long-standing, bipartisan agreement over parity for defense and non-defense spending. This principle of parity is enormously important for working families and is something that cannot be terminated. If we do not act, funding for education, child care, health care, nutrition assistance, affordable housing and other important domestic programs will be at a 40-year low as a percentage of our economy.

As the middle class continues to shrink, cuts to non-defense spending would cause even worse economic pain to working families, the elderly, children, the sick and the most vulnerable. Meanwhile, as Trump and the Republicans demand an unbelievable \$100 billion increase in military spending over the next two years, the Defense Department has been inoculated from budget cuts over the past several years because of the Overseas Contingency Operations loophole—a special account not subject to spending caps established by Congress in 2011.

Providing parity in these budget negotiations means, among other things, fully funding—without offsets—the Children's Health Insurance Program for 9 million kids and community health centers for 27 million Americans. It means increased funding for the Social Security Administration and the Veterans Administration so they can provide guaranteed benefits to seniors and veterans who have earned them. It means keeping our obligations to more than 1.5 million workers and retirees who are about to lose a large part of the pensions they were promised. It means addressing the crisis of student debt, expanding child care, improving our crumbling infrastructure in rural America and protecting our national parks. It means providing help in the national struggle against opioid and heroin addiction.

Furthermore, as part of the budget negotiations, we must also provide adequate disaster relief to Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, as well as assistance to the Western states recovering from terrible wildfires.

Finally, Trump added even more fuel to the fire when he decided to use 800,000 "dreamers" as a bargaining chip for an \$18 billion wall that the overwhelming majority of Americans do not want. These dreamers are young people who have lived in this country for almost their entire lives. They go to school. They work. They serve in the U.S. military. The United States is their home; they know no other. For Trump and the Republican leadership to allow their legal status to expire, and to subject them to deportation, would be one of the cruelest acts in modern American history. It must not be allowed to happen.

This is not just my viewpoint. It's what the American people want. A recent Quinnipiac University poll showed that 77 percent of the American people, including a large majority of Republicans, support providing legal protections for the dreamers. The Republican Congress must act. A clean Dream Act must be signed into law as part of any budget agreement.

The American people are increasingly disgusted with a government that protects the interests of the wealthy and the powerful, while ignoring the needs of the vulnerable. The U.S. government must do more than provide huge tax breaks to billionaires, callously deport young people, greatly expand military spending, end net neutrality, deny the reality of climate change and threaten to cut Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, education and nutrition programs. We must pass a budget agreement that addresses the needs of Americans and not just billionaire campaign contributors.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. 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

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, when we were debating the tax relief law at the end of last year, it was a very familiar debate in many ways.

Republicans came to the floor with facts and figures on how much extra money people were going to see in their pockets and their paychecks. Democrats came to the floor with the same old tired line that you always hear them talk about—the millionaires and billionaires.

Republicans pointed out economic studies that showed that workers right now pay more than 70 percent of the cost of corporate taxes. We talked about a study by the Tax Foundation that predicted that if we passed the tax relief bill, the average family would actually see a gain of about \$2,600 a year in their after-tax income. It was partly because of getting the tax cut and partly because their employers would then pass on much of the tax cut in higher wages. Democrats didn't believe it. They said that only rich people would benefit and that businesses would never share their tax savings with the workers. The Democratic leader said that "tax cuts like these benefit the wealthy and the powerful to the exclusion of the middle class."

Here we are. It is the month after we passed the tax relief bill, the tax reduction bill, and the tax simplification bill, and the question is, Who was right? The very day the tax bill passed in Congress, AT&T came out and said it was giving its workers a bonus. It said that 200,000 hard-working employees were going to get an extra \$1,000 each directly because of the new tax relief, tax reduction, tax cut bill. The Tax Foundation predicted that they would eventually get an extra \$2,600, and these people are already getting \$1,000 each on day one.

That has opened the floodgates to other companies doing the exact same thing and employees around the country experiencing the exact same thing. Businesses started sharing the tax savings with rank-and-file, middle-class workers, and it started on day one—not just the wealthy and the powerful, as Senator SCHUMER has predicted. Over 120 companies have said they are raising wages, giving out bonuses, and investing in their workers because of the tax law. It adds up to over \$980 million—\$980 million in the pockets of hard-working men and women around the country. How many people are seeing that? By last count, almost 1 million hard-working Americans—over 970,000 hard-working Americans have already gotten the good news.

There is more good news coming every day, with more announcements today. It is exactly what Republicans said would happen. It is happening for people who work at banks, who work at insurance companies, who work at airlines. It is happening for people who work at big companies, such as AT&T, Visa, and Comcast, but it is also happening for people who work at smaller companies, such as a winery in California and an aviation company in Texas. These are businesses and people in communities who are important parts of their communities and doing important jobs. The employees work hard, and now they are getting a share of the relief the Republicans had predicted they would get all along. And they are not just getting cash bonuses. There is a bank in Massachusetts called Berkshire Hills Bancorp. They announced last week that the people working there will be getting a \$1,000 bonus and will also see the minimum wage raised to \$15 an hour.

More is being invested in employee development and training programs. When you invest more in employee development and training programs, that means people are going to have additional skills that make them even more productive, better at their jobs, and qualify for even higher wages.

This bank in Massachusetts is also contributing an extra \$2 million to its charitable efforts, including scholarships. That helps improve the communities where the workers live and where they raise their families.

Democrats said it is not going to happen. It has happened. It is happening every day. They said that businesses would keep the money for themselves. That is not what we are seeing all across the country.

Ms. WARREN, the senior Senator from Massachusetts, went on PBS. The senior Senator from Massachusetts said that the idea that tax relief would lead to higher wages was, in her words, "the big lie that Republicans have been selling" for decades. She said that tax relief was "an insult to working families across America."

I would point out to Senator WARREN that many of the people who work at this bank are in her home State of Massachusetts. People have gotten wage increases. People have gotten additional money spent on training so they can become more valuable and make even more money. People have seen the minimum wage in that business go up. The workers getting these bonuses and raises in their pay are her constituents. Does she think these people are feeling insulted? Does she believe they have been insulted by getting a \$1,000 bonus and getting an increase in their salaries and having investments in terms of additional training? Is that an insult to those people? I don't think so. I bet they are feeling pretty glad to be supported and valued by their employer.

There is another business in Nevada, South Point Casino. Workers there are

receiving \$1 million total in bonuses. Previously, this business had actually planned to increase the share of health insurance costs that its employees would have to pay because health insurance costs have gone up.

Health insurance prices have skyrocketed ever since ObamaCare was passed. Companies have struggled with how to deal with these rising costs. Many have tried to pass these on to the employees.

This company in Nevada has said that because of the Republican tax relief law, they are canceling their plans to raise insurance costs—canceling their plans to raise the costs. That is more money in employees' pockets. The owner of the business said: "We want to be sure that our extended family is taken care of." That is the way these people think of the people who work for them—as part of their extended family. That is how employers are responding to tax relief all around the country, and that is what we said would happen.

We also predicted that one way businesses might deal with lower taxes would be to cut prices for consumers, let people who use their services or buy their products keep more of their hard-earned money. Americans are starting to see that prediction come true in the form of lower utility bills. Gas, electric, and water utilities across the country are getting ready to cut their rates because the taxes are going down under the law. Customers of the power company in Baltimore are going to receive millions of dollars in the form of lower rates. It has been a cold winter on the east coast, and a lower electric bill is going to be good news for a lot of people in that area. Customers are also likely to see the same thing in Missouri, South Carolina, and Louisiana.

These are the kinds of effects we are seeing all across the country, in various ways. It is all good news for consumers, all good news for people at home as a result of the tax reduction, tax relief, tax cuts passed by Republicans and signed by President Trump.

Americans are getting the benefits of tax relief. They are getting the benefit of regulatory relief and the pro-growth policies of Republicans in Congress and the Trump administration. People are seeing it in their daily lives. The polling company Gallup said that as soon as Donald Trump was elected President, economic confidence in this country soared. That is what the polls found. It has stayed positive almost without interruption ever since. It is the exact opposite of what polls were showing during the previous 8 years, in the previous administration. That was during the so-called economic recovery.

Why are people so optimistic now? It is because you can't open a newspaper or turn on a television without seeing more good news about the economy. New employment numbers came out last Friday. CNN had a headline: "U.S.

economy added 2 million jobs in 2017.” The Washington Post’s headline was “Trump’s first-year jobs numbers were very, very good.” Bloomberg reported that the Christmas shopping season was “probably the best one in a decade.” People are feeling confident. They are seeing higher wages, they are seeing cash bonuses, and soon they will start seeing the tax cut in their paychecks.

The American people know that Republicans have kept our promise. We are cutting regulations, cutting taxes, putting more money back in their pockets. That is what hard-working Americans have asked us to do, and that is what we are going to continue to do.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mrs. ERNST. Mr. President, I rise to discuss the positive impact the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act will have on Iowa farmers.

Of course, our Iowa agricultural economy is really important, and those men and women who are serving as farmers, ranchers, and growers in the State of Iowa mean the world to me, coming from a farm my family had in Southwest Iowa.

We all understand this has been a very challenging time for farmers in our rural communities. The community I come from in Southwest Iowa has just 10,000 people in our county. Many of them have faced the challenges of the economic downturn. Since their peaks in 2012, corn prices have declined by 60 percent and soybean prices have declined by 47 percent. My neighbors are hurting, folks. Farm income has nearly been cut in half since 2013.

A lot of our producers are hurting, especially our young and beginning farmers who have gotten their start just in maybe the last 10 years or so, but, fortunately for our farmers, our ranchers, and our growers, tax relief is on its way. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act will provide sweeping tax cuts for farmers and rural communities, allowing our producers to keep more of those hard-earned dollars.

About 95 percent of farms are organized as passthrough businesses, such as sole proprietorships, partnerships, and S corps. These businesses are taxed under individual tax rules and will benefit from lower tax rates for every income bracket. On top of that, they will see significant relief through a new 20-percent deduction on passthrough business income. The law also provides relief from the costly individual mandate which forced many farmers to choose between buying an expensive ObamaCare plan through their State exchange or being fined.

Now, just a couple of years ago, I remember a very intense conversation I had with a beginning farmer in Northeast Iowa. When he was purchasing his insurance through the State exchange, the cost had more than doubled. He was shaking he was so upset about it, and he explained to me the additional cost of that individual policy was his truck payment. There was no room in his budget for the additional cost of that insurance policy so he had to make that choice: Do I purchase through the individual exchange or do I make my truck payment? Fortunately, within this bill, we have that relief. He can make that choice, and the choice is his on whether he makes that truck payment and forgoes the insurance or whether now he can do without that type of insurance and not be fined because he was too poor to afford it.

In addition, the bill dramatically expands section 179 expensing and allows 5 years of 100 bonus depreciation. Both of these changes will foster much needed investment in farms throughout Iowa.

The law also preserves a number of important tax provisions for farmers, including the interest deduction, cash accounting, and the use of like-kind exchanges for property.

Last, but certainly not least, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act doubles the Federal estate tax exemption while preserving the stepped-up basis. The death tax can have a devastating impact on family farms. Over 90 percent of farm assets cannot be sold easily without losing value. Especially as we continue to experience a downturn in that ag economy, family farmers are sometimes left with no choice but to sell land or the equipment they use to farm that land when they are forced to pay that tax.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act is a big step in the right direction for agriculture. I am thankful to the President for his leadership and to my colleagues in the Senate and the House for helping get this long-needed bill done. On behalf of agriculture, thank you.

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

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

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I rise to highlight the positive impacts our historic tax reform law will have on the agricultural community.

Agriculture is Arkansas’ largest industry by far, adding \$16 billion to our economy every year and accounting for approximately one in every six jobs. We are the top rice-producing State in the Nation, No. 2 in the Nation in broiler chicken production, and the third largest producer of catfish in the United States. We could also clothe

and shelter ourselves from fiber grown in Arkansas, as we are the third in the Nation in cotton production and the fifth largest softwood lumber-producing State. You could keep going down the list, and you would find Arkansas as one of the Nation’s top 10 producers of a number of agricultural commodities.

Clearly, ensuring that Washington helps create an economic environment that allows the agricultural industry to thrive is extremely important to my home State of Arkansas. When President Trump signed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act into law, his signature provided much needed tax relief to America’s farmers. More than 94 percent of farms are organized as passthrough businesses, which means they are impacted by the same tax provisions as individual filers. Lower tax rates across the board and a 20-percent deduction from their taxable income means immediate savings, which can be reinvested to help grow their operations.

Ninety seven percent of the farms in Arkansas are family owned, and the vast majority of them will now be exempt from the estate tax—the death tax. This is a big deal. It will help keep those farms and ranches in the family for generations to come.

Finally, farmers and ranchers will be able to expense 100 percent of their capital investments, such as equipment, over the next 4 years. In his address to the Farm Bureau earlier this week, the President called this the “sleeper” in the bill. He is right. People don’t realize and there hasn’t been enough talk about how beneficial this provision will be for our family-run agricultural operations. The substance of the President’s Farm Bureau speech tilted heavily toward our efforts to bring stability and predictability to the economy.

As we have witnessed over the course of the previous administration, uncertainty is devastating to our economy. There are few industries that are inherently more affected by uncertainty than agriculture. This is why we have taken steps to eliminate some of the punitive, needless regulations that create uncertainty for our farmers and our ranchers.

It is also why my colleagues and I on the Agriculture Committee, under the steadfast leadership of Chairman ROBERTS, are working hard to reauthorize the farm bill. Programs are authorized by the farm bill that are absolutely vital to farmers, ranchers, and consumers. These programs will provide more certainty in rural America to address the challenges ahead. Finally, it is why we took great care to ensure that the agricultural industry will see the benefits of tax reform. Establishing a tax code that works for our farmers and ranchers, as opposed to against them, is vital to their ability to plan for the future and invigorate our rural communities.

I am proud of our efforts to pass this landmark tax reform law, and I am

confident it will have lasting, positive effects for our economy.

With that, I yield back.

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

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

NOMINATION OF MICHAEL BROWN

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I am honored and privileged to come to the floor of the Senate today to talk about Michael Brown, appointed by President Donald Trump to be a district judge on the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia.

Mr. Brown is an outstanding citizen of our State. He is married to a wonderful lady and has three wonderful children. He is a graduate of Marist School, a graduate of Georgetown University, and a graduate of the University of Georgia Law School, magna cum laude, in 1994.

He has a record of practicing law in the private sector that is unparalleled, having worked for both King & Spalding and also Alston & Bird.

King & Spalding produced many of the judges on the bench of the United States of America with distinguished records, not the least of which is the Attorney General under President Jimmy Carter, Griffin Bell, an outstanding Attorney General from our State. They also produced Sam Nunn, an outstanding Member of the Senate. They produced many judges in our State. Many were also produced from the firm where he practices now, which is Alston & Bird.

It is a privilege for me to talk about Michael for many reasons. Most importantly, he comes with a background of experience in the private sector. He has been recommended by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce as one of the great lawyers in the United States of America in business matters. One of the things our courts need is a tempered balance of business and consumers. There is no question that someone who is not a voice for business as a judge but has experience in business as a judge will make a tremendous difference. I know he will in the Northern District of Georgia.

I thank the President for nominating Michael and making this appointment. To the Members of the Senate, I urge you to join me in voting for Michael Brown for the Northern District of Georgia to be our next judge there. He will be a great judge on the bench. It will be a great decision for us, and it will continue the growth and improvement of outstanding jurists confirmed by this Senate in this year 2018.

I yield back.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to begin the series of votes.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Parker nomination?

Mr. BURR. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) is necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 98, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 5 Ex.]

YEAS—98

Alexander	Gardner	Nelson
Baldwin	Gillibrand	Paul
Barrasso	Graham	Perdue
Bennet	Grassley	Peters
Blumenthal	Harris	Portman
Blunt	Hassan	Reed
Boozman	Hatch	Risch
Brown	Heinrich	Roberts
Burr	Heitkamp	Rounds
Cantwell	Heller	Rubio
Capito	Hirono	Sanders
Cardin	Hoeven	Sasse
Carper	Inhofe	Schatz
Casey	Isakson	Schumer
Cassidy	Johnson	Scott
Cochran	Jones	Shaheen
Collins	Kaine	Shelby
Coons	Kennedy	Smith
Corker	King	Stabenow
Cornyn	Klobuchar	Sullivan
Cortez Masto	Lankford	Tester
Cotton	Leahy	Thune
Crapo	Lee	Tillis
Cruz	Manchin	Toomey
Daines	Markey	Udall
Donnelly	McCaskill	Van Hollen
Duckworth	McConnell	Warner
Durbin	Menendez	Warren
Enzi	Merkley	Whitehouse
Ernst	Moran	Wicker
Feinstein	Murkowski	Wyden
Fischer	Murphy	Young
Flake	Murray	

NOT VOTING—2

Booker	McCain
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The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Michael Lawrence Brown, of Georgia, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Georgia.

Mitch McConnell, Deb Fischer, John Barasso, John Thune, Roger F. Wicker, James M. Inhofe, Johnny Isakson, Mike Crapo, Tom Cotton, Chuck Grassley, Thom Tillis, Mike Rounds, Michael B. Enzi, James Lankford, Lindsey Graham, Pat Roberts, Todd Young.

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

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Michael Lawrence Brown, of Georgia, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Georgia, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) is necessarily absent.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 97, nays 1, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 6 Ex.]

YEAS—97

Alexander	Gardner	Paul
Baldwin	Gillibrand	Perdue
Barrasso	Graham	Peters
Bennet	Grassley	Portman
Blumenthal	Harris	Reed
Blunt	Hassan	Risch
Boozman	Hatch	Roberts
Brown	Heinrich	Rounds
Burr	Heitkamp	Rubio
Cantwell	Heller	Sanders
Capito	Hoeven	Sasse
Cardin	Inhofe	Schatz
Carper	Isakson	Schumer
Casey	Johnson	Scott
Cassidy	Jones	Shaheen
Cochran	Kaine	Shelby
Collins	Kennedy	Smith
Coons	King	Stabenow
Corker	Klobuchar	Sullivan
Cornyn	Lankford	Tester
Cortez Masto	Leahy	Thune
Cotton	Lee	Tillis
Crapo	Manchin	Toomey
Cruz	Markey	Udall
Daines	McCaskill	Van Hollen
Donnelly	McConnell	Warner
Duckworth	Menendez	Warren
Durbin	Merkley	Whitehouse
Enzi	Moran	Wicker
Ernst	Murkowski	Wyden
Feinstein	Murphy	Young
Fischer	Murray	
Flake	Nelson	

NAYS—1

Hirono

NOT VOTING—2

Booker	McCain
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The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 97, the nays are 1.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Michael Lawrence Brown, of Georgia, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Georgia.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, the Trump administration has come up with a name for its energy policy. The energy policy amounts to, basically, a big, fat cascade of gifts and special favors for oil, gas, and coal companies, which, in turn, make big political contributions. Trump officials call the policy “energy dominance.” More accurately, its name would probably be “fossil fuel industry political dominance” or one might actually call it “ignorance dominance” since the administration willfully ignores scientific understanding, basic economics, market theory, and even the warnings of our national security community.

The situation is not pretty from an environmental point of view. EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt is busily trying to roll back rules that limit, for instance, emissions of methane, which is a more powerful greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. He is considering walking back fuel efficiency standards that save drivers money at the pump. President Trump withdrew the United States from the Paris climate accord and was promptly ignored by every other nation on Earth.

Last month, on the Interior Secretary’s recommendation, Trump took big areas of the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments, in Utah, away from the public and opened them, instead, to big mining and oil and gas interests. Zinke has even proposed to open almost all U.S. coastlines to drilling by oil and gas companies. That includes drilling in protected areas in the Arctic, drilling up and down the Atlantic coast, expanded drilling in the Gulf of Mexico, and drilling along the Pacific coastline. The plan even includes Georges Bank and other crucial fishing grounds for New England.

This drilling scheme is likely dead on arrival. Republican Governors in New Jersey, Maryland, and Florida have all denounced the plan, as have Florida’s Democratic and Republican Senators. It even runs into objections from the Pentagon. When President Obama considered opening the southern Atlantic coast to drilling 2 years ago, the Defense Department told the Obama administration that offshore energy development could interfere with military readiness and missile testing.

Given the dominance of fossil fuel political interests in this administration, the whole Trump energy dominance scheme, of course, neglects the warnings of our national security experts about climate change—climate change as an accelerant of global instability

and conflict and climate change as a direct hazard to military installations and infrastructure, from the Naval Station Norfolk to faraway facilities like Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean.

In 2008, the National Intelligence Council reported more than 30 U.S. military installations facing risk from rising sea levels. A vulnerability assessment directed by the “2010 Quadrennial Defense Review” found that at around 3 feet of sea level rise, 128 military installations are at risk. Naturally, many of those belong to the Navy—indeed, 56 out of those 128. It is a significant share of the Navy’s global footprint, totaling around \$100 billion in value.

In 2011, the National Academy of Sciences report, “National Security Implications of Climate Change for U.S. Naval Forces,” recommended the continued review of how sea level rise and changes in storm frequency and intensity would affect coastal installations.

The National Defense Authorization Act, which we just passed, directs the Department of Defense to study how climate change will affect our most vulnerable military bases over the next 20 years, including “the effects of rising sea tides, increased flooding, drought, desertification, wildfires, thawing permafrost,” as well as how climate change may drive new requirements for combatant commanders.

The law includes a sense of Congress statement that “climate change is a direct threat to the national security of the United States and is impacting stability in areas of the world both where the United States Armed Forces are operating today, and where strategic implications for future conflict exist.”

That is a sense-of-Congress statement that has passed this Republican-controlled Senate and the Republican-controlled House and was signed into law by this administration. Thank you to the author of this language, my friend and fellow Rhode Islander, Congressman JIM LANGEVIN.

Even the U.S. Government Accountability Office has engaged. The independent oversight agency issued a report titled, “Climate Change Adaptation: DoD Needs to Better Incorporate Adaptation into Planning and Collaboration at Overseas Installations.”

I think that title gives away the punch line. Surveying our bases and installations across the world, GAO found that weather and climate change pose operational and budgetary risks to infrastructure. GAO recommended that DOD’s climate planning efforts be expanded and increased; specifically, that the Secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force require defense installations to “systematically track the costs associated with extreme weather events and climate change” and that DOD better coordinate addressing climate change risks across different DOD installations.

This picture in the GAO report shows an unnamed military facility in the

Pacific that has at times been cut off by flooding from access points to its munitions storage complex. If you have a military facility that can’t get access to its munitions storage, you have a problem.

This is the picture of the flooded entryway, and this is the picture of the similar entryway under normal circumstances, able to be traveled.

A 2014 typhoon caused flash flooding here that trapped and imperiled American personnel. The point is, when climate change effects inhibit military base operations, defense preparedness requires climate preparedness.

Naval Station Norfolk, the largest Navy base in the world, is a poster child for the devastation that awaits our coastal military bases if we continue to pump out the greenhouse gas emissions that are driving sea level rise. A tide gauge operated at the base since 1927 has shown nearly 15 inches of vertical sea level rise so far. In the broader Hampton Roads metro area, home not only to the Navy but also to facilities of the Air Force, the Marine Corps, the Coast Guard, NASA, and NOAA, high tides are already regularly forcing seawater back through storm drains and flooding roadways.

DOD’s own environmental research program, the Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program, used Norfolk as its case study for sea level rise and extreme storm risks to coastal DOD installations. The study found a “tipping point” of about a half meter, 1.6 feet, of sea level rise, at which point “the probabilities of damage to infrastructure and losses in mission performance increased dramatically.” This is mapping of the flood hazard around Naval Station Norfolk.

This tipping point at which the mission performance losses increase dramatically is only a few decades away. Retired RADM David Titley, a former oceanographer and navigator of the Navy and leader of its Climate Change Task Force, said Norfolk has about 10 to 15 years to get serious about sea level rise in the region before “we’re really cutting it close.”

In 2017, CAPT Dean Vanderley, who leads infrastructure engineering at the Norfolk Naval base, admitted that sea level rise is “something where I don’t know that we’ve fully defined the problem. And we have definitely not fully defined the solution.”

Retired CAPT Joe Bouchard, a former base commander, told InsideClimate News that Naval Station Norfolk would need significant improvements to nearly every piece of infrastructure, from electrical and drainage systems to pier improvements, not to mention a seawall. He estimated this work could cost more than \$1 billion and take as long as a decade to complete. That is just one base with \$1 billion and a decade’s worth of work. The DOD has identified over 128 bases that would be at significant risk with 3 feet of sea level rise. I think NOAA’s current estimate is for 6 feet of global sea rise by the end of the century.

Even though our President is clueless about the basics of climate change, his Secretary of Defense understands and acknowledges the risks. In response to congressional questioning last year, Secretary Mattis said, "Climate change is impacting stability in areas of the world where our troops are operating today. . . . It is appropriate for the Combatant Commands to incorporate drivers of instability that impact the security environment in their areas into their planning."

Well, for political reasons, the White House can't acknowledge the problem so the recently published "National Security Strategy" totally disregards all of these recommendations. It will not even mention the forbidden words. We know these words are forbidden in the Trump administration because over and over again the memos leak out about people being told don't say the words "climate change."

Instead, with all these warnings from GAO, from senior military officials, from the National Intelligence Council, from a decade of Quadrennial Defense Reviews, and the testimony of Secretary Mattis—instead of listening to that, Trump parrots climate change denial talking points that come from the phony fossil fuel front groups. It is pathetic. Calling this deliberate ignorance "energy dominance" may be a fine fossil fuel flourish, but it is completely disconnected from actual safety, security, and military readiness—and don't get me started on what the fossil fuel industry's systematic corruption of our democracy means for America's fabled status as that "city on a hill."

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

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

IRAN

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss my thoughts on recent protests in Iran and the important upcoming decisions by the President with respect to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or the JCPOA.

While I am mindful that we have limited visibility into Iran and continue to learn more about the circumstances and motivations of the recent protests, one thing is clear: A significant portion of the Iranian people are not satisfied with their government and are increasingly willing to make their dissatisfaction heard. It is important that we support their right to peacefully express their views and demand that the Iranian Government respond with constructive dialogue, rather than force.

It was notable that Iranian President Ruhani implicitly recognized the validity of the protests earlier this week when he reportedly said:

It would be a misrepresentation and also an insult to Iranian people to say they only had economic demands. . . . People had economic, political and social demands

That is according to President Ruhani.

Acknowledging the need for reform, Ruhani continued:

We cannot pick a lifestyle and tell two generations after us to live like that. It is impossible. The views of the young generation about life and the world is different than ours.

Now is the time to support the Iranian people in their quest for a government that is more representative and supportive of their interests. Unfortunately, some have suggested that our response should be to withdraw from the JCPOA, an action that I believe would only serve to embolden the hardliners in Iran and leave the United States more isolated from our allies. Withdrawing from the JCPOA and re-imposing nuclear-related sanctions on Iran would immediately change the narrative inside of Iran, uniting reformists and hardliners alike in their opposition to what they view as a hostile United States.

While some would argue that the recent protests in Iran are symptomatic of what they view as a flawed JCPOA, I would suggest otherwise. In reality, the nuclear deal exposed one of the Iranian regime's central vulnerabilities—namely, that the regime can no longer simply blame sanctions imposed by the United States and the international community for its economic woes at home. It is becoming clearer to the Iranian people that it is actually the regime's corruption, financial mismanagement, funding of malign activities, and hegemonic ambitions that are at the root of their government's inability to enable job creation and to ensure that necessities like food and gasoline remain affordable.

In the coming days, the President has several important decisions to make with respect to the JCPOA. In October, President Trump acknowledged that Iran is meeting its commitments under the JCPOA, but he chose not to certify that continued sanctions relief is "appropriate and proportionate" to the actions taken by Iran with respect to terminating its illicit nuclear program. By the end of this week, President Trump is again required to decide whether to issue such a certification. I expect he will again choose not to do so.

The more consequential decision for the President this week will be whether to continue waivers of nuclear-related sanctions, as he is required to do under the JCPOA. Choosing not to continue such waivers would immediately snap back U.S. nuclear-related sanctions, thereby putting the United States in violation of the JCPOA. Let me be clear. This would be a unilateral action on behalf of the United States that would put us in violation of an international agreement, not just with Iran but with the United Kingdom,

France, Germany, Russia, and China, as well.

By all accounts, the JCPOA is working as intended, and Iran is verifiably meeting its commitments under the deal. It is important to remember what the JCPOA was designed to do and what it is now achieving. The JCPOA commits Iran to never seeking to develop or acquire a nuclear weapon; effectively cuts off all pathways for Iran to achieve a nuclear weapon during the period covered by the agreement; and increases the time it would take for Iran to acquire enough material for one nuclear bomb from 2 to 3 months to at least 1 year. When this agreement was signed, they were within months of having that capability. It dramatically reduces Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium and the number of installed centrifuges. It has prevented Iran from producing weapons-grade plutonium and has subjected Iran to robust monitoring by the IAEA to verify its compliance.

Withdrawing from the JCPOA at this point would provide no benefit and would actually leave us more isolated and less able to deal with the various challenges posed by Iran. The crippling sanctions regime that brought Iran to the negotiating table in the first place only worked because the international community was united in its determination to keep Iran from achieving a nuclear weapon. If we withdraw from the JCPOA unilaterally—and in the absence of a clear violation of the deal by Iran—there is no reason to believe that our partners in the P5+1 would join us. In fact, French President Macron has said that there is "no alternative" to the JCPOA and told the U.N. General Assembly that "renouncing it would be a grave error."

General Dunford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told the Armed Services Committee last year:

I believe that the U.S. would incur damage vis-a-vis our allies if we unilaterally withdraw from the JCPOA. Our allies will be less likely to cooperate with us on future military action to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon and less likely to cooperate with us on countering other destabilizing aspects of Iranian behavior that threaten our collective interests.

Our sanctions may snap back but not those imposed by the rest of the world, many of whom have begun building economic ties to Iran since the JCPOA was signed. Our international partners would then blame us, not Iran, for the failure of the deal.

Some, including President Trump, have argued that we can and should dissolve the JCPOA and renegotiate a better deal. This is a highly unrealistic proposal. We were only able to achieve the JCPOA after years of sustained multilateral diplomatic efforts and the imposition of aggressive international sanctions in concert with our partners. It will likely be impossible to replicate those conditions if the United States unilaterally withdraws from the JCPOA.

Contrary to President Trump's belief, threatening to walk away from the

deal actually weakens our ability to address the JCPOA's perceived flaws by alienating our partners. Instead, we should remain committed to the JCPOA and lead the international community in imposing additional sanctions, where necessary, to change other Iranian behaviors—namely, their respect for human rights, ballistic missile development efforts, and other malign activities.

We must also seek to help enable the Iranian people to make their choices heard, including by encouraging the adoption of social media and other means of communication. We could start by building upon general licenses issued by the Obama administration designed to encourage the export of communications technology to Iran.

Secretary Mattis told the Armed Services Committee at his confirmation hearing: "When America gives her word, we have to live up to it and work with our allies."

If the President decides this week not to continue nuclear-related sanctions relief for Iran, he will be effectively choosing to restart the Iranian nuclear program, thereby making military conflict with Iran more likely.

Withdrawing from the deal would also be a devastating blow to our efforts toward diplomacy with North Korea—and for that matter, any future diplomatic efforts to constrain aggressive behavior by our adversaries. Why would any nation engage with us in serious dialogue to resolve differences if they fear we will later withdraw unilaterally, even when the other parties are complying with the agreement?

Regardless of whether you supported the JCPOA before it was signed, the truth is that it has removed the greatest threat we faced from Iran while also preserving all other means to address Iran's malign activities. Let there be no doubt—Iran continues to be a state sponsor of terrorism and an abuser of human rights. Iran continues to destabilize the region through its development of ballistic missiles and support of proxies in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, and elsewhere. If Iran behaves this way without a nuclear weapon, imagine how much worse a nuclear-armed Iran would be.

Fortunately, our nonnuclear sanctions on Iran remain in place and are unaffected by the JCPOA. In fact, Congress authorized additional sanctions in July to help deal with these issues. The administration should work with our international partners and use all tools at its disposal, including by ramping up nonnuclear sanctions, where necessary, to counter Iran's unacceptable behavior in these other areas.

Abrogating the JCPOA only invites another nuclear crisis like the one we are currently facing with North Korea—a concern echoed by General Dunford when he appeared before the Armed Services Committee and said: "It makes sense to me that our holding up agreements that we have signed, un-

less there's a material breach, would have impact on others' willingness to sign agreements."

Many have criticized the JCPOA as a "flawed deal." For example, concerns have been raised that certain provisions sunset after a period of years, thereby delaying rather than permanently preventing Iran from achieving a nuclear weapon. If the concern is that Iran may seek to resume nuclear weapons development activities after these sunsets—a concern that I share—the appropriate course of action is not to throw out the deal but to work with our international partners to ensure that necessary restrictions on the JCPOA are appropriately extended or supplemented.

As I noted before, Iran has committed in perpetuity not to develop or seek to acquire nuclear weapons. We should not take them at their word; we should verify their adherence to this commitment, just as we are doing under the JCPOA. If at any point in the future we have evidence to suggest Iran is taking steps that would indicate a violation of that commitment, we should use that information to rally the P5+1 and other international partners to take a unified stand against such efforts. Unilaterally withdrawing from the JCPOA would seriously damage our ability to exert such leadership in the future.

Again, according to General Dunford, in the absence of the JCPOA, Iran would likely resume its nuclear weapons program and "a nuclear-armed Iran would likely be more aggressive in its actions and more dangerous in its consequences." General Dunford also told the committee that "the intel community assessment is, in fact, that Iran is in compliance right now [with the JCPOA], and therefore, I think we should focus on addressing the other challenges: the missile threat they pose, the maritime threat they pose, the support of proxies, terrorists, and the cyber threat they pose." I wholeheartedly agree with General Dunford's assessment.

Our troops in Iraq and Syria are operating in close proximity to Iranian-aligned militias, including those who previously targeted American troops. Unilaterally withdrawing from the JCPOA could embolden these hardline militias and possibly result in Iran giving them a green light to begin targeting U.S. forces once more.

Furthermore, while I have full confidence in our military's ability to fight and win wars when necessary, we cannot escape the reality that military contingencies to respond to both a nuclear-armed North Korea and Iran would result in massive loss of life and national treasure and greatly stress our military's capacity and capabilities.

In conclusion, I will return to where I began. Now is not the time to impose a self-inflicted wound upon our foreign policy and standing in the world. Unilaterally withdrawing from the JCPOA

would empower Iranian hardliners and dramatically undermine the reform-minded protests we should be seeking to empower. Worse still, it would leave us more isolated in the international community and, by extension, less able to address the range of national security challenges posed by Iran, North Korea, and our other potential adversaries.

We must not abdicate the JCPOA or American leadership on these issues. Therefore, I urge the President to stay the course with respect to the JCPOA, while also rallying the international community to take effective actions intended to change other unacceptable behaviors by the Iranian regime to suppress dissent at home and sow instability abroad. We must not squander this opportunity by making the story about the United States rather than the courageous Iranians who at great risk to themselves have taken to the streets to demand a better future.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GARDNER). The clerk will call the roll. The senior assistant 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 (Mr. LEE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at 12 noon tomorrow, all postcloture time on the Brown nomination be considered expired and the Senate vote on confirmation of the Brown nomination with no intervening action or debate; further, that if cloture is invoked on the Counts nomination, all postcloture time be considered expired at 1:45 p.m. tomorrow and the Senate vote on confirmation of the Counts nomination with no intervening action or debate; finally, that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider with respect to the Brown and Counts nominations be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

The Senator from Oklahoma.

MISSILE DEFENSE

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, for about 20 years now, I have viewed the development and deployment of a layered ballistic missile defense shield as probably singularly the most vital thing we could be doing around here. People are aware of that now. Adversaries, like North Korea and others, have ballistic missiles, and they are increasing their range capability. Iran is getting almost everything. One of the problems you have is that you get countries like North Korea developing missile capabilities, and if they have it, then other adversaries have it. I am talking about Yemen and all the rest of them.

It is important for us to communicate to the American people that the

threat we face is probably the most imminent threat we have had in the history of this country. Today, it is the greatest threat we have had certainly in my lifetime.

I have come to the floor and spoken on this issue in 2001, 2009, 2012, and this will be the fourth time this year. Over the last 30 years, we have witnessed the missile defense programs go through dramatic investment periods, followed by extreme starvation and cancellations—I am talking about in the United States—depending on who happens to be President at the time.

Remember, of course, when Reagan came in and people made fun of him with “Star Wars” and tried to defame him in any way they could. Yet he was able to be persistent and start a program, and we should be very thankful we have it today. That was followed in 1989 by President Bush. He continued that program.

However, in 1993, when President Clinton was in office, the first thing he did was to cut \$2.5 billion out of the Bush missile defense budget request for fiscal year 1994. He also terminated the Reagan-Bush Strategic Defense Initiative and downgraded the National Missile Defense Program to a research and development program. He cut 5-year missile defense funding by 54 percent, from \$39 billion to \$18 billion.

I say this because these times are changing. Continuing with his administration in 1996, he cut the funding and slowed down the development of THAAD and the Navy Theater Wide Systems. To remind ourselves of how important that was at that time and the cuts he made to that and how critical that was, THAAD right now is the only thing we have to join forces with South Korea to be able to knock down something coming from North Korea to South Korea. The Aegis system is a defensive system that we could share with Japan. Without these systems, they would be wide open. That was 1996.

In 1999, the last of the Clinton years, he delayed by at least 2 years the Space Based Infrared System, which is a very complicated system that knocks down incoming missiles. Then, in 2000, Bush came in. By the end of 2008, President Bush had succeeded in fielding a missile defense system capable of defending all 50 States. One of the things he did that was most significant—and this is in the final years of his administration—was to recognize the fact that we have had ground-based interceptors in our country for a number of years. In fact, there are 44 ground-based interceptor systems. Unfortunately, they are all on the west coast because that is where we thought the threat would be. We discovered at that time, during the Bush administration, that the threat was from both sides because we recognized that Iran was developing the capabilities, as well as North Korea and others. So in order to protect Eastern United States as well as Central Europe, we had the system that was set

up. It was kind of funny because I remember being there with one of our strongest allies. The system they set up was one where they had a radar system in the Czech Republic, and they had a rocket system—a ground-based interceptor—in Poland, right next door. I remember when Vaclav Klaus was the President of the Czech Republic, one of our strongest supporters, and he said to me at that time: Now, if we go ahead and put our system in the Czech Republic and in Poland, can you assure me that if we incur the wrath of Russia, we are not going to end up being embarrassed and have the rug pulled out from under us?

I said: There is not a chance in the world that would happen.

Well, that did happen. In fact, it was a total of 44 ground-based interceptors that were fielded. That was in Alaska and California, on the west coast. We went through this where they pulled the rug out from under Poland, as well as the Czech Republic. Then, in April, came our first Obama defense cuts, which began disarming America and dismantling our layered missile defense system. This is critical because we put this in for the reason that we perceived the threat to be coming in from the east as opposed to the west coast, and the very system that would have protected us was taken down by President Obama.

I would say, due to his overall reduced budget requests in defense, there were not enough Aegis ships. I already mentioned how we are using those today in defense of many of our allies, including Japan. Since Kim Jong Un took power in 2009, he has already conducted more than 80 ballistic missile tests. That is far more than his father and his grandfather conducted.

North Korea has conducted six nuclear tests of increasingly powerful weapons. The latest test was in September of last year. The major test actually came after that, and that was on November 28. On November 28, he demonstrated that he had the range of the United States and the central part of our country. In other words, it was stated by others who observed that he now has the capability of reaching any target in mainland United States.

There were some scientists who did an analysis of what they did on November 28. They made it very clear. David Wright, an analyst for the Union of Concerned Scientists, wrote that—this is something that happened on November 29—that yesterday’s test indicates that North Korea can now hold the United States well within missile range. He said: “Such a missile would have been more than enough range to reach Washington, DC, and in fact any other part of the continental United States.”

Here is the scary part of this. Those who are not wanting to believe that the threat is real and the threat is there are saying: Well, we don’t know that the missile he demonstrated on November 28 could have reached that

range if it had a full payload, a load of a nuclear warhead.

We don’t know if they had one or not, but that doesn’t give me much comfort. They also questioned whether or not it could sustain the reentry back into the atmosphere.

The point is that they now have that capability, and that is something we have to keep in mind as we are making decisions, because we have decisions to make, and that is what we are doing right now in trying to decide how we are going to keep the government from shutting down and develop some kind of a budget plan that is going to serve us well.

TAX REFORM

Mr. President, let me mention something else that I think is very significant because I heard today a lot of people criticizing and not really understanding what happened with the tax plan that was passed. We are already getting the results of it. It is kind of exciting. I don’t recall anything in my career where we got the results as quickly as we got and we are getting right now. We heard Minority Leader SCHUMER call the tax plan “a punch in the gut to the middle class.” In an op-ed piece in the New York Times, Senator ELIZABETH WARREN and Senator BERNIE SANDERS said: “The Republican agenda on health care and taxes is . . . widely disliked by the American people” and a “tax giveaway to the wealthy.”

I think it is important that people understand that not only is middle-class America going to benefit from this, but they already have. One million Americans are counting on receiving raises and bonuses from this tax reform. In my State of Oklahoma, thousands of employees will be receiving and have already received large compensation increases, bonuses—Express Employment Professionals in Oklahoma City, American Airlines, Southwest Airlines, and AT&T. In fact, Senator ROY BLUNT was coming back on a plane, the same one I was on, and the flight attendant was talking about how she had already received a \$1,000 bonus. Then, the rest of them chimed in and said: We have too.

That is already happening. Right now we have a list of 123 major corporations that have already given an average of \$1,000 for every employee they have, predicated on the assumption that the tax plan is going to increase the economy, and that is exactly what is going to happen.

I am confident that this is actually happening today. I have to say this, though, because more people still try to say: Well, we can’t give tax reductions to people and still increase revenue to do all of these things we need to do with our national defense and with our infrastructure programs.

That is not true.

I am going to repeat one that I have done before on this, but people seem to not understand. It is easy to say: Well, if you reduce taxes, you are going to reduce revenue.

That is not the way it works. I remember very well what happened. It was not in this position, of course, but in 1991, when Ronald Reagan was President, at that time he had the most far-reaching reduction in taxes. Remember, the top rate was reduced from 70 percent to 30 percent, and the other brackets came down proportionately. Yet at the time he did that, in 1981, the total amount of revenue coming into the United States was \$469 billion. As a result of that, it increased revenue to \$750 billion. That is huge, and it shows that it really happens. The reason it happens is that for each 1-percent increase in the economy, it produces increased revenue of some \$3 trillion. That is what happened then, and that is what is going to happen now. People are rejoicing today.

I ask unanimous consent that a sheet that outlines all of these companies that are giving large bonuses as a result of the tax bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

COMPANIES INCREASING COMPENSATION, SO FAR

1. AAON
2. AT&T
3. AccuWeather
4. Advance Financial
5. Aflac
6. Alaska Air Group
7. American Airlines
8. American Bank
9. American Savings Bank
10. Americollect
11. Aquesta Financial Holdings
12. Associated Bank
13. Atlas Air Worldwide
14. Ball Ventures
15. Bancorp South
16. Bank of America
17. Bank of Colorado
18. Bank of Hawaii
19. Bank of the James
20. Bank of the Ozarks
21. Berkshire Hills Bancorp
22. BB&T
23. Carl Black Automotive Group
24. Central Banccompany, Inc.
25. Central Pacific Bank
26. Charlie Bravo Aviation
27. Charlotte Pipe and Foundry
28. Citizens Financial Group
29. Colling Pest Solutions
30. Comcast
31. Comerica Bank
32. Commerce Bank
33. Community Trust Bancorp
34. Copperleaf Assisted Living
35. Cornerstone Holdings
36. Dayton T. Brown Inc.
37. Delaware Supermarkets Inc.
38. DePatco, Inc.
39. Dime Community Bancshares
40. Eagle Ridge Ranch
41. EastIdahoNews.com
42. Elite Roofing Systems (Idaho)
43. Elite Clinical Trials, Inc.
44. Emkay, Inc.
45. Ennis, Inc.
46. Express Employment Prof.
47. Fifth Third Bancorp
48. FirstCapital Bank of Texas
49. First Farmers Bank & Trust
50. First Financial Northwest, Inc.
51. First Hawaiian Bank
52. First Horizon National Corp.
53. Flemington Car & Truck
54. Fort Ranch

55. Gardner Company
56. Gate City Bank
57. GetFoundFirst.com
58. Great Southern Bancorp
59. HarborOne Bank
60. Hartford Financial Services
61. Hawaii National Bank
62. IAT Insurance Group
63. INB Bank
64. InUnison Inc.
65. JetBlue
66. Jordan Winery
67. Kansas City Southern
68. Kauai Cattle
69. Melaleuca
70. Mid-AM Metal Forming
71. Move It Or Lose It Moving
72. National Bank Holdings Corp.
73. Nationwide Insurance
74. National Guardian
75. Navient
76. Nelnet
77. Nephron Pharmaceuticals
78. Northpoint Apartments
79. OceanFirst Financial
80. Ohnward Bancshares
81. Old Dominion Freight Line
82. Pinnacle Bank
83. Pioneer Credit Recovery
84. PNC Financial Services
85. Regions Financial
86. Renasant Bank
87. Resident Construction
88. Riverbend Communications
89. Riverbend Management, Inc.
90. Riverbend Ranch
91. Riverbend Services
92. Rush Enterprises
93. Sheffer Corporation
94. Sinclair Broadcast Group
95. Smith Chevrolet
96. Smith Honda
97. Smith RV
98. South Point Casino
99. Southwest Airlines
100. Steel Design
101. Stifel Financial Corp.
102. Summit State Bank
103. SunTrust Banks, Inc.
104. TCF Financial Corp.
105. The Flood Insurance Agency
106. The Travelers Companies
107. Territorial Savings Bank
108. Texas Capital Bank
109. Tokio Marine HCC
110. Total System Services
111. Turning Point Brands
112. Unity Bank
113. U.S. Bancorp
114. Visa
115. Washington Federal
116. Webster Financial
117. Wells Fargo
118. Western Alliance Bancorp
119. Western & Southern Financial
120. Willow Creek Woodworks
121. Windsor Federal Savings
122. Yancey Bros.
123. Zions Bancorp

TAX RELIEF PAYS AMERICAN WORKERS

Almost immediately after Congress passed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, American workers at dozens of firms began to see the effects in the form of bonuses and raises. For supporters of tax relief this was good news, though not altogether a surprise. During debate over the law, economists cited research that workers bear most of the burden of the corporate income tax via reduced wages. The remainder is borne by consumers and investors. A significant cut in the corporate rate would provide real benefits to workers.

One study by scholars at the American Enterprise Institute concluded that a 1 percent increase in the corporate tax rate is associated with a 0.5 percent decrease in real wages. A 2007 Treasury Department survey of

economic studies found that workers “bear a substantial burden” of the corporate income tax. The Congressional Budget Office concluded in 2006 that workers pay more than 70 percent of the cost of corporate taxes.

Opponents of tax relief countered that a corporate rate cut would help only the wealthy—a claim being knocked down more each day. Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said that “history shows tax cuts like these benefit the wealthy and the powerful to the exclusion of the middle class.” As a wave of companies across the country began announcing bonuses and giving raises to workers, it became clear that tax relief is putting more money in the pockets of the hard-working Americans who Republicans said would win because of the law.

The same day the House and Senate passed the bill, December 20, AT&T Inc. issued a press release saying: “Once tax reform is signed into law, AT&T plans to invest an additional \$1 billion in the United States in 2018 and pay a special \$1,000 bonus to more than 200,000 AT&T U.S. employees—all union-represented, non-management and front-line managers. If the President signs the bill before Christmas, employees will receive the bonus over the holidays.”

So far, at least 123 companies have announced they are giving employees bonuses or otherwise increasing compensation due to the tax cut legislation. Notable examples include:

American Airlines, Southwest Airlines, and JetBlue announced \$1,000 bonuses for their employees (a total of more than 200,000 people). American’s bonuses will exclude officers; Southwest’s and JetBlue’s include all employees. American said it would pay bonuses “in light of this new tax structure.” JetBlue said that “our Crewmembers should be the first to benefit.” Southwest said it would put the savings from tax relief “to work . . . to reward our hard-working Employees.”

AT&T announced \$1,000 bonuses to its 200,000 employees. It also said that it will increase capital expenditures by \$1 billion in 2018.

Comcast announced a \$1,000 bonus for more than 100,000 employees. In addition, it plans to invest \$50 billion in its infrastructure in the next five years. Comcast said the bonuses are “[b]ased on the passage of tax reform and the FCC’s action on broadband.”

Nationwide Insurance announced a \$1,000 bonus for 29,000 employees and increased 401(k) matching. The company told its employees: “The combination of the new tax legislation, including a reduced corporate tax rate, and our associates’ ongoing commitment to our members, community and On Your Side promise are the reasons we’re making this investment that further enhances the already robust benefits we offer to attract and retain the best talent.”

PNC Financial Services announced \$1,000 bonuses for 47,500 employees as well as \$1,500 to be added to existing pension accounts. The company also will raise its base pay rate to \$15 per hour. PNC’s CEO said: “The tax reform law creates an opportunity to reward our employees who are working hard each day to serve our customers, build strong relationships in our communities and create long-term value for our shareholders.”

U.S. Bank announced a \$1,000 bonus for nearly 60,000 employees and enhanced health care offerings in the 2019 enrollment period. It will also raise base pay rate to \$15 per hour. The bank said that these decisions were “a result of the tax reform package.”

Mr. INHOFE. 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.

Ms. HIRONO. 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

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, every Member of this body is only a few generations removed from the immigrant experience. At some point in the recent past, each of our ancestors made the courageous decision to leave his home in search of a better life in America. Each of them took a risk. They didn't know what awaited them in this country, but they believed that through their own hard work and determination, they could succeed.

My mother took a huge risk when she brought my brothers and me to this country. Leaving her entire family behind, she packed our belongings into one suitcase, and we set sail for Hawaii. We grew up poor, but Mom worked so hard every day to build a life for us in this country. She worked minimum-wage jobs with no health insurance. We moved apartments and schools every few years. Eventually, we were able to bring my grandparents to Hawaii from Japan. So I understand as an immigrant how important family unification is to immigrant families.

I share my story not because I think it is particularly extraordinary but because it is a story that millions of families in our country share. The same hopes that drove my mom to risk everything to bring us to America are reflected in the stories of millions of immigrant families across the country, and they are reflected in the lives of Dreamers, whose futures are now at risk because of the President's decision to end the DACA Program.

More than 15,000 young people have already lost their protection from deportation as a result of the President's decision, and 122 more will lose DACA protection every single day. It was with this sense of urgency in mind that I joined a bipartisan group of my colleagues at the White House yesterday to find a path forward to protect the Dreamers. The President took great pains to appear reasonable and eager to make a deal, but we left yesterday's meeting without much clarity about where he stood.

Only a few days ago, the President threatened to hold Dreamers hostage until he got \$18 billion to build the wall. I would call that his vanity project. In response to my question at yesterday's meeting, the President appeared to demonstrate some flexibility on this issue, but after the Freedom Caucus spent yesterday afternoon warning of a potential betrayal on so-called "amnesty," the President reaffirmed in a tweet his hard-line position that funding for the wall must be part of any deal on Dreamers.

Between insisting on building an unnecessary wall, demonizing family reunification, and peddling misinforma-

tion about the diversity visa lottery, the President lost track of what is really at stake here—the inspiring young people whose lives he has left hanging in the balance.

Before the holidays, it was heartening to see so many Dreamers from all across the country taking direct action in the halls of Congress to fight for their futures. I spoke with a number of these young people, like Victor from Houston, who traveled for days to make his voice heard in Congress.

Victor's parents were seasonal farmworkers who traveled to the strawberry fields of Florida every year. They settled down in Houston and saved money for a car and an apartment. They sent for Victor and his sister when he was only 4 years old.

Victor spent most of his childhood not even knowing his immigration status. It wasn't until he came home one day with a permission slip to join his middle school class on a trip to Spain that his mom told him that he was undocumented. Learning what it meant to be undocumented—that if he traveled to Spain he couldn't come home—was really hard for Victor, but he tried to put it from his mind.

As the years passed, it got harder for Victor to grapple with his status. He loved going to school, but he knew as an undocumented immigrant that his options after he graduated from high school were limited. He developed depression, and his grades suffered. But a few months after graduation, President Obama created the DACA Program, and Victor successfully applied for it.

Victor told me that even though he had DACA, he was still too afraid to talk about his status with anyone. During the 2016 election, this changed. He confronted his friends who voted for Donald Trump and shared what losing DACA would mean for him.

On September 5, Victor knew there would be an announcement about his future. He put his phone away and started cleaning his house to distract him from what was about to happen. Eventually he ran out of distractions and sat down to watch Attorney General Jeff Sessions' DACA announcement. Victor began to cry. In the days that followed, Victor started having panic attacks—sometimes as many as five to seven per day. He was afraid to get in the car because he didn't want to hurt anyone if he got a panic attack while driving. A few weeks later, Victor showed up for his first United We Dream event in Houston. There he met fellow Dreamers and allies committed to fighting for him. He told me that it was amazing to see so many people show up in support and solidarity.

Victor made himself a promise that once the Dream Act passes, he is going to go back to school to study psychology so that he can help LGBT youth like him. Before he left, Victor said something really insightful. He said that it is really important for people to come out of the shadows to tell their stories because once you tell your

story, then they can no longer demonize you.

I couldn't agree more.

Fighting to protect Dreamers is about much more than the law. It is about compassion and basic human decency. Late last night, Dreamers won a temporary reprieve when a district court judge in San Francisco issued a preliminary injunction to reinstate the DACA Program for existing enrollees. The judge said that ending DACA in the way the administration ended it was arbitrary and capricious. This was an important victory, for now. It is just a temporary injunction, a temporary reprieve. So I agree with my Democratic leader that we cannot allow this decision to make us think that we are out of the woods, not at all. It cannot dim our resolve to pass the Dream Act. The fight continues.

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

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

Mr. KAINE. Thank you, Mr. President.

I rise as many of my colleagues have this afternoon, and I have risen on the same topic often to talk about our Dreamers.

Usually, when I have risen in the past, I have told stories about Virginia Dreamers. We have about 13,000 Dreamers in Virginia. I have highlighted stories of Dreamers from Latin America, Africa, Sweden, and Asia. One of the students I talked about, Gloria Oduyoye, just graduated from William & Mary Law School within the last month and thus became the first Dreamer to be a law school graduate in Virginia and one of the few Dreamers who attained a law degree in the United States. I talked about her story.

Today I decided not to talk about stories of individuals again but to try to put it in context, with the message really being that the time is now to make a decision. We don't need more information. We just need the will to act and do what I think is the right and the fair thing to do because we have been at this discussion now—it is hard to believe we have been at this discussion for 16 years.

The American public—Democrats, Republicans, and Independents—overwhelmingly support a permanent solution for Dreamers. It is not that we need to know anything more to solve this. We have been talking about it for a very long time.

I want to encourage Members of this body and in the House who are involved in the negotiation to come to an agreement and provide permanent protection for the Dreamers before next Friday so that we can protect this community, which is frightened because

they are so worried about being deported or losing their ability to work, to go to school, losing the ability to protect their families. But it is more than just protecting people because they are frightened; it is protecting them because, as I have seen in Virginia and in every State, they so enrich this country.

The first version of the DREAM Act, it is hard to believe, was introduced in 2001. The Senator from Illinois, Mr. DURBIN, who has been a champion of this and has my deepest admiration for his persistence in this endeavor, introduced the first version of the DREAM Act together with the senior Senator from Utah, Mr. HATCH.

The bill has evolved since then. It wasn't exactly the same as we are contemplating now, but it was the first version of the bill. It sought to repeal a provision of the 1996 immigration reform that prohibited undocumented immigrants from eligibility for higher education. Instead, what the bill, in its original version, did 17 years ago was to grant permanent resident status to young, undocumented immigrants with a high school degree or equivalent GED who fulfilled certain residence requirements and did not have criminal records. That was the start of this discussion. We are still looking for the permanent answer.

The DREAM Act first almost passed in 2007. It attained more than a majority vote in the Senate, but it didn't get to the 60-vote threshold, so that was insufficient for passage. In 2010, the House passed the DREAM Act, but the Senate again failed to approve it with a 60-vote threshold.

In 2013, just a few months after I came to the Senate, we contemplated, debated, discussed, voted upon comprehensive immigration reform in June. I was kind of proud then. I was a young Senator, had been here a couple of months and stood in my chair and offered a speech on the floor of the Senate in Spanish to describe what was in the bill for the 45 million Americans who get their news every day in the Spanish language. After I was finished describing it, people came up to me and said: Has anybody ever done that before? And I said: Frankly, I don't know.

It turned out that it was the first time in the history of the body that a speech had been given in a language other than English. But what was important about that moment in June of 2013 was not the speech; it was the vote. The package was comprehensive. It included not just the DREAM Act but border security, assistance for employers to determine the immigration bona fides of those applying for work. These are reforms—an approval for people here on temporary protected status from El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Somalia, Sudan, and Haiti to become permanent residents and then convert that into a path to citizenship. That comprehensive immigration reform bill, in my view, represents the Senate working at its best: a bipar-

tisan working group, coming through committee, coming to the floor with amendments. It passed this body with 68 votes in favor.

It was evidence of the naivete of a young Senator at the time that I assumed, of course, something was going to happen because it passed here with 68 votes. I knew the House wouldn't do exactly what we did, but I thought they would do something, and we would be conferencing it. But alas, I was naive; that was not to happen.

We are now in a different place, and we have the ability to act.

I supported President Obama's actions in June of 2012 to protect Dreamers—the DACA Program; and then later, the DAPA Program. I felt that those actions were completely in accord with earlier Executive actions Presidents had taken in the area of immigration.

Since June of 2012, 800,000 young people have achieved Dreamer status. Some of them aren't so young anymore. I sometimes refer to them as students and kids, but they are in the military, they are parents, they are teachers, and they are active in their communities. As I said, there are 13,000 in my State. DACA has allowed them to continue their education, to work legally, and to remain in the only country they have ever known.

I will say I was disappointed when President Trump in September announced that he would terminate the program in 6 months—in March. I felt like it was the breaking of a promise to these young people because he had said, even as a candidate and then as President, that Dreamers were good kids and that they wouldn't have anything to worry about from him.

I will say there was one aspect of what the President said—I can't just be critical without pointing out that there was one thing about what he said that I thought was right. He said: And Congress should fix it. I agreed with President Trump on that. I wish he hadn't terminated the program, but he was right that this is something for Congress to fix because anything done by Executive action, even fully within the power of a President to take it, is subject to being changed by another Executive. The lives and futures of these young people are such that we shouldn't be scaring them about whether they are protected or maybe back to being protected depending upon who was the occupant of the White House.

That Presidential announcement in March, although I was disappointed, on that core piece of it, that Congress should fix it, I think President Trump was right and I think he is right. I think this is something that Congress must fix, should fix, can fix, and we have all the information about it to fix it right now.

It has been difficult and a little bit heartbreaking to talk to these young people and their families about the fears they have. I don't live under the

fear of deportation. I don't live under the fear of my job being taken away because of my status. I don't live under the fear of my kids not being able to get in-state tuition and instead having to pay out-of-state or not being able to afford it at all. It is not a fear I walk around with every day. It is hard to put yourself in somebody else's shoes and experience the fear and even terror they are feeling when you yourself don't have that same exposure.

I have spent a lot of time listening to these young people and their parents in Northern Virginia and Richmond, especially, where I live, and the fear they feel is very palpable, and the panic they feel is very palpable, and I understand why. I think part of our job should not be to increase anxiety and fear; part of our job should be—when we can, when it is the right thing to do, when it is within our grasp—to take action and provide clarity and certainty so people will know what their status is. I think the time for that is now after 16 years.

Maybe the most important thing I am saying is that this is not a new issue. It is not that we need another week or another month or another year to figure out the answer. The first bill was introduced in 2001, and I think January 19, 2018, is ample time for us to now get this right and make it either part of the spending bills that we will do at year-end or part of a stand-alone bill that we could embrace as a body.

I was heartened by some of the comments by the President, as reported yesterday, during the meeting with bipartisan leadership at the White House about this. We can do it, and the time is right to do it now. So I would ask my colleagues and especially urge all those in the negotiations to make this decision and provide these wonderful young people with certainty about their future.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I join my colleague from Virginia, as well as Senator DURBIN, who has been working so hard to get this done, to stand up for the Dreamers. I give my strong support once again for taking action on the Dream Act. We need to take up this bill.

As Senator KAINE just noted, I was also heartened, after the meeting at the White House, by the fact that this President understands—he said he understands that we can't wait until March to get this done, that we need to get this done soon. For me, the easiest way to do this is by passing the Dream Act.

The Federal court decision in California yesterday will provide some temporary relief, as every single day more and more kids fall out of status. That sounds like a legal term, but for them, it changes their whole life. These are kids who literally believed our government. They were told: You register. You sign up. We are going to allow you to stay.

And then, in one little moment and with a signature, that all changed. Their lives changed. So it is now our obligation in the Senate to get this done.

We have already seen the harmful effects of the administration's decision to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program, and the situation will continue to get worse until we take action. This is not just a small thing. I have met these kids. Ninety-seven percent of them either work or are in school. The average age they were when they were brought to this country is 6½ years old.

A few months back, I stood in front of a Catholic church with our archbishop of the Twin Cities, Archbishop Hebda, and a number of his parishioners and a number of the priests from that church to talk about what this meant in people's lives—kids brought over through no fault of their own.

My favorite example of a Dreamer, Senator KAINE and Mr. President, is Joseph Medina. He was brought over—and he didn't know this at the time—as a baby. His parents had died, and he was brought over to Sleepy Eye, MN, where he was raised. This was a long time ago. When he got to be the right age, he decided that he wanted to serve our country, and he signed up to serve in World War II.

Well, back then, he went to the military, to the Army, and said: I want to sign up.

They said: Well, it turns out—I don't know what term they used back then, but he was undocumented. And when I first met him at the young age of 99, as he explained to me, back then, all you did was you went to Canada for a day, with our country's OK, and slept in a hotel for a night, which is what he did, and then came back. Then he was made legal, and the Army signed him up, and he ended up going over and serving in the Pacific. He came back to this country, met his wife, got married, had a son, and that son served in the Vietnam war.

A few years ago, when he was 99, I got to bring him to Washington, and we stood in front of the World War II Memorial. There he stood. He had never seen it before, and he would never go again. He just died at the age of 103. He stood there with two Dreamers, suburban high school kids from Minnesota who wanted to join the Air Force, but they couldn't do it. They didn't have that right status. They were Dreamers too. They had been brought over as young kids.

To me, that just brought it all home. This is a war hero, someone who served our country, and this is the kind of person we are talking about when we talk about the Dreamers. His last act of patriotism in the last few years of his life was to continue to push so that other kids could serve their country just as he had and just as his son had.

While we have not reached an agreement yet on this bill, the reports on the bipartisan meeting are hopeful. But

time is ticking by. Time is ticking. The American public is with us. This is not one of these issues where the public says: What are they doing? This makes no sense. No. A recent poll found that 86 percent of Americans support action to allow the Dreamers to stay here in the United States. So I am very hopeful that we can come together on a bipartisan agreement.

The Dream Act was based on one simple principle, and that is that you should have the opportunity—this set of people, 800,000 people who came over here through no fault of their own, should have that opportunity to call this country home, as they have been doing for so many years.

Passing the Dream Act isn't just the morally right thing to do, it is the economically right thing to do. One recent study estimated that ending deferred action for childhood arrivals would cost the country over \$400 billion over the next 10 years. It would cost my State more than \$376 million in annual revenue. We are proud to be the home of more than 6,000 Dreamers.

Since it was established in 2012, it has helped, as I have noted, nearly 800,000 young people who have lived in the United States since childhood to have better lives. Think about that—800,000 people. As I mentioned, 97 percent of them are in school or in the workforce, and 72 percent of them are currently in school pursuing a bachelor's degree or higher. More than 100 students applied to medical school last year. Nearly 100 of them are currently enrolled in medical school at a time when we need more doctors, particularly in rural areas. Those are the facts.

I note that at the meeting at the White House, the President actually said that when this got done, he wanted to pursue comprehensive immigration reform. It is something that we have done before on a bipartisan basis in the Senate, and I believe that is where we need to turn now.

We talk about the economic sense of the Dreamers. Look at our country overall. Seventy of our Fortune 500 companies are headed by immigrants. Twenty-five percent of our U.S. Nobel Laureates were born in other countries. Immigrants have been an economic engine for this country.

Everyone in this Chamber came from somewhere. Their relatives came from somewhere. My grandparents on my mom's side came from Switzerland, and on my dad's side my great-grandparents came from Slovenia. They worked in the mines. They worked so hard just to send my dad to college. They saved money in a coffee can in a basement. I am here today with great-grandparents who came straight from Slovenia, a grandfather who worked in a mine, a dad who grew up there and was the first one in the family to go to college and get a 2-year degree and then a 4-year degree, and I literally stand here on the shoulders of these immigrants.

On my mom's side, the Swiss side, my grandpa came over and ended up at Ellis Island when he was 18 years old, and they had reached the cap on Swiss immigrants. That might sound amusing, but that was the case. He then somehow got himself to Canada—I think he said he was going to live there—came back through—because he wanted to be in our country—came back through, ended up in Wisconsin, like all good Swiss, with my other relatives on my grandma's side, worked at a cheese factory, and was an alien for 20 years. He finally applied for citizenship when World War II was breaking out, and that is when they found out that, in fact, he maybe had come into the country two different ways. But back then, they listened to his story, and they gave him citizenship. Otherwise, he would have been deported—I think it was 3 weeks before the U.S. joined World War II—as a Swiss German. Instead, he married my grandma back then, they had my mom and my mom's brother, and here I am.

I am on the shoulders of those immigrants. So when I see these Dreamers, I see my own family, and I hope everyone in this Chamber sees the same thing—the American dream. That is why, Mr. President, I stand with the Senator from Virginia, Mr. KAINE, with Senator DURBIN, and so many of my colleagues who have been working on this for so long on both sides of the aisle. There has been leadership on both sides of the aisle. So let's get this done, let's pass the Dream Act, and let's never forget that we all come from somewhere.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TILLIS). The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, a number of us are here today with a very simple, straightforward demand. We must act now to pass a Dream Act. Very simply, the honor and integrity of this Chamber are at stake.

The young people who would be covered under the Dream Act are Americans in all but name. They came here as children. They grew up as Americans. They go to our schools, serve in our military, and support our economy. They work hard and they give back and they believe in the American dream. Deporting Dreamers would be cruel and irrational, inhumane, and, very simply, repugnant to basic American values.

Just think of Jonathan Gonzalez-Cruz. He is a college student at Southern Connecticut State University. I had the privilege of meeting him in December. His story has stuck with me. His story haunts me when I think of the moral imperative of this Nation to pass the Dream Act.

Jonathan was born in Mexico. He came to this country when he was just 4 years old. The United States is home for him. It is the only country he has ever known. He received a full scholarship to attend Southern Connecticut

State University, and he is set to graduate this spring with an honors degree in economics and math.

His dream is to attend law school, but due to the uncertainty surrounding DACA, he has decided to delay applying, knowing he will be unable to receive scholarships without his DACA status. He could attend, but he can't pay for it with scholarships unless he has that DACA status.

Jonathan first became compelled to speak up and tell his story after his father was deported, and they were unable to even say goodbye. Despite his own struggles, Jonathan is a passionate advocate for his community, and he actively works for Connecticut Students for a Dream. That organization, Connecticut Students for a Dream, is a group of students who help empower and advocate on behalf of other undocumented students. In fact, today, Jonathan is in DC to help ensure that the voices of students are, in fact, heard. Jonathan is a volunteer peer mentor through that organization because he is so passionate about raising graduation rates and ensuring that all students like himself have the support they need to succeed.

During his senior year, Jonathan has been interning at an immigration law firm, and he is glad to be helping others gain legal status in this country. The irony is not lost on him—and should not be lost on us—that he, himself, could face deportation this year. If Jonathan is not permitted to stay—if Congress does not act and he loses his DACA protection—Connecticut and this Nation will be the losers. Connecticut and this Nation will lose an educated and compassionate public service-minded individual who gives back to his community, to his fellow students, and to our State. He is just one example of the estimated 10,000 like him in Connecticut—and at least 700,000 around the country—who could lose their status in March if Congress fails to act now.

Very simply, we have an obligation to do our job and provide permanent status and a path to citizenship for the Dreamers. The hopeful news is, there is broad bipartisan support for affording the Dreamers protection against mass, draconian deportation. Our challenge is to make sure that what we do here reflects that broad bipartisan support in this Chamber and around the country because America knows it has made a promise. It made a promise to those Dreamers, and great countries do not break promises.

Last night, a Federal district court issued a preliminary injunction ordering DHS—the Department of Homeland Security—to resume accepting renewal applications. Once again, the courts have served as a bulwark for basic rights under rule of law, but this reprieve is no final remedy. We must redouble our determination to protect these young people from draconian, mass deportation—a continuing threat as long as President Trump refuses to

reverse his cruel, unconscionable policy.

A Federal judge has struck down President Trump's order as unconstitutional, but a Dream Act is no less necessary today than it was yesterday. Congress should waste no time in swiftly passing clean legislation—a clean Dream Act to protect these young people.

When DACA was adopted in 2012, it changed the lives of young people like Jonathan. It opened new vistas. It provided Dreamers with the opportunity to get driver's licenses, to attend college, to become productive members of our economy.

Importantly, when DACA was adopted, we made that promise to these young people. We promised that if they came forward and provided the United States of America with information, some of the most personal information any of us have—information about their addresses, employment, dates of birth, their families—we would not use that information against them. They had a place here under DACA. They had rights—moral, if not legal. That promise is now about to be broken.

Great countries keep those promises. The United States is the greatest country in the history of the world. It should not be breaking promises to innocent young men and women who know only this country, who believe in the American dream, who believe in America's promises, who believed those promises when they offered that information and now are relying on the good faith of America. The rescission of DACA threatens to tear apart families, destroy lives, create disarray, and derail futures. We are a country that is better than this rescission. We are a country that keeps promises, and Congress must now act to protect these young people.

DACA protections are set to expire in 2 months. Already, tens of thousands of DACA recipients are estimated to have lost their protection from removal. The longer Congress takes to act, the longer these young people, who were promised the American dream, continue with anguish, with targets on their backs.

Continued waiting means instability to the job market because companies are forced to hire replacements for DACA recipients and train new workers in anticipation of the March deadline. It could mean a massive ejection of qualified, hard-working people vital to our economy.

This kind of massive deportation by plane, by boat, by car, by foot would be unprecedented. We have never seen anything like it before. As I have said repeatedly, this kind of mass, draconian deportation would be a humanitarian nightmare, a betrayal of America.

If Congress fails to pass the Dream Act, we will lose nearly \$500 billion over the next 10 years. Let me repeat. We will lose \$500 billion over the next 10 years. We will lose \$25 billion in

Medicare and Social Security taxes alone. In my home State of Connecticut, we stand to lose \$300 million in economic benefits a year.

Now is the time to abandon the myth that the Dreamers work on the sidelines of American society. They are part of the fabric of this Nation. Their lives are woven into the great tapestry of America. They drive our economy. They give back to our communities.

The administration has thrown a ticking time bomb into their lives, but it is also a ticking time bomb in this Chamber. We have the power to defuse it. In doing so, we can give hope to hundreds of thousands of members of our society and reaffirm the greatness of our country. At stake is nothing less than the character of our country, and that is why there is such bipartisan support for the Dream Act, as evidenced yesterday in the Cabinet Room when the President met with Members of the Congress on both sides of the aisle.

In the Dreamers, we see ourselves. We see relatives who came to this country years ago, many of them as teenagers. My father fled Germany at 17 years old with nothing more than the shirt on his back, speaking no English, knowing virtually no one here. Like him, they believe in America's promise, America's dream, and we should believe in the Dreamers.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to speak about the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program, known as DACA. That was an Executive order of President Obama's which provided temporary legal status to immigrant students and young people if they registered with the government, paid a fee, and passed a criminal and national security background check. It was for 2 years and renewable.

Young people who are protected by DACA are known by some as Dreamers. They came to the United States as children. They grew up singing the "Star Spangled Banner" and pledging allegiance to our flag. They believed that they were Americans, but legally, they are not. The average DACA recipient came to the United States at the age of 6 and has been here for approximately 20 years.

It was 7 years ago that I sent a letter to President Obama. I was joined in that letter, incidentally, by Senator Dick Lugar, a Republican from Indiana. In that letter, I asked President Obama: Can you find a way to protect these young people?

We passed the Dream Act on the floor of the House. We passed it on the floor of the Senate. We have never managed to pass it in both Chambers in the same year. And the President created the DACA Program.

The DACA Program has been a success. Approximately 800,000 Dreamers have come forward and received DACA protection. Let's allow them to be part of America as teachers, as nurses, as engineers, as first responders, and even serving in the U.S. military.

But on September 5 of this last year, 2017, Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced that the Trump administration was setting out to repeal DACA, to put an end to it. That same day, President Trump called on Congress to come up with a solution to legalize DACA. He challenged us. He said to the U.S. Senate and House: Pass a law. If this is a good idea, pass a law.

It has been more than 4 months since the President issued that challenge. The Republican leadership of Congress has not proposed any legislation to legalize DACA as the President asked.

The deportation clock is ticking for these young people who are protected. Already, 15,000 have lost their DACA status. Beginning on March 5—the deadline that initially was imposed by President Trump—every day for the next 2 years, 1,000 DACA young people will lose their ability to work legally in the United States and will be subject to being deported from this country.

Who are they? Some 20,000 of them are teachers in our schools who would lose the right to work legally and have to leave their classrooms. Nurses would leave their patients. First responders would leave their posts. And 900 soldiers would lose their ability to volunteer to risk their lives for America's future.

This isn't just a looming humanitarian crisis; it is an economic crisis. More than 91 percent of DACA Dreamers are gainfully employed and paying taxes. Many of them are students; yet they are still gainfully employed because they don't qualify for Federal assistance for higher education, so they have to work jobs, sometimes many jobs.

The nonpartisan Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy reports that DACA-eligible individuals contribute an estimated \$2 billion a year in State and local taxes. The Cato Institute, a conservative operation in Washington, estimates that ending DACA and deporting DACA recipients will cost the economy \$60 billion and result in a \$280 billion reduction in economic growth over the next decade.

Poll after poll shows overwhelming bipartisan support for the Dreamers. FOX News found that 79 percent of Americans support a path to citizenship for Dreamers, including 63 percent of Trump voters.

The answer is clear. It was 16 years ago that I first introduced the DREAM Act—bipartisan legislation to give these young people a path to citizen-

ship. In July of last year, I introduced the most recent version with my colleague, Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM of South Carolina. We need to pass the Dream Act, and we need to do it now, before January 19.

Over the years, I have come to the floor to tell the story of the Dreamers. I can give a pretty nice speech here, but these stories tell the story of this issue more than anything I can add to them. These stories show what is at stake when we consider the fate of DACA and the Dream Act.

Today, I want to tell you about this young lady. Her name is Evelyn Valdez-Ward. This is the 107th Dreamer story I have told on the floor. Evelyn was 6 months old when her family brought her from Mexico to Houston, TX. She was quite a good student. She graduated 11th in her high school class of 650. She took all advanced placement classes and was a member of the National Honor Society. She was a member of the color guard in the marching band and regularly volunteered at homeless shelters and animal shelters.

It wasn't until she began to apply for college that she finally learned her immigration status. She wasn't like the other students with whom she had grown up and shared classrooms and experiences. Evelyn is undocumented, but it didn't stop her—she was going to pursue college.

One of her teachers believed in her because she was such a bright student and wrote her a letter of recommendation to go to college. She was accepted into the University of Houston. She received multiple awards while in college, including the Excellence in SI Leadership and Mentoring Award, the American Society of Plant Biology Award for Outstanding Research, and the Outstanding Biology Leadership Award.

The summer after her freshman year, she was offered a great research opportunity through the National Science Foundation. Because of DACA, she was allowed to work legally in the United States, and she was able to pursue this important research. That opportunity was in plant water transport research in California. This is where Evelyn fell in love with ecology and plants.

She graduated magna cum laude in 2016 with a bachelor of science in biology. Today, she is a second-year Ph.D. student at the University of California, Irvine, in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. She is researching the effects of climate change on the interactions between plants and soil. Evelyn's dream is to continue her research as a scientist and to become an advocate for strategies to mitigate climate change.

In September, the American Association for the Advancement of Science wrote a letter opposing the White House decision to rescind DACA. Here is what they said:

Many DACA students make significant contributions to the scientific and engineering enterprise in the United States . . . high-

achieving young people in DACA contribute in many ways to our nation. Many are studying to become scientists, engineers, medical doctors and entrepreneurs. Given the administration's decision, we urge Congress to craft legislation that provides long-term protection for these young people who seek to continue their education and contribute to society. . . . Our nation needs an immigration policy that advances U.S. innovation and prosperity, and stays true to foundational American goals that seek contributions to society from all.

The Presiding Officer and I had a unique invitation yesterday. I would just say that as a Member of the House and of the Senate, I have never been invited to a meeting quite like the one we had yesterday with the President in the Cabinet Room of the White House. It was the President's idea. I don't know if it was a spur-of-the-moment idea, but it is one that came together very quickly in a few days.

I think there were almost 26 of us—Democrats, Republicans, House and Senate Members—who were called together by President Trump. I was kind of surprised, but there I was sitting right next to the President of the United States. It was only the third time we had ever spoken. The other two times, incidentally, were about DACA and the Dream Act, as you can probably guess. He invited me to sit next to him as we talked about this issue.

Then he did something that was really unusual. I have been to some meetings with the President in the Cabinet Room with President Obama and President George W. Bush. Usually, what happens is, the cameras come in, the President says a few words, then the staff tells them to leave, and they reluctantly pull out and leave. Yesterday was quite different. The President told the press they could stay, and they did, for almost an hour. The conversations between the President of the United States and Members of Congress were shared with the American people. I had never seen anything quite like it.

I kind of liked it, to be honest with you. I think there was a lot of candor in the room. People were expressing their points of view, and there were many different points of view, but I think I came away from that meeting with more hope than ever that we can do something about DACA and the Dream Act. The President told us he would like to see it done. He added, though, there were things he wanted to be a part of it. One of them dealt with border security, which has been a priority for all of us from the beginning.

We want to establish—both political parties want to establish that we are committed to border security, and we are. How you define it, what it costs, and how it is implemented—some of these things we can define in our agreement; others will be left to future efforts by Congress and the President.

Then he talked about the family unification, and that is an issue that is very delicate. It is one that, as my colleagues can imagine, really hits home.

It is very personal as to whether a member of a family can bring someone they love—some relative in their family—to the United States. Even if they decide to bring them—incidentally, they may be waiting 30 years, in the case of those who are seeking entry into the United States through family visas; 80 years, from China; 160 years from Mexico. Some of these things are unrealistic and will never happen, but to talk about family unification really strikes home with a lot of families.

I want to hear the President's point of view, but I want to deal with this in the most sensitive and sincere way. We don't want to flood the United States with people who are any danger to us, No. 1, or nonproductive citizens, but we certainly want to see families unified.

There is a question about diversity visas. I will not go into it because it is a long story—the creation of this program, where it is today, and where it might be in the future.

Here is what I do believe after yesterday's meeting. I believe President Donald Trump called for that meeting because he wanted to let the American people know he was serious. He wanted to show them he could be a President presiding over a table with 24, 25 Members of Congress from both political parties and tackle a sensitive, delicate, challenging issue. He wants to show the American people he can lead. I want to help him lead if the goal is to make sure DACA and the Dreamers ultimately have their chance to be part of America's future.

I am willing to work in good faith with the President to compromise, whatever it takes, to bring this forward. There are so many lives hanging in the balance, and this is one of them—this wonderful, brilliant young woman who wants to make not only the world a better place but America a better place. She simply wants the chance to be here and be part of America's future. We can give her no less.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for 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.

REMEMBERING MATT HILLYARD

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, today I wish to pay tribute to a remarkable man whose smile and beautiful soul touched the lives of everyone he met. Matthew Hillyard passed away peacefully at his family home on January 4, 2018, to the grief of not only his family and close friends but to everyone who knew him in the Utah Legislature.

Matt, the loving son of Lyle and Alice Hillyard, was born with Down syndrome. His parents were told he would not live past adolescence; yet he defied the odds and packed a lot of life into 42 years on Earth. Matt never let his disability define him; instead, he shared his special light with everyone who caught his eye.

Matt's father, Lyle, has served as a Utah lawmaker since 1981. The father-and-son duo became a fixture of the Utah Legislature. When things got tense on the senate floor, Matt's innocence stood as a light to other lawmakers, defusing tension and stress during the most heated debates. He made friends with people from all walks of life—be they legislators, security guards, or schoolchildren visiting the capitol. Matt's smile and his big hugs were legendary, and people would often line up to be the recipient of his affection.

I had the privilege of enjoying Matt's hugs and greetings on many occasions, and I never left his side without feeling I had been in the presence of a truly remarkable son of our Heavenly Father. Legislative bodies across our country would be well-served with the steady presence of someone like Matt, a kind soul who gives love and unwavering friendship to all.

I believe there is a special place in Heaven for Matt, who personified the pure love of Christ. He lived a life of sweet innocence, friendship, and love. His warm embrace and sweet smile will be greatly missed by all. It is my greatest hope that his family and all who knew him will find joy and peace in the memories we have shared with this extraordinary man.

LANDMINES

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, according to Landmine Monitor, which is the world's best source of data on the production, use, export, stockpiling, and clearance of landmines, cluster munitions, and other unexploded ordnance, 2016 was a terrible year for casualties caused by mines and other UXO.

In 2016, the Monitor recorded 8,605 casualties, of which at least 2,089 people were fatalities. That is the highest number since 1999, and it includes the most casualties of children ever recorded. Civilians represented 78 percent of recorded casualties in 2016. There are still 61 countries that are known to be contaminated with landmines.

On the positive side, approximately 232,000 landmines were destroyed in 2016, and 66 square miles of land were

cleared of mines and other UXO. International donors and UXO affected countries increased support in 2016 for UXO clearance programs by \$40 million above the previous year to \$564.5 million. The United States was, like previous years, by far the largest donor.

It is also encouraging that, since March 1, 1999, when the international treaty banning antipersonnel landmines came into force, 163 countries have joined. That is an extraordinary achievement for a treaty that owes its existence to the vision and perseverance of hundreds of advocacy, human rights, arms control, humanitarian organizations, and journalists, around the world, and the leadership of former Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy; yet despite this progress and substantial declining in the past few years, the number of innocent people maimed and killed by mines has steadily increased.

There are several explanations for this. Rebel groups like ISIS routinely use landmines and other improvised explosive devices. The wars in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Yemen have been largely responsible. It may never be possible to completely eradicate the use of landmines by rebel groups, for the weapon is so cheap to manufacture while causing such harm.

But the major powers that have not joined the treaty—the United States, Russia, China, Pakistan, and India—also share the blame. Antipersonnel landmines, which are designed to be triggered indiscriminately by the victim, whether an unsuspecting farmer or an enemy or friendly combatant, have no place in the arsenals of modern militaries. It is hypocrisy to claim on the one hand, as our military does, that it uses every precaution to avoid harming civilians and prides itself on its precision weapons, and on the other hand to insist on the right to use a weapon that is the antithesis of precise and overwhelmingly harms civilians.

I have spoken more times than I can count about the scourge of antipersonnel landmines and the need for the United States to join the Mine Ban Treaty so we are no longer an excuse for other countries not to join. Our military has not used landmines for more than two decades. In fact, U.S. policy now strictly limits the use of antipersonnel mines to the Korean Peninsula, but we do not need them. What we need is the best protection for our troops to maneuver safely through minefields. We should have banned these indiscriminate weapons a long time ago, and we would have if landmines were blowing off the arms and legs of children in this Nation the way they are in others, but we have learned that the Pentagon is not in the habit of giving up weapons, even if they are weapons that deserve to be relegated to the dustbin of history. That decision will only be made by a President who is willing to do what is morally right.

Landmines have been aptly described as weapons of mass destruction in slow

motion. President Trump reacted with anger and disgust, as he should have, when Syria's President Assad used chlorine gas against his own people. He should react the same way toward anti-personnel landmines and set an example for the rest of the world.

I ask unanimous consent that a January 6, 2018, New York Times editorial on this subject be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the New York Times, Jan. 6, 2018]

WHY DO LAND MINES STILL KILL SO MANY?

(By the Editorial Board)

The world is rolling backward, and at a disturbingly faster pace, in the struggle to limit carnage from land mines and other booby-trap explosives. The most recent numbers, covering 2016, are appalling.

Known casualties that year came to 8,605, including 2,089 deaths, according to a new report by Landmine Monitor, a research arm of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. The toll was nearly 25 percent higher than the 6,967 maimed and dead counted a year earlier, and more than double the 3,993 in 2014. And these numbers are almost assuredly an undercount. "In some states and areas, numerous casualties go unrecorded," Landmine Monitor said.

Much of the 2016 mayhem stemmed from conflicts in Afghanistan, Libya, Ukraine and Yemen, but people in 56 countries and other areas were killed or wounded by improvised explosive devices and other ordnance placed by governments or, more commonly, by insurgent groups. The sheer indecency of it is self-evident. Nearly 80 percent of the victims were civilians; children accounted for 42 percent of civilian casualties in situations where the ages were known.

One subset of the menace, cluster munitions, is singularly vicious. A single cluster bomb can contain dozens, even hundreds, of baseball-size bomblets that spray in all directions, ripping apart anything in their path. All too often, they fail to detonate right away and thus become time bombs that imperil unwary civilians who pick them up, including curious children. Cluster munitions alone caused 971 known casualties in 2016, more than twice the toll of the previous year, according to Cluster Munition Monitor. Most victims were Syrians, nearly all of them civilians, but Saudi Arabia has also used American-supplied cluster bombs in Yemen.

Perhaps the saddest part of all this is that for well over a decade the world seemed to have gotten a grip on what are referred to generically as the "explosive remnants of war." Thanks to an international treaty that came into force in 1999—now signed by 163 countries and banning the production, stockpiling and transfer of land mines—casualties declined steadily worldwide. They reached a low of 3,450 in 2013, compared with 9,228 in 1999. (A companion treaty outlawing cluster munitions, joined by 119 countries, went into effect in 2010.) As the death and injury toll for 2016 shows, nearly all that hard-won progress has been erased by the brutal conflicts of recent vintage.

The picture is not irredeemably bleak. The Landmine Monitor said that 32 donors, led by the United States, contributed nearly \$480 million in 2016 for mine clearance and victim aid. That was an increase of 22 percent from the year before. More than 232,000 anti-personnel mines were reportedly destroyed in 2016, and about 66 square miles—an area nearly the size of Brooklyn—were cleared of explosive hazards.

The grim reality, though, is that the land mine and cluster munitions treaties are undercut by the refusal of some of modern warfare's most powerful players to sign them. Among those countries are China, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Russia and Saudi Arabia. And the United States. The Pentagon has long insisted that eliminating cluster bombs could put soldiers at risk. As for land mines, they are deemed by Washington to be a useful tool in the demilitarized zone separating North and South Korea—a first-line defense for the South against a possible invasion. But given the North's nuclear buildup, a mined DMZ seems to be a Cold War vestige of diminished value.

Washington is not immune to international suasion. Land mines are so stigmatized that American forces have barely used them since the 1991 Persian Gulf war. The United States stockpile, estimated at three million mines, is significantly reduced from pre-treaty years; it's puny compared with the 26 million mines that Russia has on hand, according to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. Similarly, American reliance on cluster munitions, which peaked in the early stages of the 2003 Iraq war, has all but disappeared.

In 2014 the Obama administration even signaled it might be willing to join the anti-mine treaty. Regrettably, that step never came. It might have been a moral statement encouraging others to follow suit. Now, with President Trump openly disdainful of international agreements, the likelihood of Washington's signing the treaty would seem to be about zero. The Pentagon, under his ultimate control, recently authorized the military to restock older cluster munitions, whose immediate failure rate can be high, leaving bomblets that can explode and kill civilians even years later.

For countries like Afghanistan, Libya, Ukraine and Yemen, the risks may endure long after the guns go silent. Vietnam provides an example. Since the war there ended in 1975, at least 40,000 Vietnamese are believed to have been killed and another 60,000 wounded by American land mines, artillery shells, cluster bombs and other ordnance that failed to detonate back then. They later exploded when handled by scrap-metal scavengers and unsuspecting children.

The lesson is stark for today's war-torn countries. They could reap the same whirlwind in coming decades.

(At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

VOTE EXPLANATION

• Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for the votes on the confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 371 and the motion to invoke cloture on Executive Calendar No. 389.

On vote No. 5, had I been present, I would have voted yea on the confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 371.

On vote No. 6, had I been present, I would have voted yea on the motion to invoke cloture on Executive Calendar No. 389. •

REMEMBERING ANNE MICHELE IRBY

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, today, with sadness in my heart, I wish to pay tribute to a very special person, Anne Michele Irby, a member of my staff for over 25 years and a dear friend who died on December 18, 2017.

Anne was born in Baltimore and raised in Parkville. She was the daughter of Basil T. Irby, a sales representative for the Baltimore Stationery Co., and Jean Craig, a homemaker. She attended St. Thomas More School and was a 1979 graduate of the old Seton High School in Charles Village. She received a diploma from what was then Villa Julie College and earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Baltimore. Early in her career, she worked for the Baltimore Jewish Council and then became a lobbyist for Associated Catholic Charities of Baltimore.

Anne joined my office in 1990 when I was a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives and remained a member of my team when I became a U.S. Senator. She was a dedicated case-worker in my Baltimore office and was an invaluable resource to my staff and the citizens of Maryland. She was an indefatigable advocate for veterans and their families and helped them navigate a complicated system to obtain disability, medical, and educational benefits. She also helped veterans obtain much-needed medical appointments and lost medals. In addition to her work with veterans, she also worked tirelessly to help Marylanders save their homes as the foreclosure crisis spread across the State during the recession.

Anne was very knowledgeable about the agencies and personnel available to serve the needs of my constituents. Agency professionals knew Anne and respected her willingness to assist those constituents in need. Anne considered her position in my office as a career, not just "a job." She was a true professional who wanted to make life better for as many people as she could. That is the essence of public service.

Anne would be best described as a "gentle soul." She was a devoted caregiver to her parents and close family members. She was a huge football fan. I think the only person she ever had a "beef" with was John Elway. The Baltimore Colts drafted him in 1983, but he refused to play for the Colts, so they had to trade him to Denver. Even though she was from Baltimore, she later cheered hard for the team from Washington after the Colts left town under the cover of darkness on March 29, 1984. She spent many Mondays talking about how her team fared on Sunday. In addition to her love of football, Anne enjoyed a good book and a hot cup of coffee. She would often visit Washington's Politics and Prose bookstore to pick up the latest bestseller or meet her favorite author. She frequented Baltimore's Woodlea Bakery and was known for bringing their donuts and cakes to the office for the rest of the staff and visitors.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "To laugh often and much; To win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; To earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; To appreciate

beauty, to find the best in others; To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition; To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded."

Anne Irby left us much too soon, but she succeeded. She touched so many lives and helped so many people and families across the State. She will be remembered for putting the concerns of others before her own. Many people wake up every day hoping to make a difference. We can all take comfort in knowing that Anne Irby actually did make a difference. I send my deepest condolences to her sister Donna Jean Rodgers, her other family members, and her friends. We are all grieving.

I salute Anne for a job extraordinarily well done and pledge today that she will always be a member of "Team Cardin."

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

REMEMBERING CLIFF EVERTS

• Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to remember and pay tribute to a pioneer of Alaska aviation, Cliff Everts, who passed away in December at the age of 95. One of the greatest compliments you can pay to a longtime Alaskan is to refer to that individual as a pioneer. Yes, Cliff was a pioneer, but that understates the reverence with which he is held in Alaska's aviation community. He is indeed an icon of Alaska aviation.

Place yourself in a remote Alaskan village in the dead of winter. The outdoor temperature is minus 25 degrees, and the village is running short of fuel. Imagine the sound of a fuel plane landing on your village's gravel runway, delivering thousands of gallons of fuel needed to sustain daily life in the bush and power remote work sites. Deliveries such as this make life in rural Alaska possible. This is the legacy of Cliff Everts.

Originally born in New York, Cliff's passion for flying began at a young age. He took his first flight at 12 years old. As a teenager, he delivered newspapers to pay for his flying lessons. Cliff trained on a Taylorcraft, a high-winged, two-seater aircraft, and was soloing within just 6 months.

Later Cliff joined the Civilian Pilot Training Program, supporting wartime efforts during World War II. It was not long thereafter that he made the decision to leave New York, to accept a position flying as a copilot for Alaska Star Airlines in Anchorage. Alaska Star Airlines was a predecessor of today's Alaska Airlines.

Having grown to love Alaska, Everts embraced the pioneer spirit and accepted another position flying for Wien Airlines in Fairbanks. He continued to fly for Wien Airlines for 35 years, logging over 30,000 hours of flight time. His

flights carried mail, cargo, and passengers throughout the entire State.

While Cliff Everts was a pilot by trade, he was also a very savvy entrepreneur and was well known for his many business ventures, but he is best known for Everts Air Fuel. Cliff started this business in the 1980s flying a C-46. The C-46 is a World War II era high-altitude, multiengine aircraft. He quickly built the fleet, running his business on the philosophy that providing for the unique needs of Alaskans can be done both efficiently and affordably by Alaskans.

Cliff's son, Robert, began his own aviation business called Everts Air Cargo. Between Everts Air Cargo and Everts Air Fuel, the pair owned 21 airplanes. I understand that there are six C-46 aircraft remaining in revenue service. The Everts enterprises fly four of the six, and that is a testament to how well they treat their equipment. They are also known for treating their people exceptionally well.

Alaska was good to Cliff Everts. Cliff was great to Alaska. In recognition of his achievements, Cliff amassed numerous awards and recognitions. In 2007, Cliff received the Federal Aviation Administration's Master Pilot Award. In 2011, the general aviation side of Fairbanks International Airport, what we call "East Ramp," was dedicated in Cliff's honor. In 2012, the Alaska Air Carriers Association designated Cliff as an "Aviation Legend." Cliff was also inducted into the Alaska Aviation Hall of Fame. He holds the Alaska Aviation Entrepreneur Award. All appropriate recognition for a man best known for these words, "Flying has been my life, and I can't see joy in doing anything else."

On Saturday, January 13, Alaskans from all walks of life will come together in Fairbanks to celebrate the life of Cliff Everts. Cliff's friends and admirers will be joined by his wife Betty and their large family. On behalf of my Senate colleagues, let me take this opportunity to share our condolences with Betty and the family and to thank Cliff Everts for his outstanding life of service to aviation and Alaska.●

MACOMB COUNTY, MICHIGAN, BICENTENNIAL

• Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the 200th anniversary of Macomb County, MI. Situated along Lake Saint Clair in the southeast corner of Michigan, Macomb County is built on industry and entrepreneurship and populated with dedicated citizens and entrepreneurs.

French fur trappers were the first Europeans to arrive in the area during the 17th century, and when they recognized the possibilities presented to them within the area's marshes, they sought new opportunities for trade. Moravian missionaries later established the first organized, non-native settlement in the area in 1782 as a ref-

uge for Native Americans who had converted to Christianity along the banks of the Clinton River. In March 1780, Christian Clemens purchased a distillery, which is considered the first building on the site of the future city of Mount Clemens. The next year, he bought 500 acres for development, and the site became known as High Banks. On January 15, 1818, Macomb County was formally organized as the third county in the Michigan territory and was named in honor of General Alexander Macomb, a highly decorated veteran of the War of 1812. High Banks was platted as the Village of Mount Clemens and named the county seat.

Starting in the early 1800s and continuing until 1840, settlers began moving into the interior of the county and carved out farms from the hardwood forests. Families began focusing on agriculture as the roots of county villages and towns began to be established by this time. Germans, Belgians, and other Europeans also began joining the original French and English settlers during this time. During the 1870s, mineral baths brought international fame to Mount Clemens as many thought the waters had healing powers, though interest in the spas eventually died out in the early 20th century.

Between 1920 and 1930, Macomb County saw its first population spike when it more than doubled from 38,000 to 77,000. This was caused by the establishment of Selfridge Field in 1917, now the Selfridge Air National Guard Base, and the beginning of the migration of automotive workers moving out of the city of Detroit. During the 1940s and 1950s, the suburbs again saw a population increase but the largest instance of growth occurred between 1950 and 1970, when more than 440,000 moved to Macomb County and helped make it one of Michigan's largest counties.

Today Macomb County encompasses 27 local municipalities that nearly 1 million Michiganders call home. Like our country, its people come from different backgrounds and ethnicities and share many different cultures. There are robust urban clusters, a prosperous manufacturing and economic industry throughout that is home to more than 18,000 businesses, and beautiful natural features and agricultural lands in the north. All of this has contributed to Macomb County having over 865,000 residents, making it the third most populated county in our great State.

Macomb County has been an integral part of Michigan and our great Nation for 200 years. As a fifth generation Michigander living in the southeast Michigan area, I am honored to ask my colleagues to join me in celebrating this significant milestone for one of Michigan's most important and storied counties and all those fortunate enough to call it home. I wish Macomb County continued growth and prosperity for many years to come.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

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

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The messages received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 10:07 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 bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 535. An act to encourage visits between the United States and Taiwan at all levels, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1486. An act to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to provide funding to secure non-profit facilities from terrorist attacks, and for other purposes.

H.R. 3202. An act to require the Secretary of Homeland Security to submit a report on cyber vulnerability disclosures, and for other purposes.

H.R. 3320. An act to direct the Secretary of State to develop a strategy to regain observer status for Taiwan in the World Health Organization, and for other purposes.

H.R. 4433. An act to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to require the Under Secretary for Management of the Department of Homeland Security to achieve security of sensitive assets among the components of the Department of Homeland Security, and for other purposes.

H.R. 4555. An act to authorize the participation in overseas interagency counterterrorism task forces of personnel of the Department of Homeland Security, and for other purposes.

H.R. 4559. An act to conduct a global aviation security review, and for other purposes.

H.R. 4561. An act to provide for third party testing of transportation security screening technology, and for other purposes.

H.R. 4564. An act to require a threat assessment on current foreign terrorist fighter activities, and for other purposes.

H.R. 4569. An act to require counterterrorism information sharing coordination, and for other purposes.

H.R. 4577. An act to establish a working group to determine ways to develop a domestic canine breeding network to produce high quality explosives detection canines, and for other purposes.

H.R. 4581. An act to require the Secretary of Homeland Security to develop best practices for utilizing advanced passenger information and passenger name record data for counterterrorism screening and vetting operations, and for other purposes.

MEASURES REFERRED

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

H.R. 535. An act to encourage visits between the United States and Taiwan at all

levels, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

H.R. 1486. An act to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to provide funding to secure non-profit facilities from terrorist attacks, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

H.R. 3202. An act to require the Secretary of Homeland Security to submit a report on cyber vulnerability disclosures, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

H.R. 3320. An act to direct the Secretary of State to develop a strategy to regain observer status for Taiwan in the World Health Organization, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

H.R. 4433. An act to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to require the Under Secretary for Management of the Department of Homeland Security to achieve security of sensitive assets among the components of the Department of Homeland Security, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

H.R. 4555. An act to authorize the participation in overseas interagency counterterrorism task forces of personnel of the Department of Homeland Security, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

H.R. 4559. An act to conduct a global aviation security review, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

H.R. 4561. An act to provide for third party testing of transportation security screening technology, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

H.R. 4564. An act to require a threat assessment on current foreign terrorist fighter activities, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

H.R. 4569. An act to require counterterrorism information sharing coordination, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

H.R. 4577. An act to establish a working group to determine ways to develop a domestic canine breeding network to produce high quality explosives detection canines, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

H.R. 4581. An act to require the Secretary of Homeland Security to develop best practices for utilizing advanced passenger information and passenger name record data for counterterrorism screening and vetting operations, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. THUNE, from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute:

S. 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 (Rept. No. 115-199).

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 Mrs. McCASKILL:

S. 2285. A bill to require mailing addresses to correspond with the physical address at which the mail will be delivered; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. CORKER (for himself, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. ISAKSON, and Mr. COONS):

S. 2286. A bill to amend the Peace Corps Act to provide greater protection and services for Peace Corps volunteers, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. MARKEY (for himself and Ms. WARREN):

S. 2287. A bill to repeal the medical device excise tax, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. CRUZ:

S. 2288. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to submit an annual report to Congress relating to the use of official time by employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, to limit the instances in which official time may be granted for certain purposes to employees of the Department, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Ms. WARREN (for herself and Mr. WARNER):

S. 2289. A bill to create an Office of Cybersecurity at the Federal Trade Commission for supervision of data security at consumer reporting agencies, to require the promulgation of regulations establishing standards for effective cybersecurity at consumer reporting agencies, to impose penalties on credit reporting agencies for cybersecurity breaches that put sensitive consumer data at risk, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Ms. CANTWELL (for herself and Mr. GARDNER):

S. 2290. A bill to improve wildfire management operations and the safety of firefighters and communities with the best available technology; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. CRUZ:

S. 2291. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to make permanent the individual tax rates in effect for taxable years 2018 through 2025; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. NELSON:

S. 2292. A bill to amend the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act to prohibit oil and gas preleasing, leasing, and related activities in certain areas of the Outer Continental Shelf off the coast of Florida, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

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

By Mr. FLAKE:

S. Res. 371. A resolution expressing the sense of the Senate on the value of the bilateral relationship between the United States and Mexico; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 819

At the request of Mrs. MURRAY, the name of the Senator from Maryland

(Mr. CARDIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 819, a bill to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to provide more effective remedies to victims of discrimination in the payment of wages on the basis of sex, and for other purposes.

S. 1006

At the request of Mr. MERKLEY, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. SMITH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1006, a bill to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation, and for other purposes.

S. 1124

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1124, a bill to grant the Director of the United States Marshals Service authority to appoint criminal investigators in the excepted service.

S. 1218

At the request of Ms. HEITKAMP, the name of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1218, a bill to promote Federal employment for veterans, and for other purposes.

S. 1358

At the request of Mr. CASSIDY, the name of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1358, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for the treatment of certain direct primary care service arrangements and periodic provider fees.

S. 1588

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. SMITH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1588, a bill to secure Federal voting rights of persons when released from incarceration.

S. 1650

At the request of Ms. HIRONO, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1650, a bill to authorize the Secretary of Health and Human Services to award grants to support the access of marginalized youth to sexual health services, and for other purposes.

S. 1693

At the request of Mr. PORTMAN, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. CARPER) was added as a cosponsor 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 Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN) 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. 1873

At the request of Mr. BLUMENTHAL, the name of the Senator from Maine

(Ms. COLLINS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1873, a bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a program to establish peer specialists in patient aligned care teams at medical centers of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

S. 2007

At the request of Mr. FLAKE, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2007, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to increase the exclusion for educational assistance programs.

S. 2186

At the request of Mr. COONS, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2186, a bill to modernize laws and policies, and eliminate discrimination, with respect to people living with HIV/AIDS, and for other purposes.

S. 2274

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2274, a bill to provide for the compensation of Federal employees affected by lapses in appropriations.

S. RES. 363

At the request of Mr. NELSON, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN) was added as a cosponsor of 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.

S. RES. 367

At the request of Mr. CRUZ, the names of the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN) and the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 367, a resolution condemning the Government of Iran for its violence against demonstrators and calling for peaceful resolution to the concerns of the citizens of Iran.

S. RES. 368

At the request of Mr. CORKER, the names of the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. HASSAN), the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN), the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER), the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO) and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 368, a resolution supporting the right of all Iranian citizens to have their voices heard.

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the names of the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN), the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER) and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 368, supra.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. NELSON:

S. 2292. A bill to amend the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act to pro-

hibit oil and gas preleasing, leasing, and related activities in certain areas of the Outer Continental Shelf off the coast of Florida, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I must say, I have seen political games being played with trying to drill off of the coast of Florida. Not only am I appalled—I have recoiled at this political game—but unfortunately I am not surprised because of what we have seen happen in the last 15 hours.

It all started late last week when the Department of the Interior released a new 5-year drilling plan. It virtually had all of the coastal waters—the Outer Continental Shelf of the entire United States—included in this plan, including that area of Florida that is off limits to drilling in law—a law that Republican Senator Mel Martinez and I passed back in 2006 that keeps drilling off of the gulf coast of Florida until the year 2022.

This new proposal would open up nearly all of the Federal waters to drilling, including all of the coastal waters of Florida, both the west coast—gulf coast—and the east coast—the Atlantic—and also the Straits of Florida, those waters that come around the Florida Keys, which is the Gulf Stream that comes right up the southeast coast of Florida. The Gulf Stream then goes out across the Atlantic, past Bermuda, and ends up in Northern Europe.

Well, our colleagues have heard this Senator many times come and talk about how keeping oil rigs away from Florida's coast is an issue that is important to our State because of our tourism economy but also because of the military missions on the west coast—the gulf—as well as the Atlantic.

As a Floridian, this Senator has been fighting this fight ever since the mid-1980s when Secretary of the Interior James Watt intended to drill off the east coast of Florida where we were launching our space shuttle, dropping the solid rocket boosters, and where we were launching our military rockets, taking our clandestine satellites into orbit and dropping the first stages. That is how I beat it back in the 1980s, but lo and behold, here we are again in the same place.

We know you can't allow drilling in the Straits of Florida right off the Florida Keys because an oilspill there would be in the Gulf Stream, and that Gulf Stream hugs the coast of southeast Florida. Can you imagine what it would do to the beaches of the Florida Keys, Miami Beach, and all up the Gold Coast of Florida, all the way to Palm Beach, all the way north to Fort Pierce, where then the Gulf Stream heads farther in a northeasterly direction out into the Atlantic?

Well, let me show you what is happening in the gulf coast. All of this in yellow is what is off limits in the Gulf of Mexico as a result of the 2006 law.

There is an obvious reason for all of this—because this line is known as the Military Mission Line. Everything east of here is the largest testing and training area in the world for the U.S. military. That is why we put this off limits to oil activity.

Oh, by the way, the testing and training mission for the entire Department of Defense is located right here at Eglin Air Force Base, which is where they brought all the pilot training for many nations for the F-35, the new super stealth jet fighter.

Guess what is going on down here in Panama City at Tyndall Air Force Base. That is where we have all the pilot training for our F-22, another one of our stealth fighters.

Down here in Key West, we have the Key West Naval Air Station. They bring in the squadrons of F-18s for the Navy at Boca Chica, which is where the airbase is, and within 2 minutes of lifting off the runway, they are over restricted airspace to do their testing and training.

By the way, what about the rest of the Navy? They bring their amphibious ships in here, going onto the beaches up there by Eglin Air Force Base. And all of the activity is not just on the surface; the testing and training mission is also subsurface because that is part of the Navy's mission as well.

There is ample opportunity to test because from here to here is 300 miles. From here to here is about 300 miles. So there is plenty of room to do this testing. This is the largest testing and training area in the world.

But painfully, over time, we have found another reason, and that was over here off of Louisiana. A little over a decade ago, there was an oilspill. It wasn't any little oilspill; it was the Deepwater Horizon, the BP well that spewed at the surface. At the bottom of the ocean, which was a mile below the surface, it spewed out 5 million barrels of oil before they got it stopped. That was a rig that did not work. There was supposed to be what is called a blowout preventer that was to go in and clamp off the well, and there was a blowout. It was defective. It didn't close off that well at the wellhead 5,000 feet below the surface of the gulf. As a result, 5 million barrels of oil spilled.

What happened to Florida's economy, not even to speak of all the fishing over in Louisiana and Alabama and Mississippi? I will tell you what happened to Florida's economy. Oil came as far east as Pensacola Beach. Photographs of oil completely covering the sugary white sands of Pensacola Beach went around the world. So what did people do? For an entire tourist season, they didn't come to any of the beaches of the gulf coast because they thought there was oil on the beach.

Painfully, that experience—not even to speak of what has been done to our environment and how much oil is still sloshing around down there on the bottom of the gulf—painfully, that experience got in the minds of the businesses

all up and down the gulf coast of Florida.

By the way, over on the east coast—had that oil ever gotten into a current called the Loop Current that comes down and becomes the Gulf Stream, that oil would have ruined the tourism industry all along Florida's southeast coast, from the Keys to Miami Beach, and all the way up to Fort Pierce, FL.

Floridians feel fairly strongly about this. That is why we were fortunate, over a decade ago, in a bipartisan way, to pass a law to keep all of that area I just showed you off limits. We knew what would happen to our tourism—what people subsequently found out with the Deepwater Horizon oilspill—and we knew what would happen to threaten our national security by hampering our ability to do our training and testing.

So, voila, all of a sudden, the Trump administration announces last week that it is going to drill off all of Florida. I have sponsored legislation in the past. I have introduced bills to expand the moratorium on the gulf coast. I have sponsored other legislation to protect Florida. And today I am introducing another bill that would be a permanent ban on drilling off of Florida's coast for exactly the reasons I have just said.

Last week, when the Secretary of the Interior, Secretary Zinke, announced that they were opening up nearly all Federal waters, including all of those around Florida, we, of course, went into fighting mode again. We will fight this, and it will be defeated. It turns out that was just a political stunt because late yesterday—1 day after officially publishing the plan in the Federal Register—Secretary Zinke flew to Florida, met with the Governor of Florida for 20 minutes at the Tallahassee Airport, and suddenly announced that he had now decided to take Florida “off the table.” That sounds like a political stunt.

While many in Florida have seen right through this shameless political stunt, it has opened up a long list of other questions that I have now asked Secretary Zinke to answer in a letter I sent today.

What exactly does “off the table” mean? Is it the whole Eastern Gulf? Half of it? Is it 125 miles off the coast? Does it mean both coasts of Florida? Does it mean just one? What about the Straits of Florida, Secretary Zinke?

What about the seismic surveys? You all have said you are proceeding with that. Are those off the table too? If you are going to take Florida waters “off the table” in this little political stunt that was done 1 day after the Federal Register published this proposed rule, does that mean you are going to eliminate the seismic surveys? There is no reason to expose marine life and endangered species to the harmful impacts of seismic surveys if there aren't any actual plans to drill in the area. So, Mr. Secretary, are you taking those off the table?

What about your statement—it also included another caveat, Mr. Secretary. You said you were “removing Florida from consideration for any new oil and gas platforms.” Well, all of us know that platforms are different from wellheads. So tell me, Mr. Secretary, does that mean there will still be drilling off the coast of Florida, but the platforms themselves might be located just to the west of the Military Mission Line, and the wellhead is going to be underneath and far from that prohibited line? Mr. Secretary, does your change of heart mean that the administration now supports the bipartisan efforts of the Florida delegation to extend the moratorium on drilling in the Eastern Gulf? That is the bill that I am introducing today, and it has been introduced by Congressman Castor in the House of Representatives.

For every day that goes by without answers to these essential questions, the Secretary needs to add that much more time to the public comment period.

The Secretary's promise last night at the Tallahassee Airport, one day after publishing in the Federal Register that Florida is off limits—right now those are just empty words because the only real thing out there that exists is the law that prevents drilling off the gulf coast of Florida for the next 5 years.

The Secretary has proposed a 5-year plan to drill the rest of Florida and to start drilling in 2023 off the gulf coast of Florida.

There is also a law called the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, which spells out a very specific process for developing lease sales in Federal waters. With all of this rush, and now saying that Florida is “off the table,” I fear this announcement of Secretary Zinke's is going to discourage Floridians from commenting on the proposal that was published just this Monday—the one that opened up Florida's entire coastline to drilling—because Floridians have been given false assurances that they are all in the clear. That brings us back to this political stunt: Design a plan for the entire United States, publish it on Monday, and take it back on Tuesday for Florida for political reasons.

Floridians should be aware and they should make their objections known because if they don't, then the administration will try to say that they never heard objections from Floridians. It goes on and on—more political games.

Floridians aren't the only ones who need to know what this means. What about all the other States that have been affected? Did you hear that there is an uproar among the Governors of other coastal States that are in this drilling plan of the administration? They asked: Why, one day later, would you go to Florida and say “We are eliminating it,” but, Secretary Zinke, you didn't exempt my State—all the way from Maine in the North, all the way to Florida on the Atlantic coast,

all the other Gulf States, and then to the west coast of the United States, California all the way up to the State of Washington? It is more games.

People in Maryland, people in Massachusetts, people in the Carolinas are really upset. They ask: Why don't you eliminate the drilling that you are proposing off my State? What about out in California and Oregon and the State of Washington?

The administration and Secretary Zinke shouldn't be playing politics with an issue that is so important to all of our futures, especially so to Florida's future.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 371—EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE ON THE VALUE OF THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND MEXICO

Mr. FLAKE submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 371

Whereas the United States and Mexico share a nearly 2,000-mile long border that spans 4 States of the United States and 6 Mexican states;

Whereas for more than a century the United States and Mexico have maintained and fostered diplomatic ties that in 2017 allow for close cooperation and collaboration on efforts to strengthen security measures along the border, combat drug trafficking and illegal immigration, and facilitate cross-border trade;

Whereas the United States and Mexico have enjoyed economic ties for more than a century that culminated with the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994, which opened the Mexican market to the United States and Canada, creating the largest single free trade area in the world;

Whereas before the North American Free Trade Agreement was in effect, in 1993, United States trade in goods with Mexico was worth approximately \$82,000,000,000, and in 2016, United States trade in goods with Mexico was worth approximately \$525,000,000,000;

Whereas the United States has invested approximately \$1,800,000,000 in the Mérida Initiative, which focuses on the disruption of organized criminal groups, institutionalizing the rule of law, creating a 21st-century border, and building resilient communities;

Whereas cooperation between the United States and Mexico to fight drug trafficking and organized crime has grown significantly since the implementation of the Mérida Initiative and security cooperation has intensified since 2008 as trade between the United States and Mexico has boomed;

Whereas the United States intelligence community has worked effectively with its counterparts in Mexico to assist in the arrest of top criminals and drug traffickers, notably Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán who was extradited to the United States by Mexico in 2017;

Whereas Mexico has assisted the United States in extraditing criminals and fugitives of United States law captured in Mexico and such cooperation has increased substantially, with 12 extraditions in 2000 and 79 in 2016;

Whereas Mexico has been an important partner in stanching the flow of illegal migrants from Central America bound for the United States, by deporting hundreds of thousands from Mexico before they reach the United States border;

Whereas Mexico is second to only Canada in energy trade with the United States, provides crude oil to the United States, and imports rapidly growing volumes of both petroleum products and natural gas from the United States;

Whereas recent changes to Mexico's Constitution allow for further cooperation between the United States and Mexico to develop North American energy resources to the benefit of both countries;

Whereas, in 2015, the largest share of business and tourist travelers to the United States were from Mexico;

Whereas the number of United States citizens living in Mexico has steadily increased and exceeded 1,000,000 in 2017, making United States citizens in Mexico the world's largest United States expatriate community;

Whereas Mexico is an active participant in international affairs through its membership in the United Nations and the Organization of American States, and hosted the G-20 Leaders' Summit in 2012;

Whereas the United States and Mexico maintain a robust education exchange program called the United States-Mexico Bilateral Forum on Higher Education, Innovation, and Research that strengthens student mobility between the United States and Mexico, aiming to send 100,000 Mexican students to the United States and 50,000 United States students to Mexico by 2018;

Whereas the Mexico-United States Entrepreneurship and Innovation Council is a bilateral initiative comprised of public and private sector representatives designing new initiatives alongside public policies to enhance regional competitiveness that strengthens the high-impact entrepreneurship system in North America;

Whereas the North American Free Trade Agreement was negotiated 25 years before the date of agreement to this resolution, prior to the advancement of new technologies and economies, such as the E-commerce sector, that are not addressed in the Agreement's chapters; and

Whereas approximately 80 percent of Mexico's exports go to the United States and 47 percent of Mexico's imports come from the United States, making the United States Mexico's most significant trading partner: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) values the bilateral relationship between the United States and Mexico and the many benefits derived from cooperation on security, combatting transnational crime, energy, economic engagement, and cultural engagement;

(2) recognizes that implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994, and the resulting increase in trade, has provided a platform on which cooperation with Mexico on so many levels has been possible;

(3) recognizes that Mexico is an essential partner for the United States in regional security and encourages the President to continue to strengthen ties between the United States and Mexico to help advance United States regional interests;

(4) understands that the relationship between the United States and Mexico is strengthened by interaction between people from the United States and Mexico and economic interaction;

(5) encourages United States drug enforcement agencies to continue developing strong cooperative measures with Mexico since efforts to stem the drug trade into the United

States depend on Mexico's cooperation because, among other matters, more than 90 percent of heroin in the United States comes from Mexico;

(6) stresses the importance of the North American Free Trade Agreement to the United States economy and to the bilateral relationship between the United States and Mexico; and

(7) encourages the President to work toward modernization of the North American Free Trade Agreement in a way that strengthens the Agreement so that it can continue to provide benefits to the peoples of the United States and Mexico and the important bilateral relationship between the United States and Mexico.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I have 2 requests for committees to meet during today's session of the Senate. They have the approval of the Majority and Minority leaders.

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

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

The Committee on Environment and Public Works is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, January 10, 2018, at 10 a.m. to conduct a hearing entitled "America's Water Infrastructure Needs and Challenges."

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

The Committee on the Judiciary is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, January 10, 2018, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing on the following nominations: Kurt D. Engelhardt, of Louisiana, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit, Barry W. Ashe, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Louisiana, Howard C. Nielson, Jr., to be United States District Judge for the District of Utah, and James R. Sweeney II, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Indiana.

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Summer Lockerbie and Stephen Popick, fellows in my office, be granted privileges of the floor for the remainder of this session of the Congress.

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

REQUIRING THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES TO CONDUCT A STUDY AND SUBMIT A REPORT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 282, S. 875.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 875) to require the Comptroller General of the United States to conduct a study and submit a report on filing requirements under the Universal Service Fund programs.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

SECTION 1. STUDY AND REPORT ON FILING REQUIREMENTS UNDER UNIVERSAL SERVICE FUND PROGRAMS.

(a) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section—

(1) the term “Administrative Procedure Act” means subchapter II of chapter 5 of title 5, United States Code;

(2) the term “Commission” means the Federal Communications Commission;

(3) the term “covered carrier” means an eligible telecommunications carrier or service provider that receives universal service support under sections 214(e) and 254 of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 214(e) and 254) for the provision of service under a Universal Service Fund program; and

(4) the term “Universal Service Fund program” means each program of the Commission set forth under part 54 of title 47, Code of Federal Regulations, or any successor thereto, including—

(A) the Connect America Fund set forth under subpart D of that part;

(B) the Lifeline program set forth under subpart E of that part;

(C) the E-Rate program set forth under subpart F of that part;

(D) the Rural Health Care program set forth under subpart G of that part;

(E) the Remote Areas Fund set forth under subpart J of that part;

(F) the Connect America Fund Broadband Loop Support program set forth under subpart K of that part;

(G) the Mobility Fund set forth under subpart L of that part; and

(H) the High Cost Loop Support for Rate-of-Return Carriers program set forth under subpart M of that part.

(b) **STUDY AND REPORT.**—Not later than 18 months after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall conduct a study and submit to the Commission, the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate, and the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House of Representatives a report, which shall include—

(1) an analysis of the filing requirements for covered carriers participating in a Universal Service Fund program, including any filings re-

quired by the Universal Service Administrative Company;

(2) an analysis of the financial impact of those filing requirements on covered carriers participating in a Universal Service Fund program; and

(3) recommendations, if any, on how to consolidate redundant filing requirements for covered carriers participating in a Universal Service Fund program.

(c) **RULEMAKING.**—

(1) **NEW OR ONGOING RULEMAKING.**—Except as provided in paragraph (3), not later than 60 days after the date on which the report is submitted under subsection (b), the Commission shall—

(A)(i) initiate a rulemaking to consolidate redundant filing requirements for covered carriers participating in a Universal Service Fund program; and

(ii) incorporate into the rulemaking under clause (i), and as part of that rulemaking seek comment on, the recommendations described in subsection (b)(3), if any, except to the extent that doing so would violate the requirements of the Administrative Procedure Act; or

(B) incorporate into an ongoing rulemaking relating to consolidating redundant filing requirements of the Commission, and as part of that rulemaking seek comment on, the recommendations described in subsection (b)(3), if any, except to the extent that doing so would violate the requirements of the Administrative Procedure Act.

(2) **WASTE, FRAUD, AND ABUSE.**—In a rulemaking in which the Commission is required under paragraph (1) to seek comment on the recommendations described in subsection (b)(3), if any, the Commission shall also seek comment on and consider whether the benefit of each recommendation is outweighed by any potential increased risk of waste, fraud, and abuse in the Universal Service Fund program affected by the recommendation.

(3) **PREVIOUS RULEMAKING.**—Paragraph (1) shall not apply if, on or before the date on which the report is submitted under subsection (b), the Commission completes a rulemaking to consolidate redundant filing requirements for covered carriers participating in a Universal Service Fund program.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported substitute amendment be agreed to, the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed, and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The committee-reported amendment in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

The bill (S. 875), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

**ORDERS FOR THURSDAY,
JANUARY 11, 2018**

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

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 6:42 p.m., adjourned until Thursday, January 11, 2018, at 10 a.m.

NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate:

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

PAUL C. NEY, JR., OF TENNESSEE, TO BE GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, VICE JENNIFER M. O'CONNOR.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

HOLLY W. GREAVES, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, TO BE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, VICE BARBARA J. BENNETT, RESIGNED.

CONFIRMATION

Executive nomination confirmed by the Senate January 10, 2018:

THE JUDICIARY

THOMAS LEE ROBINSON PARKER, OF TENNESSEE, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE.