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Senate

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

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Almighty God, in whose hand lies the destiny of people and nations, empower our lawmakers to do Your will on Earth even as it is done in Heaven. Make their lives reflect gratitude for Your merciful kindness and loving providence. Lord, break the bonds of any excessive self-sufficiency by showing them what they can accomplish with Your supernatural strength. Help them to be blessings and not burdens as they live a life with the gifts of enthusiasm and expectancy. As they live at full potential according to Your expectations, use them to glorify Your Name on the Earth.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

TAX REFORM

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, anyone who has read the news lately will have come across some pretty remarkable headlines about the state of the U.S. economy.

On Tuesday, Gallup announced that at the close of 2017, Americans' opti-

mism about the job market set a new record. The same day, the S&P 500 hit an all-time high. Last week, the New York Times ran a story about "a wave of optimism [that] has swept over American business leaders." This optimism, the reporters continued, "is beginning to translate into the sort of investments in new plants, equipment and factory upgrades that bolsters economic growth, spurs job creation—and may finally raise wages significantly"—raise wages significantly.

Markets are optimistic, manufacturers are optimistic, and workers are optimistic. Investment is ramping up, wages are growing, and unemployment is low. By all accounts, 2018 is off to a very bright start.

Of course, Washington is not the source of all this. The engine of American free enterprise is not here in the Nation's Capital, it is in the ingenuity, talent, and work ethic of workers and entrepreneurs all across our country.

Government does not create prosperity, the American people do, but the Federal Government can certainly get in the way. Draconian tax policy and runaway regulation make it more difficult for American workers to find jobs and get pay raises. It becomes harder to start new businesses, harder to expand and invest in existing businesses, and more tempting to send money and jobs overseas.

During the Obama years, that is precisely what happened. For 8 years, his administration seized every single opportunity it could find to increase taxes, pile on more regulations, and literally micromanage the lives of the American people. Many middle-class families, like the ones I represent in Kentucky, were drowning in all this.

Now all of that is changing. In 2017, a Republican President, Republican House, and Republican Senate brought back bedrock, free market principles: tax less, regulate less, micromanage less, and empower the American people to work hard and keep more of what

they earn. And we are already seeing results.

The most significant accomplishment was the historic tax reform law the President signed into law just over 3 weeks ago. It hadn't been done in 30 years, but in 2017 Congress and the White House worked together to overhaul the Tax Code. We cut rates for families and businesses, expanded key deductions, closed wasteful loopholes, and repealed ObamaCare's individual mandate tax. We took a lot of money out of Washington's pocket and put it back in the pockets of middle-class families, who, after all, earned it in the first place.

Earlier in the year, we made major progress in rolling back the tangled web of Obama-era redtape using the Congressional Review Act. Congress repealed 15 major Federal regulations that were literally stifling American enterprise. This alone is expected to save employers up to \$36 billion in compliance costs. This was in addition to the 860 obsolete rules the Trump administration revisited in 2017.

Small businesses and large companies are all benefitting from these victories, and so are their workers. Boeing has announced plans to invest \$100 million in developing its workforce and another \$100 million to enhance its facilities and its infrastructure. AT&T intends to invest a billion dollars in capital upgrades. Just this morning, Walmart announced it would raise starting wages for hourly associates, along with bonuses and an expansion of paid family leave. That is great news for more than 1 million people, including the nearly 30,000 people working at more than 100 Walmart stores across my home State of Kentucky. This is in addition to all of the other employers across the State who have already begun passing tax reform savings along to their employees.

What is true for nationwide employers is proving to be true on Main Streets across the country as well. In

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



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New Jersey a family-owned car dealership is giving each of its full-time employees a \$500 bonus and looking to create more jobs. In Florida, a family-owned cookie bakery is planning to immediately expense new equipment purchases, enabling them to develop specialized products and boost wages for their team. All told, more than 100 companies have announced intentions to deliver special bonuses, pay increases, or other benefits to employees as a result of tax reform. This in addition to the direct savings from tax cuts. Thanks to lower rates and bigger deductions, American workers will get to keep more of their paychecks.

These are just a few of the ways a growing economy can make life better for the American people. This is what happens when a Republican President and Republican majorities in Congress work to get Washington out of the way.

It is a shame that none of our Democratic colleagues in the House or the Senate—not one, not a single one—voted for tax reform—not a one. If they had their way, American businesses would not have had a 21st century tax code giving them a fairer fight with overseas competitors, American workers wouldn't have these bonuses and special benefits, and a typical family of four earning just over \$70,000 wouldn't be on track to keep \$2,000 more of their own money this year.

Fortunately, Republican majorities passed the bill anyway, and the American people are sure glad that we did.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, we are inching ever closer to the government's spending deadline of January 19, when we will have to address a host of unresolved issues. We must lift the spending caps equally for defense and other domestic priorities, such as opioids, veterans, pensions. We must pass an aid package to give relief to disaster stricken areas of our country. We must pass the healthcare package that extends CHIP—children's health insurance—and community health centers.

Just this week, the CBO projected that CHIP will actually save the government money if it is extended for 10 years. We could ensure that kids continue to get quality health insurance for longer and save the government money if we extend it for 10 years. That is a no-brainer.

Of course, we must settle the fate of the Dreamers. A deal to pass DACA protection alongside a package of border security measures is finally within reach. As the immigration meeting at the White House showed, almost everyone in this body is interested in passing DACA protections into law.

Democrats are interested in effective, practical border security measures. We want what secures the border the most, not what sounds the best, not what was a political slogan in a campaign but what actually protects our border as drugs flow in and other things come across. We are working as hard as we can to find an agreement both sides can live with. The only folks who didn't get the memo were some House Republicans who continue to push hard-line immigration bills that are outside the scope of the negotiations. I am referring to Representative GOODLATTE's proposal, which is entirely counterproductive and completely unacceptable.

If Speaker RYAN is going to listen to the hard right in the House and coalesce behind Representative GOODLATTE's proposal on DACA, we will have no deal. Let the American people hear that. If Speaker RYAN is unable to resist Representative GOODLATTE's proposal—he has never been for Dream to begin with—we will have no deal.

If Speaker RYAN bends to the hard-right faction of his caucus—which is far away from what most Americans think; the hard right doesn't like Dreamers, and 70 percent of Americans do—and if they ask for immigration measures outside the scope of our negotiations, then so will we. Deal with chain migration outside of the scope of Dreamers? Let's deal with the 11 million who need a path to citizenship—a tough but fair path. We can play that game too. We can go beyond the confines of this deal, which has been Dreamers and border security, and then the whole thing won't happen.

There are people on my side who aren't going to want to make any compromises. I know that. There are people on both sides who won't want to make any compromises. As responsible leaders, we have to come to an agreement, and we can't make everybody happy. That is why we have a House and Senate. That is why we have legislators.

The whole reason we narrowed the scope of our negotiations is so that we could accomplish something for the Dreamers, rather than relitigating comprehensive immigration reform in such a compressed timeframe.

This body passed a very fine bill, in my opinion. It was really tough on the border. It was tough on benefits. It was tough on a path to citizenship. For the first time, for instance, green card holders had to learn English. That was in our bill that passed this body—led by Senator MCCAIN and myself and the Gang of 8—68 to 32. The House didn't dare take it up for the same reason they seem to have trouble today: The

hard right said no immigration reform. And we are stuck. That hurts everybody.

I am sure my good friend is hearing from farmers in his State, as I hear from farmers in mine, and businesspeople. We have to tighten up our borders. We have to make sure we have a rational system of immigration. We can't assure that every person who wants to come here comes here. We all agree with that. But that is comprehensive immigration reform, because we also believe that the 11 million here should be given a difficult but fair path to citizenship. We can't start litigating all of that.

Some of my friends on the other side of the aisle say: I have to have this provision outside DACA and border security. They are hurting the cause of getting something done.

If we can reach an agreement by the end of this week or over the weekend, we can pass it into law as part of a global deal on the budget by next Friday. I believe that is still the best way to resolve the issue. I am hopeful we can get this done. Any later than that, we won't have time to do it by the 19th.

Let me assure my colleagues, accept the majority leader in good faith and the Speaker in good faith—their intention is to put a bill on the floor in February or March. We have heard that before, and it never happens. So we feel passionately that we should get this done—both tighten up the border and help the Dreamers. We have to do it as part of the must-pass bill, and that must-pass bill is this global spending deal.

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now a word on the Russia investigation. Over the past weeks, several events have shaken my confidence that our Republican colleagues are committed to an independent investigation in Congress and at the FBI.

A rightwing smear campaign is being waged to discredit the investigation and the investigator. Absurd attacks have been launched on Special Counsel Mueller, one of the finest men that I think we have ever come across in this body. I remember when he was FBI Director; everyone loved him. He is a man of utmost integrity. A Republican Congressman went so far as to suggest his investigation was a "coup" when that Member spoke on the floor of the House.

Here in the Senate, the chairman of the Judiciary Committee—I have great respect for him; we are the only two Charles E's in the Senate—referred Christopher Steele to the FBI and recommended criminal charges, even though Mr. Steele was a whistleblower—something that our chairman of Judiciary has always protected. He came to the FBI with concerns that Donald Trump was subject to blackmail. Any American would worry about that. The chairman took that action

unilaterally—that is, asking for criminal charges—without consulting with or providing notice to the minority. Yet he still expressed outrage when the ranking member of his committee released a transcript of his committee’s interview with the chairman of Fusion GPS even though that was what was in contention. There is a fundamental double standard here. You can’t complain, Mr. Chairman of Judiciary, about our side doing things unilaterally if you do them unilaterally. We want to work in a bipartisan way.

I applaud my friend, the senior Senator from California, for releasing that transcript. It contained information that was crucial for the American people to read and understand in order to judge for themselves the allegations my friends across the aisle have made. You make a serious allegation against someone but say no one can see the information? That is not fair. That is not how we work here in America.

Now, in the Foreign Relations Committee, my friend Senator CARDIN was compelled to release a minority report about Russia’s interference in foreign elections because the majority would not join him. Think about that. Senator CARDIN’s report showed something we already know to be true—no one disputes that; well, maybe a few—that Russia maliciously and persistently interferes in elections around the globe and will not cease without unified and strong countermeasures.

Senator CARDIN’s report is another compelling reason that the Senate act on election security legislation. Before we left for the holidays, Senators LANKFORD, KLOBUCHAR, HARRIS, and COLLINS introduced the Secure Elections Act. It is a good piece of legislation that would help shore up election security. Midterm elections are just around the corner, and, as Senator CARDIN’s report tells us, Russia will no doubt endeavor to sow confusion and chaos into our democracy once again. That is what they do. That is what Putin likes to do. We have to stop it. And making information public about it is very important. This should be a unifying, nonpartisan issue.

Why would the Republican majority on the Foreign Relations Committee refuse to join that report? It is because—in my judgment, at least—for partisan reasons, Republicans in Congress and some in some parts of the media—the conservative parts of the media—have sought to undermine the Russia investigation in countless ways. They have hidden behind secrecy and innuendo to cast aspersions on the investigation and erect roadblocks in its path. Their goal, it seems, is to discredit the investigation so that ultimately they can discredit any findings that are detrimental to their party or their President.

President Trump makes the strategy manifest, clear as day, almost every day on his Twitter feed. Yesterday, he tweeted that the Russia investigation was “the single greatest witch hunt in

American history.” That is a little self-centered. How about Salem? Those people were burned at the stake. And he wrote that “Republicans should finally take control.” That last line should send shivers down our spines, that “Republicans should finally take control.”

From the very beginning, this investigation has been about an issue most sensitive to our national interests—interference in our elections, the wellspring and pride of our wonderful and great and grand democracy. If ever there were an issue that transcends party, this is it. Yet here is the President of the United States imploring his party to “take control” of the investigation. You never thought you would hear a President say something like this. Frankly, you never thought you would hear such silence from the other side of the aisle when he does, but that is where we are. Republican lawmakers ought to shout down that kind of appeal. We all must commit to the essential truth of the matter, which is that the investigation into Russian interference in our election must remain as bipartisan and as nonpartisan as possible. The interests of the Nation are at stake. All of us—all of us—must choose country over party.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

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 Montana.

NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING AWARENESS DAY

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, today is National Human Trafficking Awareness Day. Montana, like much of the United States, is suffering from the rise in human trafficking. I am grateful that Montana’s attorney general, Tim Fox, has taken this issue head-on. In fact, Montana has had three times as many human trafficking cases in 2017 as we had in 2015—a threefold increase. Unfortunately, this number will likely continue to rise in the coming

years, and online platforms are a driving force for it. Like so many things, the internet has tremendous power for good as well as for evil.

Having spent 12 years building a startup cloud computing business in my hometown of Bozeman—a business we grew to over 1,000 employees. We took the company public. This became a large, global business. I understand the power of the internet for good. But I also believe we must and can have better safeguards to protect our children, our families, and our neighbors from sex trafficking, while at the same time protecting innovation on the internet.

Unfortunately, a startup business—your business—has the potential to be used for terrible reasons without your awareness. Even more upsetting, it is also possible that online platforms do know that bad actors are using that platform and they do nothing about it. During my first hearing on the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, we investigated one of these platforms: backpage.com.

Bad actors like backpage.com must be held accountable. That is why today, on Human Trafficking Awareness Day, I will be joining the Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act. This act strips protections for platforms that knowingly assist, support, or facilitate sex trafficking. We must take steps now to stop human trafficking and protect vulnerable members of our community. The Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act moves us closer to that goal.

I tip my hat and I am thankful to Senator PORTMAN for introducing this bill. I am thankful for the work of the Senate Commerce Committee to ensure that this legislation protects the millions of companies on the internet that are building our economy and creating high-paying jobs and doing so in good faith.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be added as a cosponsor for S. 1693, the Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act.

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to address the Senate as in morning business.

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

ECONOMIC GROWTH, REGULATORY RELIEF, AND CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, on Tuesday of this week, I regained my previous held seat on the Senate Banking

Committee, a committee I served on from 2011 until the beginning of this Congress. While this committee sometimes flies under the radar for many Americans, the oversight it conducts and the issues it considers under its substantial jurisdiction are of great consequence to America and to the American people.

The owners and employees of banking institutions have experienced success when their communities experience success. What I am saying is, how we lend money matters to every kind of person every day. So what we have experienced across Kansas, in many instances, is difficulty and really hard times.

I want to talk about community. Community financial institutions are of great importance to the folks I represent in Kansas. What I want to do, in part, with my opportunity to serve on the Banking Committee is to make sure those financial institutions have a regulatory environment in which they can benefit their communities and benefit the citizens who live there.

Communities in Kansas are losing their hometown banks to consolidation and sales, and some of these banks that are moving in that direction have been family owned for generations. In order to better understand why these lenders are consolidating or selling, I have sought out the nature of this decline by speaking with financial leaders from across the country. The overwhelming response I received is that the costs associated with complying with new Federal regulations are simply too much to absorb in their business model.

In the aftermath of our country's significant financial downturn, a new regulatory framework was put in place to rein in those bad actors and punish bad behavior that led us down that path in 2007 and 2008. We have had more than 7 years to determine what the effects are of this new regulatory environment—Dodd-Frank—and what it has meant to our community banks and our community financial institutions. The most glaring aspect of these new regulations is the disproportionate burden placed upon those smaller institutions seeking to comply with their new responsibilities.

Rather than extending credit to best fit the needs of their customers, banks are exiting entire lines of business because the penalties for making a mistake far outweigh the economic benefits derived from extending a loan. I experienced this damaging news and reality during the Senate Banking Committee's consideration of legislation to reform the secondary mortgage markets in 2014. I was attempting to solicit feedback from Kansas lenders of the financial impact some of these proposed changes would have on their communities, and what I learned, unfortunately, was this: "Jerry, we don't make home loans anymore." When pressed for a reason, they responded it just didn't make business sense for them to

do that any longer due to the increased Federal regulators' crackdown on mortgage lending.

As a member of the Senate who cares deeply about rural America and the special way of life we enjoy in Kansas, this is a very damaging occurrence. If a community banker determines they can no longer extend credit to what would have otherwise been a credit-worthy borrower because of the fear of making a mistake and the repercussions that follow, then they decide not to make the loan at all and not even to be in the business. What community would expect their financial institutions in their community to refuse to make a home loan? It is the American dream.

While community banks had been consolidating for a number of years due to shifting demographics and market conditions, we cannot nor should we attempt to discount the role the post-Dodd-Frank regulatory environment has played in the acceleration of the harming of our community banking structure.

I am not opposed to regulations, and neither are the community bankers working to serve their communities, but there has to be prioritization on the part of Congress to create an environment where local lenders can succeed because the success of these institutions means the success of their communities and the people who live there.

During the fall of 2015, I worked alongside a number of committee colleagues—both Republicans and Democrats—to see if we could bridge the divide and bring relief to our community lenders across the country. While these efforts did not then produce a result, these discussions demonstrated that the issues facing the financial service world need not be partisan, and they sowed the seeds for what has now resulted in legislation moving its way through the legislative process today.

I am happy to support S. 2155, the Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief, and Consumer Protection Act recently reported out of the Banking Committee on a bipartisan vote. Many of the provisions in this bill originated in legislation I have promoted since I came to the Senate, first as the Communities First Act, and most recently as the CLEAR Relief Act. While this legislation will not solve every issue that needs to be solved, it is meaningful progress that will make a difference.

It is Congress's responsibility to ensure that economic growth is not needlessly impeded, and it is our duty to ensure that economic opportunities flourish and that Americans have access to the tools necessary to pursue the American dream.

The Banking Committee can and will play an important role in providing these tools, and I feel fortunate to have the opportunity to lend the voice of Kansas to that effort. I look forward to working with the chairman, MIKE CRAPO, the Senator from Idaho, and the ranking member, SHERROD BROWN from

Ohio, as we work together to make sure good things happen in Kansas and across the country.

Again, I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Banking Committee and on the Senate floor to see that all Americans have the opportunity to have access to credit so we can continue to pursue growing economic opportunities for all Americans to keep the American dream alive and well.

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

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

OPIOID EPIDEMIC

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I am here today with my colleague Senator CAPITO to talk about something that is getting a lot of attention but needs even more attention from this Congress, which is the opioid epidemic—the epidemic the President has rightly called a crisis, and he then turned to Congress and said: Find the money to solve the problem. We have been doing a substantial amount of that, but I think we see a clear desire here and in all of our States to find a better solution.

This is an issue that has hit every town in America, small and large, I believe. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, over 40,000 people died from an opioid overdose. This is a fraction of the people who had an opioid overdose. These are the people who died from an opioid overdose in 2016, 40,000 people; over 90 Americans every single day. It was a 28-percent increase over 2015 and a dramatic increase over where we were just 10 years before.

Opioid overdoses now surpass car accidents as the No. 1 accidental cause of death in the country. Both of our States and our surrounding States, I think almost every one of them, have had more overdose deaths in 2016—and an increased number, I think, in 2017—than car accident deaths. The Centers for Disease Control estimates the economic burden of this epidemic is almost \$80 billion a year.

We have just gone through a tax discussion, an economic growth discussion. When we were talking about billions of dollars, seldom were we talking about \$80 billion to do something with or to stop doing something with, but the economic cost of all of this—lost productivity, addiction, the crime related to that addiction—the CDC says \$78.5 billion a year is now the cost.

We are both appropriators. The members of the Appropriations Committee have looked at this carefully. Our colleagues have had a chance to confront this issue in our committee head-on. We brought bills to the floor that have passed and made a big difference in a

short period of time. Over the past 2 years, not counting what we hope to do this year, the committee has increased opioid funding by over \$900 million, nearly a 200-percent increase for the Department of Health and Human Services—more money for justice, more money for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

This funding is focused on developing alternatives for pain management, giving our State, Federal, and local law enforcement partners the tools they need to combat opioid trafficking, ensuring first responders we are working to see that there are better ways to respond with opioid reversal.

One of the things we have seen recently is that opioids of all kinds are now laced with new drugs like fentanyl, and you don't even know what you are taking. Narcan, the former way to deal with this and still the most effective way to deal with this—you think you have dealt with a problem, and the dose is so strong, the same person in just a few minutes lapses back into another seizure, attack, that has often been fatal. Even though people are there and the traditional way to respond is there, it isn't enough for what is going on now.

One thing you would have to tell anybody doing this is, it is unlikely you have any real idea what you are putting into your system. What you think was a narcotic high the day before could easily kill you the next day. We have been looking for better ways to monitor programs so prescriptions in West Virginia and Missouri—they are both States where, in some counties, the number of prescriptions people have been walking into the pharmacist with are just ridiculous.

The committee that funds the Department of Health and Human Services—that is the committee we are both on—in the last 2 years, we have increased funding by 1,300 percent, \$745 million—13 times more than we were spending just 2 years ago. We have given grants to States, in ways we haven't before, to look at specific State needs and ideas they have to deal with this and then share. We have looked at increasing Federal surveillance on how prescriptions are being written, how drug stores are becoming the conduit, and how many substances are coming through the mail to find new ways to determine whether this is reasonable in the area these drugs are going into. We have looked at ways to increase the tools necessary to communities and first responders. We are talking right now to the National Institutes of Health about what they can do on a number of fronts. One is to work with the pharmaceutical companies themselves to develop alternatives to the kind of pain management we have had.

Also, let me say on that front, we have gone through a period where doctors and hospitals were too often graded on whether people had any pain or not as opposed to whether they had

pain they didn't understand, pain that was unacceptable. More and more people ought to be saying, as opposed to taking this potentially addictive drug, give me a dose that is not as addictive, and maybe I am still more achy than I would be otherwise, more pain than I would have otherwise, but I understand it and am aware of it, and I am not in some cloud of no pain but not much of anything else in terms of real quality of life.

We are looking at how we can work with these companies for pain management. I have talked to the pharmaceutical companies. I think it is time for them to step up, maybe in partnership with NIH, so there is some Federal money to encourage more private sector money to find alternatives that are less addictive and better understood, to find more effective and affordable ways to respond. Just the amount of money in the first responders' kits around the country, and local governments paying for the Narcan, the more expensive injectable treatment—we need to look for ways where that can be more available and in a way that local governments have a better way to deal with this.

This needs to be dealt with locally. The first responder is going to be a local person. If you are a fire department that also has first responders, your department is three times more likely to go on an overdose call than they are to go to a fire. That is where we are in this situation today.

In trying to figure out what the impact really is at home—as we all are trying to do—I had a meeting not too long ago with medical professionals, with State officials, with emergency responders, in Springfield, MO, to talk about how we deal with prevention, treatment, and recovery. We talked about the critical partnership between local, State, and Federal law enforcement and the dangers the first responders themselves face. Sometimes what people are putting into their system is so powerful and so addictive that walking into the room or touching the clothing becomes a potentially great danger for the person who is there to help you. I talked to doctors and hospitals about the challenges they face in prescribing less habit-forming pain medications and how patients are still not fully aware of the danger of dealing with pain if you overdo it as you are dealing with pain.

I talked to one person who talked about his daughter who had just gone to the dentist and got pain medicine and had no sense that the pain medicine could be addictive and she should stop taking it when it had done its job, whether or not it was when the last pill was gone.

Then, of course, there is a new issue of underprescribing. Nobody likes to go back to the pharmacy twice to get the same prescription they just got a few days ago, but giving people more pills than they need to take themselves or have them sit in the medicine cabinet doesn't make any sense.

In our State, there are large urban areas, but it also has a lot of small and remote communities and, frankly, rural communities have been hit particularly hard by this crisis. Certainly, West Virginia is a State that understands this. There has been no more vigorous advocate for funding and new ways to solve this problem than Senator CAPITO. I am glad to be here with her today as we talk about this issue.

I can assure the people we work for that this is a top priority. It has been a top priority for over 3 years now. The first 2 years showed dramatic increases in the willingness we had to deal with this and the breadth of how we deal with it, and that is one reason we need to move on and get this funding bill, which should have been done by October 1, done right now. As we get a new number to deal with, one of our priorities will be the opioid epidemic, and one of the leaders in that discussion will be the Senator from West Virginia, Mrs. CAPITO.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, I wish to thank Senator BLUNT from the great State of Missouri for his leadership on this issue. He chairs the subcommittee that is very pivotal—the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services—and has moved forward so aggressively to up the funding in this area. We have the pedal to the metal now.

As he said, when we are moving and coming to a final spending bill, this has to be a top priority for us. It is absolutely critical. I am really pleased to be on the subcommittee, but I want to thank him for—I know he works diligently with NIH, which holds big promise. We are always looking for solutions. Can we treat ourselves out of this? Can we law enforce ourselves out of this? Can we prevent ourselves out of this? I think we can do all of those. We have to have a component of research that looks at the alternatives to pain medications and pain management.

The current bill we have looked at is \$816 million for programs to combat opioid abuse issues, and that is a 440-percent increase from the previous year.

I am going to go through this. It might sound a little mundane and detail-oriented, but people say: That is great to “up” the amount of money that you are spending, but where are you really spending this money?

The Senator from Missouri, Mr. BLUNT, mentioned that it has to be done locally, and there is a lot of emphasis on where these dollars are going.

Some of them are going, of course, to the CDC, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, for prevention issues, which is critical, while \$50 million is going to our community health centers. In States such as Alaska, West Virginia, and Missouri, community health centers are seeing hundreds of

thousands—millions—of people every day and many more who are dealing with mental health and substance abuse. SAMHSA oversees the mental health grants that go to our States, and there is \$15 million for a new SAMHSA program for opioid prevention. We have our drug-free communities program, which works well in my State. It is a total grassroots-up, bottom-up, when you get everybody from your local county or public health and others in the room to try to solve this issue. Then again, there are some block grant programs to our community health centers along with the funding to NIH. This is a broad-based look at where the funding is going.

We have an opportunity here in the next several weeks to “up” that funding, to make sure that the national priority that we feel, as Senators from States that are highly affected, is reflected in our funding. I believe that with Senator BLUNT’s leadership on the subcommittee and with other members on the subcommittee, that is something we are going to be doing.

I happen to chair the Financial Services and General Government Appropriations Subcommittee, which appropriates the money for the high-intensity drug task forces. Our State has over 22 counties that are in that. Is that a branding that you really want—that you are a high-intensity drug trafficking area? Not really. What that does is coordinate Federal, State, and local resources to help meet the challenge and face what a difficult problem you have. I work with funding on that, with the drug-free communities, and also with the President’s Office of National Drug Control Policy. We have done a lot, and we have pushed for resources.

The Senator mentioned resources for our first responders. He mentioned how dangerous it is. There have been local stories about our first responders who have just touched fentanyl—just touched it—and have gone into overdose situations. We were at the White House yesterday and were talking, and the President mentioned drug-sniffing dogs that have had reactions to fentanyl. So this is a very lethal substance. Actually, I saw in the statistics for West Virginia that more of the recent overdose deaths are attributable to fentanyl than to heroin itself, and that is rising. We need the money for enforcement, prevention, treatment and recovery, and more resources for research, and I have mentioned how critical that research will be.

Nationwide, we had over 63,000 drug overdose deaths in 2016, and a number of these were attributed to heroin and fentanyl. In my State of West Virginia, we had the highest deaths per 100,000 for overdoses. I would like to say it is happening somewhere in which maybe we would have predicted that it would happen, but it is happening everywhere. It is happening to the children of friends of mine.

Ryan Brown, a young man in West Virginia, lost his life. He had a loving

home, loving parents, and had been through treatment. He just couldn’t fight it. He went back and injected himself with a lethal dose. He died in a very public place too. It was very tragic. To his credit, his parents have taken up the mantle for Ryan to try to get more treatment centers in the State of West Virginia. I thank them for that.

We were just at the White House—Republicans and Democrats—for the President to sign the INTERDICT Act. I sponsored that bill with Senator RUBIO, Senator MARKEY, and Senator BROWN. What it does is help give our Customs and Border Patrol folks the ability to detect fentanyl when it is coming in. We know it is coming in from across our borders, principally from China, maybe China through Mexico. We need to equip our Border Patrol agents to be able to stop that—interdict the flow of that lethal substance.

Just this week, The Hill newspaper published an op-ed about the Martinsburg Initiative. Martinsburg is in West Virginia, in the Eastern Panhandle. Everybody needs to visit Martinsburg. They have an innovative police-school-community partnership that is spearheaded by the Martinsburg Police Department, the Berkeley County Schools, and Shepherd University, along with the Washington/Baltimore HIDTA. This is a comprehensive strategy of intervention and treatment for families to help prevent the beginning of the addiction to opioids.

In December, I attended the kickoff of the Bridge of Hope Fund, and I want to highlight what some of the local communities are doing in my State to try to get a comprehensive spectrum of solutions. This is a new scholarship program that was developed by Fruth Pharmacy, which is a locally-owned, family-owned pharmacy, that will allow people who have completed addiction recovery programs to get a jump-start on their college educations and career training.

The founders of the program started it because they wanted to encourage people who have reclaimed their lives and been successful to be able to get back into the mainstream. We know one of the roadblocks to recovery is getting back into the work environment—to be able to get a job. Many of these young folks who are in this position have already burned through their education grants and their availability of Pell grants. So this Bridge of Hope scholarship is an organic, from-the-ground-up scholarship program for those who have been through treatment.

We had a young man who talked about his road to recovery and how important getting his education and getting back on his feet was. We need more everywhere. I think that is essential to all of us. We have to prioritize our Federal funding for States like mine that have been the hardest hit by the opioid epidemic.

I see my colleague from New Hampshire here. Both of us have joined to-

gether on the Targeted Opioid Formula Act so that those of us who have high statistics and greater need are able to have those funds more squarely targeted toward us for prevention and treatment.

There are a lot of good ideas out there. There are a lot of things going on, but there is a lot of tragedy around all of us. I would say to the folks in the gallery and certainly to everybody on the floor that you probably know a family or you probably know somebody who has been hard hit by this. It is absolutely crushingly sad, heartbreaking, because it is preventable. It is something on which we can have an impact. If we don’t, we are going to lose another generation.

I have great fears that we are going to look back on this moment in time and think we didn’t do enough. So I think, with Senator BLUNT’s help and the help of others, particularly with Senator BLUNT’s chairing the Appropriations Committee, this is the direction in which we need to go. We need to have more targeted funding so those local resources can be creative in order to stop the scourge, to handle the scourge, and to educate the next generation as to how devastating this could be if one were to ever begin to go down this road.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 10 minutes.

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

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, let me applaud my colleague from West Virginia, Senator CAPITO, for her work in addressing the opioid epidemic. It is something that I know, in a bipartisan way, we care about in this Chamber, and it is one place in which I think we could come to some agreement about increasing resources as we come to an agreement on the budget for the upcoming year. So I thank the Senator for her comments.

SPECIAL COUNSEL MUELLER, DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, AND FBI

Mr. President, I come to the floor this morning because I believe the United States is a nation of laws. The bedrock of our democracy is the rule of law. We are blessed with a judicial system and Federal law enforcement agencies that are respected worldwide for their integrity, impartiality, and professional excellence.

As the lead Democrat on the Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies, I have a responsibility, along with my chairman, Senator SHELBY, and our colleagues, to ensure that the Department of Justice, including Federal law enforcement agencies and Federal prosecutors, have the resources they need to do their jobs. I also have a responsibility to ensure that they are independent and shielded from political interference.

On that score, I am deeply troubled by a rising chorus of partisan attacks on the integrity of the Department of Justice, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and in particular Special Counsel Robert Mueller, who is investigating Russian interference in the 2016 election.

Actually, this is the cover of the report from our intelligence agencies on that interference in the 2016 election.

I believe these attacks against Special Counsel Mueller are part of a broader campaign, orchestrated by the White House, to undermine the investigations into Russia's interference in the 2016 campaign, including the possible collusion by the Trump campaign. This effort to discredit the investigation has profound national security implications for the United States.

Yesterday, Senator BEN CARDIN, the top Democrat on the Foreign Relations Committee, released a report on behalf of the minority of the Foreign Relations Committee that documents Russian President Vladimir Putin's two-decade assault on democratic institutions, Western values, and the rule of law. This report complements a finding by the U.S. intelligence community that was issued last January that Russia interfered in the 2016 election and will continue to interfere in our elections if it is not deterred. This was the unanimous conclusion of all 17 U.S. intelligence agencies. Yet President Trump continues to be dismissive of claims that Russia interfered.

This is not about partisanship. This is not about who won the election. This is about whether Russia is trying to disrupt our democracy. President Trump's comments about what happened here are an extraordinary abdication of the President's duty to defend our country and safeguard our democracy.

Our Foreign Relations Committee's report concludes: "Never before in American history has so clear a threat to national security been so clearly ignored by a U.S. president, and without a strong U.S. response, institutions and elections here and throughout Europe will remain vulnerable to the Kremlin's aggressive and sophisticated malign influence operations."

Meanwhile, the campaign by the White House and certain Republicans in Congress to discredit and deflect the investigation continues. Indeed, it is a campaign that has become even more bizarre. Republicans on the Judiciary Committee refuse to release testimony by the cofounder of Fusion GPS—testimony regarding Russian efforts to collude with the Trump campaign. Last week, Senator GRASSLEY and Senator GRAHAM took the unprecedented step of calling on the Justice Department to investigate former British MI6 intelligence officer Christopher Steele, the author of the Fusion GPS report. Think about that. Instead of calling for an investigation of the serious charges in the so-called "Russia dossier," these Senators are demanding an investiga-

tion of the author of the report. Meanwhile, the President is becoming increasingly aggressive in attacking the investigations. Yesterday, he again called them a "witch-hunt" and demanded "Republicans should finally take control."

The partisan attacks on Special Counsel Robert Mueller are especially shameful. A decorated marine Vietnam veteran, he is a Republican who was nominated to be FBI Director by President George W. Bush and was approved by the Senate, at that time, 98 to 0. In 2011, when his 10-year term was up, President Obama, a Democratic President, asked the Senate to extend his term for an additional 2 years. Director Mueller was confirmed for another 2-year term by a unanimous vote of 100 to 0.

When Mr. Mueller was appointed special counsel in May, he was greeted with bipartisan praise for his integrity and professionalism. Here are some of the quotes we heard at the time.

Majority Leader MITCH MCCONNELL said:

I have a lot of confidence in Bob Mueller. I think it was a good choice.

Senator RUBIO said:

I believe [Mueller] is going to conduct a full and fair and thorough investigation that we should have confidence in.

Senator ISAKSON said:

[Mueller's] been appointed for a purpose. Let him carry that purpose out, and let the evidence take us where it may.

Yet today, in the wake of indictments of key Trump campaign officials, some Republicans in Congress are joining with voices in the conservative media in smearing Robert Mueller as "corrupt" and "dishonest." Those are quotes.

In early December, former House Speaker Newt Gingrich said:

Mueller is corrupt. The senior FBI is corrupt. The system is corrupt.

The day after Christmas, a prominent House Republican called for top officials in the Department of Justice and FBI to be "purged."

It is unfortunate that many Republicans appear to believe that in order to support the President they must attack and discredit not only Special Counsel Mueller but also the career employees of the Department of Justice and the FBI. These partisan attacks are baseless and reckless. They are undermining trust and confidence in the rule of law, and this must not be tolerated. It is time for responsible Senators on both sides of the aisle to speak up in defense of these institutions that are at the heart of our democracy. It is time to come together on a bipartisan basis to demand that Mr. Mueller be allowed to follow the facts wherever they may lead.

The FBI is also under attack. President Trump has said that the agency's reputation is in "tatters" and its standing is the "worst in history." The truth is that the FBI continues to be the gold standard for law enforcement agencies worldwide.

The prosecutors in the Department of Justice are superb professionals who adhere to a strict ethic of honesty and impartiality, as do the nearly 37,000 employees of the FBI. They put their lives on the line every day to protect the American people from violent criminals, terrorists, and foreign agents who mean our country great harm.

Just last month, as the agency was being attacked on FOX News as equivalent to the Soviet-era KGB, undercover FBI agents were hard at work stopping an ISIS supporter who was planning a Christmas Day terrorist attack on Pier 39, the iconic San Francisco tourist attraction. This is just one example of more than 720 potential acts of terrorism that were disrupted and prevented by hard-working FBI agents last year. We can see the headlines from some of those plots that were thwarted in New York, San Francisco, Florida, and Oklahoma City.

On June 13, Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein testified before the Appropriations Subcommittee. Because the Attorney General has recused himself, Mr. Rosenstein is the top DOJ official overseeing the special counsel. At the hearing, I asked him if he had any evidence of good cause for firing Special Counsel Mueller. He answered: "No, I have not." In response to my further questioning, Mr. Rosenstein responded: "You have my assurance that we are [going to] faithfully follow that regulation and Director Mueller is going to have the full . . . independence that he needs to conduct that investigation appropriately." More recently, on December 13, testifying before the House Judiciary Committee, Mr. Rosenstein was again asked if there is good cause for firing Special Counsel Mueller. He responded with a firm no.

Members of Congress and commentators in the media who are now attacking the special counsel, the Justice Department, and the FBI for partisan political purposes are making a grave mistake. They will not succeed in deflecting law enforcement from its duties and missions, but they may well succeed in undermining the American people's faith and confidence in these institutions so vital to a healthy democracy. That is not only deeply unfortunate, it is shameful.

This is a remarkable moment in our Nation's history. A hostile foreign power has interfered in our Presidential election. Our law enforcement agencies and special counsel are working diligently to uncover the scope and methods of that intervention so that we can prevent a recurrence in the future. Supporting these efforts isn't about party or partisanship; it is about patriotism and defending America's democracy, which has been attacked and continues to be vulnerable to attack.

Our democracy is being tested, our law enforcement agencies are being tested, and we as Senators are being tested. Our responsibility is clear. We

have a duty to come together, Senators of both parties, to defend the independence of the Justice Department and the FBI, and we must insist that Special Counsel Mueller be allowed to conduct and complete his investigation without political interference.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. FISCHER). All time has expired.

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent; the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER), the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. COTTON), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN), and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. PERDUE).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted "yea."

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

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

The result was announced—yeas 92, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 7 Ex.]

YEAS—92

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

NOT VOTING—8

Alexander	Durbin	McCain
Booker	Graham	Perdue
Cotton	Heller	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to re-

consider 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 senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Walter David Counts III, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Texas.

Mitch McConnell, Deb Fischer, John Barrasso, 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 Walter David Counts III, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Texas, 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 Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER), the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. COTTON), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN), and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. PERDUE).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN), and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) are necessarily absent.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 90, nays 1, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 8 Ex.]

YEAS—90

Baldwin	Cochran	Fischer
Barrasso	Collins	Flake
Bennet	Coons	Gardner
Blumenthal	Corker	Gillibrand
Blunt	Cornyn	Grassley
Boozman	Cortez Masto	Harris
Brown	Crapo	Hassan
Burr	Cruz	Hatch
Cantwell	Daines	Heinrich
Capito	Donnelly	Heitkamp
Cardin	Duckworth	Hoeven
Carper	Enzi	Inhofe
Casey	Ernst	Isakson
Cassidy	Feinstein	Johnson

Jones	Murphy	Shelby
Kaine	Murray	Smith
Kennedy	Nelson	Stabenow
King	Paul	Sullivan
Klobuchar	Peters	Tester
Lankford	Portman	Thune
Leahy	Reed	Tillis
Lee	Risch	Toomey
Manchin	Roberts	Udall
Markey	Rounds	Van Hollen
McCaskill	Rubio	Warner
McConnell	Sasse	Warren
Menendez	Schatz	Whitehouse
Merkley	Schumer	Wicker
Moran	Scott	Wyden
Murkowski	Shaheen	Young

NAYS—1

Hirono

NOT VOTING—9

Alexander	Durbin	McCain
Booker	Graham	Perdue
Cotton	Heller	Sanders

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 90, the nays are 1.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The assistant bill clerk read the nomination of Walter David Counts III, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Texas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

RULES OF THE SENATE

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, once more I am coming to the floor to talk about the basic rules of the Senate and how we actually get on legislation.

We have spent all of this week on four district court judicial nominations—the entire week, no legislation—because we can't get on legislation.

In 2013, we were in a situation similar to this. The minority party, at that point being the Republicans, were slowing down the process in the Senate on nominations by the Democratic Party, at that point the majority. So Republicans and Democrats sat down together and said: This is a problem. We cannot get to legislation.

The Republicans and Democrats together, with 70-plus votes, made a 2-year rule change in the Senate in the 113th Congress. It was a simple rule change: 2 hours of debate for a district court judge, 8 hours of debate for just about everyone else, and 30 hours of debate for circuit court, Supreme Court, and Cabinet nominations. It was a bipartisan agreement that worked very well for that 2-year time period.

Then, at the end of that 2-year time period, it had a sunset on it, and it expired. The hope was that we would relearn how to be able to do this. I wasn't in the Senate at that time, but I have spoken to multiple people about that process.

What happened instead was, during the first year of that, there continued to be ongoing frustration, so my Democratic colleagues used what is affectionately called the nuclear option to be able to change the rules of the Senate to say that they could bring individuals with only 51 votes—not 60—and

then they used the rule, on top of what they changed, to bring people forward at greater speed, which they did. For the rest of the next year, they used it that way.

We now come to this time period. Let me give an example of what I am talking about and the frustration it creates. Let me confirm my number and make sure I get it right for all of the Senate history. From 1967 until 2012, there were 46 cloture votes invoked. That means they requested a cloture vote, and it went all the way to be a vote—46 of those on judges and the executive branch from 1967 to 2012.

Last year, there were 46 cloture votes in this body, just in 1 year. What was from 1967 until 2012 the total number, Democrats did to Republicans in 1 year—last year.

The statement keeps coming up over and over again: Why can't we get on legislation? Because each day is full of dead time, debating nominations—nominations like what passed today unanimously in the Senate. But we had to have cloture time set aside for it.

This has to be fixed. The rules of the Senate are set by the Senators. In 2013, the Senators stood up and said "This has to stop," and they fixed it. I am recommending again that the Senate, once again, implement the same rule that Democrats led Republicans to do in 2013 now, in this year, and instead of doing it for one Congress, make it the rule. If it was a good idea for Democrats in 2013 and 2014, why is it not a good idea for Republicans and Democrats now?

That simple rule is, when we can't agree on a candidate, we would have only 2 hours of debate on a district judge—remembering that for the entirety of this week, it took the whole week to do four of them. We could do 2 hours of debate for each one if it is a district court judge, 8 hours for just about everybody else, or 30 hours of debate for Supreme Court, circuit court, and Cabinet-level nominations.

People would think that would be a slam dunk. So far it has not been. For some reason, my Democratic colleagues say: That rule was good for us, but it is not good for you, and it is not good for the future of the Senate. I believe it is. I believe it was a fair rule then, and it is a fair rule now. Enough debating about the rules of the Senate; let's get on to the business of the Senate and actually do what the American people sent us here to do.

Interestingly enough, there is also a very obscure rule in the Senate called rule XXXI. If, at the end of the year, there are still nominations that are pending out there, those nominations have to be returned to the White House, and they have to start all over again. The Senate can agree by unanimous consent to say that we all understand these are all in process and, by unanimous consent, just agree to those things to be able to hold them on the calendar.

Let me give an example. Under President Bill Clinton, at the end of his first

year, only 13 of his nominations were sent back to the White House. After the end of George W. Bush's first term, only two nominations were returned back to the White House. After President Obama's first term, only eight were sent back to the White House. After President Trump's first term, 90 were sent back—Bill Clinton, 13; George Bush, 2; President Obama, 8; President Trump, 90.

I don't think my Democratic colleagues understand that they are continuing to amp up the volume of obstruction, saying: Someone has obstructed us in the past, so we are going to do it 10 times to you. All that leads to is that the next time the Republicans are in the minority, we do it 10 times again, and it makes it worse.

There is a way to fix this. We should come to that mutual agreement. We should resolve the rules of the Senate.

We have to get on to the budget. We have to get on to the Children's Health Insurance Program. We have to get on to intelligence issues. We have to get on to immigration. We have to get on to infrastructure. We have to get on to a lot of other things, but we are stuck debating about people, and that should be an easy one for us.

I am recommending to this body what my folks used to say to me: What is good for the goose should be good for the gander. If it was a great rule when Democrats were in the majority, it should be a great rule when Republicans are in the majority.

Let's take clean, fair rules and apply them to everyone. Let's move on with the nomination process. Let's get back to the business of doing legislation so we can get this resolved.

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

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

OFFSHORE DRILLING

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss the Trump administration's recent proposal to expand offshore drilling to more than 90 percent of U.S. waters. This handout to Big Oil executives puts short-term corporate profits ahead of the long-term health and livelihood of America's coastal families, and it ignores the growing threat posed by climate change.

This administration is too weak-kneed to stand up for American families, too weak-kneed to say "enough is enough" when Big Oil executives demand more, and Big Oil executives keep demanding more because they don't like being told that any area is off limits.

Big Oil didn't like being told that the extraordinary natural, cultural, and historical value of Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante made them

off limits for fossil fuel development. So President Trump opened up much of the previously protected land for future drilling and mining.

Big Oil didn't like being told that the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, one of America's last untouched expanses of wilderness, was off limits. So President Trump and this Republican Congress included a provision in the Republican tax bill to allow drilling for the first time in this pristine reserve.

Big oil didn't like being told that our coasts, which provide the homes and livelihoods for millions of Americans, are off limits. So the Trump administration, faithful as ever to whatever Big Oil wants, issued a proposed offshore drilling plan that would allow drilling in more than 90 percent of America's coastal waters. In doing so, the Trump administration is threatening the Atlantic coast with unwanted oil drilling for the first time in more than 30 years, threatening to introduce new drilling rigs to the Pacific coast for the first time in 30 years, threatening the eastern Gulf of Mexico with drilling for the first time in more than 10 years, and threatening to illegally reopen portions of the Arctic for drilling in areas that were permanently protected in 2016.

Our coasts are working waterfronts supporting hard-working families. This unprecedented expansion of offshore drilling endangers hundreds of thousands of jobs that depend on the health of our oceans. In Massachusetts, there is shipping in and out of Boston, fishing from Gloucester to New Bedford, and tourism and small businesses on the Cape and the Islands. The ocean is our lifeline, as it is for so many coastal States and towns around the country.

The multibillion-dollar coastal economy has been a key part of the American economy since our Nation's founding. Our coastal communities are united in opposition to an expansion of offshore drilling. They understand the risks that Big Oil imposes on them.

Our coastal communities remember when the BP-Deepwater Horizon oil spill occurred in 2010. One offshore oil well blew and caused the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig to explode, and what was the consequence? It killed 11 workers, injured 17 more, and unleashed one of the worst environmental disasters in human history. Nearly 5 million barrels of oil gushed into the ocean, contaminating more than 1,300 miles of coastline and nearly 70,000 square miles of surface water. Millions of birds and marine animals died from exposure to the oil and other toxic chemicals. The gulf fishing industry lost thousands of jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue, and the spill devastated the gulf's coastal tourism economy. The environmental and economic devastation hit working families and small businesses across the entire region.

A commission formed to investigate the BP oil spill concluded that there were "such systematic failures in risk

management that they place in doubt the safety culture of the entire [offshore drilling] industry.” The Federal Government vowed to crack down on the offshore oil industry that had been cutting corners at the expense of worker safety and environmental safety. The Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement studied ways to improve oil rig inspections and issued new rules of the road to try to prioritize safety.

But President Trump has abandoned that safety-first approach. He ignores the lessons of the BP oil spill. Instead, he listens to his Big Oil friends. Last month, the administration began rescinding key safety regulations designed to protect our coastlines from another BP spill disaster. I just want to give one example.

In 2016 the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement implemented new rules to require independent, third-party certification of safety devices on oil rigs. It is not a bad idea to get someone independent to take a look at oil rigs before people put their lives at risk and hundreds of thousands of people could lose their livelihoods if an accident occurred—not a bad idea. But the Trump administration has said that this commonsense approach is an “unnecessary . . . burden” on industry. Just to be clear, this so-called burden would amount to less than a penny on the dollar for an industry that already enjoys tens of billions of dollars in taxpayer subsidies. That is less than a penny on the dollar to protect the livelihoods and maybe the lives of people living on our coasts.

The Trump administration’s insistence on padding the pockets of Big Oil while small coastal towns are left carrying all the risk is a perversion of how government is supposed to work, but this is what happens when the Republican Senate allows leadership positions at the Department of the Interior to be filled with industry insiders who reward their past—and, in many cases, their future—employers, rather than serving the American people.

American families deserve forward-looking leadership that builds for the future and ensures that America will lead in the necessary fight against climate change, but President Trump thinks leadership is handing over management of our public resources to the Big Oil executives who are looking to stuff their pockets while they can, and he chooses to ignore the writing on the wall.

Our planet is getting hotter, and 16 of the last 17 years were the hottest on record. Our seas are rising at an alarming rate. Our coasts are threatened by furious storms that can sweep away homes and devastate even our largest cities. Many communities are just one bad storm away from complete devastation. Our naval bases are under attack, not by enemy ships but by rising seas. Our food supplies and our forests are threatened by an endless barrage of droughts and wildfires.

The effects of man-made climate change are all around us, and things will only continue to get worse at an accelerating pace if we don’t do something about it. Will addressing climate change be tough? You bet it will. We will need to retool, to install offshore wind turbines instead of President Trump’s offshore drilling rigs. But there is no country and no workforce in the world that is more willing and more able to tackle the challenges of climate change head-on than the United States of America. Yes, it is hard, but it is what we do. It is who we are.

The American people deserve leadership that knows the strength of the American people; leadership that believes in the innovative resolve of American workers ready to build clean energy infrastructure of the world; leadership that will deliver a clear message to the Big Oil executives, hell-bent on protecting their own short-term profits and who don’t like being told that a place is off limits; leadership that will not chain our economy to the fossil fuels of the past; leadership that does not ignore the realities of climate change; and leadership that does not put our coastal communities at further risk of another devastating oil spill. The American people deserve leadership that works for their interests, not for the interests of Big Oil.

I yield to my colleague.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

THOMASINA E. JORDAN INDIAN TRIBES OF VIRGINIA FEDERAL RECOGNITION ACT OF 2017

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I rise today on a happy occasion, to discuss a House bill, H.R. 984, the Thomasina E. Jordan Indian Tribes of Virginia Federal Recognition Act. This is a bill with a long history, and we are joined in the Chamber by the chiefs of six Virginia Tribes whose past, present, and certainly future are connected to this bill. I will speak briefly. Then, Senator WARNER will speak. Then, the matter will be called up for a voice vote. Various objections have been heard and then cleared, and so we are now ready to move forward with this bill, which passed the House in May.

This is about Virginia Tribes that were here and encountered the English when they arrived at Georgetown in 1607—the Tribes of Pocahontas and so many other wonderful Virginians. They are living, breathing, active Tribes. They have never been recognized by the Federal Government for a series of reasons.

First, they made peace too soon, in a way, and they have been punished for that. They entered into peace treaties with the English in the 1670s.

Second, many of their Tribal records were destroyed in the Civil War. Third, a State official destroyed other records during the 1920s through 1960s. The power of these Tribes having achieved

State recognition beginning many years ago—and they have never given up hope that they would be recognized by the U.S. Government, just as they have been recognized for hundreds of years by the Government of England. In fact, last spring, they went to England to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the death of Pocahontas. They were treated as sovereigns, treated with respect, and all they have asked is to be given the same treatment by the country they love.

This bill for Tribal recognition was first introduced by a Virginia Governor, then-Senator George Allen, in the 107th Congress. A House companion bill to the Senate version was passed in May, and that is the third time the House has passed this bill—first in 2007, and the second time was in 2009.

I have had many productive discussions, as has Senator WARNER, over the last months about the bill, various questions about the history. We are now in a position where all objections have been cleared, and we are ready to move ahead.

It is such a treat to be joined by the chiefs. It is such a treat to be joined by my colleague, my senior Senator. Senator WARNER has worked tremendously hard on this, as have I, from the day he was Governor. I also have to give praise to Congressman WITTMAN on the House side, who has worked very hard to get to this day.

It is a fundamental issue of respect and fairly acknowledging a historical record and a wonderful story of Tribes who are living, thriving, and surviving and are a rich part of our heritage. This is a happy day to stand upon their behalf.

With that, I wish to yield to the senior Senator.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, let me join my friend and colleague Senator KAINE. We and some of the folks who are in the Gallery today were not sure if this day would ever come. Even in the U.S. Congress and the U.S. Senate, occasionally we get things right. And, boy oh boy, this is a day where we get things right on a civil rights basis, on a moral basis, and on a fairness basis.

To our friends who are representatives of some of the six Tribes who are finally going to be granted Federal recognition, we thank you for your patience, your perseverance, and your willingness to work with us and others.

This has become an issue over the last 20-plus years. Democrats and Republicans alike in Virginia have acknowledged the fact that these six Tribes, whose history predates any European settlement in this country, whose history goes back, as Senator KAINE mentioned, where they were recognized by the United Kingdom and recognized by the British Government when they controlled our country—but through a series of circumstances, in many cases abetted by a backwards-looking government earlier in the 20th

century in Virginia that discriminated against these Native Americans in ways that were outrageous, where in many ways records that told of their proud history in our Commonwealth were destroyed after the Civil War in fires and courthouses—these Tribes have persevered.

Today, finally, they are going to be granted Federal recognition and the respect that goes with that Federal recognition, and they will be granted certain additional opportunities in terms of special education, housing grants, affordable healthcare services, and most importantly, the ability to recover important artifacts in their history.

As has been mentioned, this bill has already passed the House. ROB WITTMAN, a Republican Member, has been a champion.

Senator KAINE and I, both as Governors—in that role of Governor, one of the things that happen every day—every Thanksgiving day, these Tribes come in and, in effect, pay their taxes to the Commonwealth of Virginia. While Virginia has recognized these Tribes for some time, every year when we would have this ceremony—one of the most moving ceremonies that I know I have participated in as Governor, and I think Senator KAINE and Senator Allen, who was also a champion on this issue before us—these Tribes would come in and say: When will the U.S. Government recognize our existence, our history, and our legacy? Well, that wait is finally over.

In a moment, I am going to be asking for unanimous consent, and the long, long wait will come to an end.

As in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Indian Affairs Committee be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 984 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The clerk will report the bill by title. The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 984) to extend Federal recognition to the Chickahominy Indian Tribe, the Chickahominy Indian Tribe—Eastern Division, the Upper Mattaponi Tribe, the Rappahannock Tribe, Inc., the Monacan Indian Nation, and the Nansemond Indian Tribe.

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

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

Mr. WARNER. I know of no further debate on the measure.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

If not, the bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

The bill (H.R. 984) was passed.

Mr. WARNER. I further ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that we proceed to the 1:45 p.m. vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER), the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER), and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted “yea.”

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

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

The result was announced—yeas 96, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 9 Ex.]

YEAS—96

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

NOT VOTING—4

Alexander	Heller
Booker	McCain

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.

The majority leader.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

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

The motion was agreed to.

RAPID DNA ACT OF 2017—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I understand the Senate has received a message from the House to accompany S. 139.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. McCONNELL. I move that the Chair lay before the Senate the message to accompany S. 139 and ask for the yeas and nays on my motion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER), the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN), and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted “yea.”

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 68, nays 27, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 10 Leg.]

YEAS—68

Barrasso	Feinstein	Nelson
Bennet	Fischer	Perdue
Blumenthal	Flake	Peters
Blunt	Graham	Portman
Boozman	Grassley	Reed
Burr	Hassan	Risch
Capito	Hatch	Roberts
Cardin	Heitkamp	Rounds
Carper	Hoeven	Rubio
Casey	Inhofe	Sasse
Cassidy	Isakson	Schumer
Cochran	Johnson	Scott
Collins	Jones	Shaheen
Corker	Kaine	Shelby
Cornyn	Kennedy	Shelby
Cortez Masto	King	Stabenow
Cotton	Klobuchar	Sullivan
Crapo	Lankford	Thune
Cruz	Manchin	Tillis
Donnelly	McCaskill	Warner
Duckworth	McConnell	Whitehouse
Enzi	Murkowski	Wicker
Ernst	Murphy	Young

NAYS—27

Baldwin	Heinrich	Paul
Brown	Hirono	Sanders
Cantwell	Leahy	Schatz
Coons	Lee	Smith
Daines	Markey	Tester
Durbin	Menendez	Udall
Gardner	Merkley	Van Hollen
Gillibrand	Moran	Warren
Harris	Murray	Wyden

NOT VOTING—5

Alexander Heller Toomey
Booker McCain

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

CHANGE OF VOTE

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, on roll-call vote No. 10, I voted yea. It was my intention to vote nay. Therefore, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to change my vote since it will not affect the outcome of the vote.

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

(The foregoing tally has been changed to reflect the above order.)

RAPID DNA ACT OF 2017

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair lays before the Senate the message from the House.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Resolved, That the bill from the Senate (S. 139) entitled “An Act to implement the use of Rapid DNA instruments to inform decisions about pretrial release or detention and their conditions, to solve and prevent violent crimes and other crimes, to exonerate the innocent, to prevent DNA analysis backlogs, and for other purposes.”, do pass with an amendment.

MOTION TO CONCUR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to concur in the House amendment to S. 139.

CLOTURE MOTION

I send a cloture motion to the desk on the motion to concur.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to concur in the House amendment to S. 139, an act to implement the use of Rapid DNA instruments to inform decisions about pretrial release or detention and their conditions, to solve and prevent violent crimes and other crimes, to exonerate the innocent, to prevent DNA analysis backlogs, and for other purposes.

Mitch McConnell, James M. Inhofe, Roy Blunt, Shelley Moore Capito, Marco Rubio, Johnny Isakson, Deb Fischer, John Boozman, Thom Tillis, Richard Burr, Pat Roberts, Orrin G. Hatch, Roger F. Wicker, John Cornyn, John Hoeven, John Thune, Mike Rounds.

MOTION TO CONCUR WITH AMENDMENT NO. 1870

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to concur in the House amendment to S. 139, with a further amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. MCCONNELL] moves to concur in the House amendment to S. 139, with an amendment numbered 1870.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

At the end add the following.

“This Act shall take effect 1 day after the date of enactment.”

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask for the yeas and nays on the motion to concur with amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 1871 TO AMENDMENT NO. 1870

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I have a second-degree amendment at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. MCCONNELL] proposes an amendment numbered 1871 to amendment No. 1870.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

Strike “1 day” and insert “2 days”

MOTION TO REFER WITH AMENDMENT NO. 1872

Mr. MCCONNELL. I move to refer the House message on S. 139 to the Committee on the Judiciary with instructions to report back forthwith with an amendment numbered 1872.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. MCCONNELL] moves to refer the House message to accompany S. 139 to the Committee on the Judiciary with instructions to report back forthwith with an amendment numbered 1872.

The amendment is as follows:

At the end add the following.

“This Act shall take effect 3 days after the date of enactment.”

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask for the yeas and nays on my motion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 1873

Mr. MCCONNELL. I have an amendment to the instructions.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. MCCONNELL] proposes an amendment numbered 1873 to the instructions of the motion to refer.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

Strike “3 days” and insert “4 days”

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask for the yeas and nays on the amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 1874 TO AMENDMENT NO. 1873

Mr. MCCONNELL. I have a second-degree amendment at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. MCCONNELL] proposes an amendment numbered 1874 to amendment No. 1873.

The amendment is as follows:

Strike “4” and insert “5”

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

RUSSIA

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I take this time to share with my colleagues a report I released yesterday, which is the product of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The report is called “Putin’s Asymmetric Assault on Democracy in Russia and Europe: Implications for U.S. National Security.”

I commissioned this report to be done early in 2017. I had to make a decision on the allocation of resources, and I thought it was extremely important that the American people and the international community understand the breadth of Russia’s campaign against democratic institutions.

Yes, we saw it in 2016 in the U.S. elections, but that was only one part of a much broader design, and I recognized we needed to devote the resources at that time in order to make this report work. It is how Russia has interfered not just here in the United States but in Europe.

I want to start with the statement that this is not a partisan report. Yes, I commissioned it as the Democratic ranking member because decisions had to be made early in 2017 on the allocation of resources. I know the Presiding Officer knows, I worked very closely with Senator CORKER on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and throughout the development of this report, I have kept Senator CORKER informed.

The work of this report has relied upon the work of many Members of the Senate on both sides of the aisle. In fact, I think the Presiding Officer will recall the work we did—Democrats and Republicans—in the passing of legislation in 2017 that held Russia accountable for its maligned activities. I was proud that I had the strong cooperation and support and leadership in developing that legislation from Senator MCCAIN, Senator GRAHAM, and Senator RUBIO, who contributed greatly to the enactment of that legislation, and on the Democratic side, Senator MENENDEZ, Senator SHAHEEN, and Senator DURBIN.

This report is the accumulation of a year's work. It had professionalism and dedication and patriotism of the very talented staff at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I want to acknowledge that because I know all of us recognize that our staffs are critically important to the work we do in the Senate.

Damian Murphy was our captain on this project. He was the one who provided the leadership to make sure we had a thorough report, that we had an accurate report, and that our recommendations would be tailored to make our Nation more secure. Terrell Henry provided incredible help throughout the entire year. Laura Carey was an instrumental part of getting this done. Megan Barkley helped us with making sure all of the sources were properly cited.

I also want to acknowledge my Democratic staff leader, Jessica Lewis, who really was the one who decided early that we could get this done and encouraged me to move forward.

Lastly, this report has received considerable attention since I released it yesterday—considerable attention—because this is the first comprehensive report that has been authored that deals with Russia's maligned activities, which are global in nature. Sean Bartlett was capable of making sure this story would be heard. I thank him for his professional work in the way we were able to get this report circulated.

Following the 2016 elections, I thought it was important that we shed more light on the Russian Government's efforts to interfere in democracies beyond our own. Anyone who thinks the threat posed by Russia is limited to hacking emails or the American election in 2016 is missing the real story, and that is what this report shows.

We wanted to describe the scale and scope of this threat to make the American people aware that the Russian Government's interference in the 2016 elections are part of a pattern of behavior and warn that Russia could attack again in 2018 and 2020. The Kremlin is a learning organization, and they are constantly perfecting and improving their techniques.

This report is the first government report to lay out in detail exactly how the Russians operate. Mr. Putin employs an asymmetric arsenal that includes not just military invasions—and they do use their military—but cyber attacks, disinformation and propaganda, and support for fringe political groups. They have employed the weaponization of energy resources. They have a network of organized crime, and they have a system that is fueled by corruption.

This threat existed long before President Trump and will remain following his tenure, unless he takes steps and we take steps to address it.

Our report examines how the Russian Government has sought to interfere in 19 countries across Europe. Many les-

sons are to be learned from our allies in Europe that have shown his behavior can be deterred. While many in the executive branch understand the threat and have taken steps to address Mr. Putin's asymmetric arsenal, Presidential leadership has been absent. Never before has a U.S. President so clearly ignored such a grave and growing threat to our national security, and without Presidential leadership, the United States will remain uncoordinated in its response.

The Washington Post reported in December that the National Security Council has not had a meeting on countering malign Russian influence—more than a year after the intelligence community assessment that Russia interfered in our elections.

Mr. Putin's rise to power in 1999 was cynical and opportunistic. He capitalized on a war in Chechnya and apartment bombings in Moscow to shore up his image as a strong hand that could steady the country after the rocky 1990s.

To do so, this former KGB officer emboldened his security services to play an outsized, criminal role in running the state. Mr. Putin's regime used violence to stop those who opposed him in and outside of Russia, cheated his way through the Olympics, and, through his security services' connections with organized crime and money laundering, has emboldened cyber theft and racketeering that has real-world implications for U.S. companies and citizens.

Mr. Putin developed his techniques first at home against his own people. In Russia, he repressed independent civil society, journalists, and political opposition, while manipulating cultural and religious influences, the media and information space, and a corrupt crony capitalist system to shore up his own regime.

The tools in Mr. Putin's asymmetric arsenal are drawn from a Soviet playbook but updated with new technologies. These include propaganda and disinformation, cultivating political fringe, religious and cultural groups as influencers, and weaponizing crime and corruption as a system of governance.

In Europe, Mr. Putin's Russia has invaded countries, attempted coups, cut off countries from energy in the middle of winter, temporarily crippled governments with cyber attacks, created a whole new way to exponentially spread fake news using bots and trolls, and used dirty money as a weapon to attempt to buy candidates and political parties. The report illustrates these events in more detail in the 19 countries across Europe.

The international response to the Kremlin's arsenal has been a patchwork. Some European countries have shored up their democracies in ways the United States has yet to do, in a strategic, whole-of-government fashion. Europe's experience with Russia's meddling shows it can be deterred, and the United States must take steps to

deter Russia now, as laid out in the report's recommendations.

The report helps us to understand why Mr. Putin is doing this. He is doing this because that is all he has. Russia's economy is faltering. It has a limited military capacity. It doesn't have many friends around the world. Its economy is about 7 percent the size of the U.S. economy—ranks No. 12 in the world. It is smaller than Italy or South Korea or Canada, but we have to acknowledge he has had success with the use of these tools, with the use of these weapons.

He has accumulated, by reported sources, more than tens of billions of dollars of stolen wealth. He has a propaganda machine that has been able to make him popular at home and accomplish many of his objectives in other countries. He has slowed down Serbia's integration into the EU and Ukraine and Georgia's ability to join NATO because of Russia's troops located in its countries.

The report highlights the lessons we have learned from our Europeans. It is interesting, the Europeans understood this risk before we did and took action. The Brexit campaign in the UK, Russia was clearly engaged in it. Prime Minister May has made a resolute public statement that Russia's meddling is unacceptable and will be countered.

France looked at what happened in 2016 in the U.S. elections, and they took steps. The Macron campaign was subject to cyber attacks with emails from President Macron during the campaign. They were released shortly before the runoff election, but France was prepared, and they were able to counter that. The French Government worked with independent media and political parties to expose and blunt the dissemination of fake news.

In Germany, we saw the famous "Lisa case" that was fabricated by Russian-sponsored news outlets in order to incite the Russian-German community for an anti-migrant-type protest. The German Government bolstered democratic cyber security capabilities, particularly after the 2015 hack of the Bundestag, and the Interior Minister proposed creating a Center of Defense Against Misinformation. Germany has acted.

In the Nordic countries, the states have largely adopted a whole-of-society approach, with an emphasis on education that teaches critical thinking and media literacy. They have a curriculum in their school for their schoolchildren to be able to differentiate between what is real and what is fake in the news.

In Lithuania, the government diversified its supplies of natural gas. All the Baltic governments have worked to integrate their electricity grids to reduce dependency on Russia for energy needs.

In Spain, the Spanish Government has investigated, exposed, and cut off significant money-laundering operations by Russia-based organized crime.

So what do we do about this? Russia has this plan to compromise our democratic institutions. What do we do about it? Well, the report spells out many, many recommendations. I am proud to say that many of these recommendations have been championed by Members on both sides of the aisle.

First, we call upon Presidential leadership. We need President Trump to acknowledge the threat and establish a high-level interagency fusion cell to coordinate all elements of U.S. policy on the Russian Government's malign influence operations. The President should present to Congress a comprehensive national strategy and work to get it implemented and funded.

Second, the U.S. Government needs to support democratic institution building and values abroad. We need stronger support for these programs. The United States should provide assistance to help bolster democratic institutions in European states.

Members of the U.S. Congress should conduct hearings and use their platform to make democracy and human rights an essential part of their agenda. I am proud of the work we have done in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Working with Senator CORKER, we have highlighted human rights throughout the year, but we need to do more. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee has recommended to the full Senate that we pass legislation so we can start evaluating every country and its ability to fight corruption, patterned after the "Trafficking in Persons Report" on human trafficking. We need to get that bill enacted into law.

Third, we need to expose and freeze Kremlin-linked dirty money. We should declassify any intelligence related to Mr. Putin's personal corruption and cut off Mr. Putin and his inner circle from the international financial system. We know that the elite class in Russia does not want to hold their money in rubles; they want dollars. We have to deny them that opportunity. They also would like visas to visit the United States; they don't want to be stuck in Russia. Those sanctions have an impact, and we need to make sure they are enforced.

Fourth, we need to create a "state hybrid threat actors" designation and impose a sanctions regime. The United States should designate countries that employ malign influence operations to assault democracies as "state hybrid threat actors." Those designated would fall under a preemptive escalating sanctions regime that would be applied whenever the state uses weapons like cyber attacks to interfere with a democratic election or disrupt a country's vital infrastructure. We need to make it clear that, yes, we want relations with all countries, constructive relations, but if they are going to use these weapons against our democratic institutions, we need to be prepared to increase our sanctions against these countries.

Quite frankly, what we must understand is the importance of democracy against what Mr. Putin is trying to do.

Fifth, we have to defend the United States and Europe against foreign funding that erodes democracy. We need to pass legislation to require full disclosure of shell company owners and improve transparency for funding of political parties, campaigns, and advocacy groups. We have bipartisan legislation to do that. Let's get that passed. We know that shell companies are shielding illegal funds. Let's make sure that Russia's game plan is not funded through shell companies that are located here.

Sixth, we need U.S. leadership to build global cyber defenses and norms and to establish a rapid reaction team to defend allies under attack. We should push NATO to consider the implications of a cyber attack within the context of article V and our ability to defend each other. We should also lead an effort to establish an international treaty on the use of cyber tools in peacetime, modeled on the international arms control treaties.

Lastly, we need to hold social media companies accountable. Government should mandate transparency for funding political advertisements. This is the new way of communications. We have to catch up with technology in our laws. We require traditional advertisers to disclose all this information, but we have left social media alone because we didn't know about it when we passed these laws. We have to make sure that we have full laws on disclosure. Companies should conduct audits on possible Kremlin-supported meddling in European elections over the past several years. Companies should establish civil society advisory councils and work with civil society and government to promote media literacy.

That is just a sampling of some of the recommendations that are in this report. It is pretty comprehensive, but I think it does give us a game plan to understand that we can protect our national security, and we must.

Following the end of World War II, the United States led the world in constructing the liberal international order, underpinned by democratic institutions, shared values, and accepted norms. It protects our shared security, advances our interests, and expands our prosperity. Yet the defense of that system of institutions and democratic principles is anathema to Mr. Putin, who seeks to protect little more than his power and wealth. It is therefore up to the United States and our allies to engage in a coordinated effort to counter the Kremlin's assaults on democracy in Europe, the United States, and around the world.

In closing, we must take care to point out that there is a distinction between Mr. Putin's corrupt regime and the people of Russia, who have been some of his most frequent victims. Many Russian citizens strive for a more transparent and accountable gov-

ernment that operates under the democratic rule of law, and we hope for better relations in the future with a Russian Government that reflects these values. We applaud the courage we saw very recently from the protesters in Russia, who stood up against Mr. Putin because they want basic freedom in their country.

I remember very clearly that when we passed the Magnitsky law that holds those who violated the basic human rights, in Russia, of Sergei Magnitsky, who was just doing his job as a lawyer—that they would be denied our banking system and denied the ability to travel to this country—when that bill was enacted, it was the people who were protesting against the government who said: That law passed by the U.S. Congress was the most pro-Russian bill passed by the U.S. Congress. We stand with the people of Russia.

I am also the ranking Democrat in the U.S. Helsinki Commission. I have worked for the Helsinki Commission for a long time. The Helsinki Commission includes all the countries of Europe and the former Soviet Union, the United States, and Canada. All countries had signed on to the Helsinki Final Act. It talks about basic democratic principles, and it gives each member state the right to challenge the activities of every other member state.

We have an obligation to call out what Mr. Putin is doing because it is not only against our national security interests; it is not only hurting the people of Russia; it is against the commitments Russia made in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

The United States must work with our allies to build defenses against Mr. Putin's asymmetric arsenal and strengthen international norms and values to deter such malign behavior by Russia or any other country.

I stand ready to work with all of my colleagues to protect our national security interests and to recognize the threat that Mr. Putin poses to our democratic institutions. I look forward to a day when we can truly have a better relationship with Russia because they stop this assault on democratic institutions in Europe, the United States, or anywhere in the world.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

MY SENATE AGENDA

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, earlier this month, I announced that my current term of service would be my last. Since then, many of my colleagues have asked how I feel with my Senate tenure drawing to a close. I think many expect me to say that I feel an overwhelming sense of satisfaction and relief. Hardly. If anything, the decision to retire has imbued me with a sense of urgency that I have never felt before.

With a year left in office, I have an agenda that is as ambitious as ever,

and the ticking shot clock is a constant reminder of just how much I have left to accomplish. Just 168 legislative days remain in my Senate term, and I can assure you that those 168 days will be among the proudest and the most productive periods in all my public service.

Anyone who thought ORRIN HATCH would coast quietly into his golden years clearly doesn't know me. The stars have aligned for this year to be one of my most successful yet. So don't expect me to go gentle into that good night. Expect me to be right here on the Senate floor, early and often, pushing the most critical reforms of this Congress. Expect me to take the lead on a Finance Committee agenda that will equal in ambition our accomplishments of 2017. Expect me to be the same steady presence in this body that I have been for the last 41 years.

Above all, expect a flurry of legislative activity from my office. I have a dedicated staff. They are determined to drive this old workhorse into the ground. And I have arguably the best working relationship with this President of anyone on Capitol Hill. Add to this the advantages that accrue from a lifetime of legislative experience and bipartisan dealmaking.

The point I wish to make is simple: In legislative terms, my final year could well be the most fruitful yet, and I hope it will be.

In the months ahead, I am eager to capitalize on our tax reform victory by putting the Nation back on the path to fiscal sustainability, finding a way forward on immigration, and securing long-term funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program—a program that I helped put into law and have been very pleased with over the years. I also intend to update our intellectual property laws for the 21st century, enact key fixes to our higher education system, and fill our courts with as many qualified judges as possible. Likewise, I look forward to working with my colleagues across the aisle to improve the competitiveness of our workforce, strengthen digital privacy, and blaze new trails on medical marijuana research.

But this brief overview doesn't cover even half of my agenda for 2018, nor does it include some of the legislative surprises I plan for later this year. The virtue of being a seven-term Senator with a reservoir of good will is that you have a little bit of latitude in your final year. That is why my plan is to go big and to go bold, because unless you are Michael Jordan, you retire only once, so you might as well make the most of it.

The truth is, I put the pieces in place long ago to ensure that my final year in office would be a legislative knockout, so no one should count me out, not for a single second, and anyone who does should be reminded that I can do in just a few months what it takes most a decade to complete. Tough old birds like me don't have lameduck

years; we just dig in and get tougher. For me, 2018 is not a victory lap but a sprint to the finish, and I plan to finish strong. I look forward to working with all of you until the very end.

With that, I just want to say how much I love the Senate, how much I love my colleagues on both sides of the floor, how much I have enjoyed working with all of you over all these years and will enjoy this remaining year hopefully even more. I hope I can do some things that will be very beneficial to our country, to all of us, and that will help us all feel better about our service here and help us all strive to do better together.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASIDY). The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I want to assure the Senator from Utah, who just spoke, who is also the President pro tempore of this entire body, that he is well regarded on both sides of the aisle. I don't think any Senator has had a more distinguished or consequential career—four decades of legislating.

I want to assure the Senator that nobody thinks he is going to slow down. In fact, as he just said, he has plenty on his agenda for the next year, and we look forward to working with him during that time period.

We also wish him well on his retirement. I have talked to him a little about this. He has a wonderful family, and he has big plans for the future with some important work he wants to do in public policy through his foundation.

I have so much respect for Senator HATCH. I thank him so much for what he did most recently to help guide us through this latest tax reform and tax cut bill that actually is making a difference for the people I represent and he represents.

Mr. HATCH. If the Senator will yield, I thank the Senator so much. I am grateful for the friendship that I have with all of you but especially with him. He is one of the up-and-coming, moving, strong Senators in this body. I have tremendous respect for his work ethic, the effort he has put forth on a daily basis, the ethics that he imposes upon himself, and the logistical all around way of doing the Senate's work. I am very pleased to have him as a friend.

Mr. PORTMAN. I thank the Senator. I have to get the last word, though, because this is about the Senator.

Senator HATCH said he loves this place and he loves its Members. There is a lot of love for him in this place on both sides of the aisle, and it is well deserved and earned.

RUSSIA

Mr. President, I heard Senator CARDIN earlier speaking about the threat that Russia poses not just to us—and the meddling that has been occurring here in our elections over the years—but also the threat that they pose to other democracies around the world, particularly in Eastern Europe. I appreciate his report. I appreciate the

fact that he has worked with a number of us, including Senator MURPHY, on the other side of the aisle, to put forward legislation to try to push back against this disinformation.

In fact, we have required that the State Department increase their efforts through what is called the Global Engagement Center. I am meeting with the Deputy Secretary of State here after this speech, and I am going to speak more about that with him, but we really want to be sure that the United States is taking more aggressive action against the kind of disinformation that can destabilize democracies.

We heard some of the examples of what his report was able to uncover in terms of some of the Russian activity, particularly, again, in Europe and in Eastern Europe. This is an issue. It is a foreign policy issue that we have been, in my view, slow to respond to. It didn't start with the last Presidential election, and it will not end with this last Presidential election unless we take a more aggressive stance and step up.

So I appreciate that it has been a bipartisan effort that we should acknowledge as Americans that it is in our interests to push back against the disinformation and the propaganda and the destabilization of democracies.

TAX REFORM

Today, Mr. President, I wish to speak about some good news; that is, that here in Congress we actually did something with the tax relief and tax reform legislation that is actually creating a better economy and more hope for people.

There was news announced today, just a few minutes ago, that is in addition to the news we have heard over the last few weeks. This historic tax reform was created, we will remember, with two goals in mind. One was to cut taxes for middle-class families—so individual tax cuts. The second part of it was to make America a better place to do business. Let's ensure that there will be more jobs created here rather than elsewhere. Let's level the playing field so our workers aren't competing with one hand tied behind their back.

As I have said through the process and as we developed this bill, we had a bipartisan agreement that our Tax Code was broken, but we couldn't seem to come up with an agreement of how to fix it. Some Democrats said: Well, that is great that you guys have done this bill, but it is not going to help. I said at the time: The proof will be what happens, what happens to jobs, what happens to wages, what happens to the economy in general, and what happens to your paycheck.

I am here to announce today that the results have been pretty darn impressive, and they have been across the board—all of those things I talked about. We have already seen as a result of this tax legislation that America has become a better place to do business. All over the country there are companies and businesses, small and large,

that have stepped forward to talk about that. I now have a list of 150 businesses—and I am sure there are many, many more—that have decided to do something. Either they announced a pay increase, a bonus, an increased 401(k) contribution, an increased pension contribution, or maybe a new investment in equipment and in technology to make workers more competitive. All of this is specifically because of the tax relief and reform bill. That is what is happening.

For those who haven't followed it, even today another company, Walmart—the largest employer in my State—announced that they are indeed going to increase pay and provide bonuses to over 1 million workers. Some companies have actually announced a combination of things, not just a pay increase but maybe a pay increase as well as an increased contribution to a 401(K) or an increased contribution to a charity.

So I think we are already seeing the direct effects—the direct and very positive beneficial effects—of this tax reform legislation, as many have hoped that we would see, given the fact that we wrote it to create these incentives for more jobs and better jobs.

But today we are going to begin to see the direct effects of the other part of the bill; that is, the tax relief directly to individuals. The IRS just announced about an hour ago that they are publishing updates to the tax withholding tables for employers. Now, what does this mean? This means that Uncle Sam is going to take a little less of your paycheck, and you are going to see it on your paycheck. So the withholding—the amount that is withheld from your paycheck with taxes—is going to be changed. The Treasury Department says that for 90 percent of Americans—90 percent—there will be a change in withholding that will be positive for them. In other words, they will have less money coming out of their paycheck.

Most people whom I represent in my home State of Ohio live paycheck to paycheck. This is really important. We talked earlier about how much this is going to be: \$2,000 a family on average. That is the median income for a family in Ohio. Whatever the amount is, this is significant, and it is something that people are going to be pretty surprised about because so many people have misrepresented what this legislation is about. They are now seeing that it is about jobs, it is about wages, it is about bonuses, and so on. But they are also going to see in their own paycheck that it is about more take-home pay. It is about having a little healthier family budget.

So, again, as we went through this process, when we would have these debates I would say: I encourage people to look online, to look at the professionals, to look at a tax calculator. I said: The proof is in your paycheck. I think the proof will be in their paychecks—more hard-earned money stay-

ing in their pocket rather than going to Washington is something that my constituents will like, particularly if we see this economy start to pick up because of this tax reform bill, which, by the way, will result in a stronger economy.

Therefore, there will be more revenue through growth. So the Federal Government will have more revenue coming in. Every 1-percent increase in GDP—a 1-percent increase in growth in this country—means about \$2.7 trillion in increased revenue coming into the Federal coffers. So that is more revenue coming in, not from a tax increase but from growth. That is the kind of revenue we want to have to be able to deal with many issues we face on the fiscal side, including our large deficits and debt, and that we will also begin to see as we see a better economy grow and develop because of this tax reform legislation. That is my strong belief and, again, I think the evidence is pretty clear that we are headed that way.

I want to commend the IRS for moving so quickly because this is pretty quick for us to turn it around. We just passed the legislation at the end of the year. It became effective on January 1. Here we are on January 11, and we are already seeing them changing the withholding that is going to go to the employers so that employers will withhold less from people's paychecks.

I also want to personally commend the Treasury Secretary, Steven Mnuchin, because I know he has a passion to make sure that our hard-working taxpayers get this tax relief as soon as possible. My sense is that he is the one who has promoted our moving quickly on this, in a professional and careful way so that the withholding tables are accurate but ensuring that we do allow people to begin to have a little more in their paychecks to be able to help make ends meet. Again, with most people I represent living paycheck to paycheck this is a big deal. Steve Mnuchin has been, I think, essential to getting this done as quickly as it has been done, as he was essential in the tax reform legislation, along with Gary Cohn of the White House, and others.

So this law is going to help middle-class families in three main ways.

First, it cuts taxes across the board. As I noted, the IRS announcement means that about 90 percent of taxpayers will see more money in their paychecks. They do this in a number of ways in the tax reform legislation, and I am talking about the reform notice here. It is Notice 1036. For those who want to go online and look at it, just go on the IRS website, irs.gov, and you can see it, the new withholding tables. They lay all of this out. Depending on how much your paycheck is, whether you are paid weekly, biweekly, semi-monthly, or monthly, you see what your benefits are going to be. But it happens because there is a doubling of the standard deduction, and most people already take the standard deduc-

tion in my State of Ohio. Now more people will take it because there is a doubling and essentially a zero tax bracket. So it goes from about \$12,000 a family to about \$24,000 a family.

It also has a lowering of the rate of tax. So your tax rate is going to be lower relative to what it was before this.

Also, if you have kids, you get a doubling of the child tax credit, including part of that being an increase in the refundability of that if you don't have income tax liability. But if you still have expenses, if you still have payroll taxes, you get your benefit there.

So these are the kinds of things that, combined, end up with this notice going out saying: You are going to have a little more in your paycheck.

Second, the result of these tax cuts is going to take about 3 million Americans off the tax rolls altogether. I say "about" because the Joint Committee on Taxation doesn't have the final number yet but they have told me that it is at least 3 million Americans who now pay income taxes who will no longer have income tax liability. Now, they may have payroll tax liabilities, and they may have State and local taxes, but the point is that this was about Federal income reform and relief, and they are going to be out from under the IRS and again be able to help make ends meet. That is as a result of this legislation. I said earlier that about \$2,000 per family is the average tax savings for a median family income in Ohio, \$2,000 a year in tax relief is about the average.

This is important because as expenses have gone up over the last couple of decades—particularly, healthcare expenses in the last decade—wages have not. So wages have been relatively flat. In fact, on average, if you take inflation into account, they have been flat over the last couple of decades. We are beginning to see some increase in wages now. This is terrific, but with wages being flat and expenses up, people have had a real squeeze, and that middle-class squeeze is real in my home State. So this is extra money that families—many people living paycheck to paycheck—can use for expenses like healthcare, maybe make a car payment, save for retirement, or maybe help their kids.

The second goal of this tax reform, boosting the American economy, is also beginning to happen, as I said earlier. When the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act became law, immediately we saw a number of companies and businesses, small and large, around the country say: We are going to do something about this. I remember being home over the holidays and, actually, the day after Christmas, December 26, I was talking with friends, and a guy who owns a small manufacturing business, the brother of a friend of mine, said: Would you be willing to come out to our little company to talk about the tax bill?

I said: Sure, if we can figure it out schedulewise.

He said: Because I want to give my employees a bonus. I am looking at this tax bill, how it is going to affect our little business, and what it is going to do for us to be able to invest more in the company, and I want to give my employees a \$1,000 bonus—everybody, 137 employees—and I also want to do something in terms of investing in my equipment because I want to make my people more competitive.

This is a small manufacturer in Cincinnati, OH, that makes a high-quality product, a precision product, and he wants to make sure that his people have the best equipment to be competitive. In his case, he has competition from overseas, as do a lot of American businesses, either directly or indirectly these days in an increasingly global economy, and he wants to be sure he is competitive. So I went there.

I went to the company, Sheffer Corporation, and I had the opportunity to talk about the tax reform bill and what it does across the board. He made the announcement, and I can tell you that people were very happy because these are folks who work hard and play by the rules. They aren't looking for any kind of a handout, but what they do want is to be able to know that if they work hard and do the right thing, they will be able to see a little better future for themselves and their kids and their grandkids and not have that middle-class squeeze we talked about, where wages are flat and expenses are up.

When the economy is not growing at a fast rate, which we have seen over the last decade, it is really a challenge. When we have an economy growing at 2 percent or less, it is tough to see that kind of open opportunity. Now, with this tax reform bill, I think we have a much better chance of seeing that. In fact, looking at some of the projections for next year, it looks like most people think the economy is going to grow at better than 2 percent—maybe 3 percent or maybe a little higher. We don't know. The point is that people are going to have more hope and opportunity.

It is not just Sheffer, though. In my hometown of Cincinnati, the Fifth Third Bank announced a companywide wage increase. So wages are going to go up for entry-level jobs and push all wages, as well as bonuses, for 13,000 employees in Cincinnati.

Across the country we have seen this. Tomorrow I will be at a plant in Cleveland, OH, that is putting more money into their pension plan. I think it is going to be about \$15 million into a pension plan, which isn't in terrible shape, but it could be a lot healthier. That is going to help those employees directly.

Last Friday I was at a plant in Columbus, OH, a small manufacturer, Wolf Metals. They do an awesome job there competing with people all around the globe, and they are going to make more investments in equipment. In fact, I like this comparison to the tax bill because one of the pieces of equip-

ment—a \$1 million piece of equipment they are going to replace with the tax bill savings—is 32 years old. The Tax Code that we reformed was 31 years old. So it is time, don't you think, every few decades to actually reform our Tax Code, to bring it up to speed and make it more competitive to give our workers the edge, just as it is time to replace that machine to give his employees, what they need to compete globally.

Nationwide Insurance in Columbus, OH, is going to reinvest in their workers. Western & Southern Financial Group, Boeing, Comcast, and AT&T are some of the big companies we have heard about. They have all announced increased investments in their workers and new investments in their operations as a result of this law.

With regard to Walmart, they employ about 1.5 million Americans now. As I said, it is the largest employer in Ohio, with over 50,000 employees. They are going to raise wages, provide bonuses, and expand benefits for the workers as a result of this tax reform legislation.

So these are the results. This isn't a hypothetical. This is not something we are just saying might happen; it is something that is actually happening.

I think every single American is going to see a benefit from this because a stronger economy helps everyone. The 90 percent of people who see their withholdings change so that they have more tax relief are obviously going to see it. The people who work in the businesses we have talked are going to see it. But all of us benefit.

President John F. Kennedy once said something I think makes a lot of sense. He talked about a rising tide. He said, "A rising tide lifts all . . . [ships]." In other words, it helps to have a growing economy.

These results are going to help with regard to our competitiveness too. Right now, we have a situation where, because of our Tax Code, jobs and investments are going overseas. Now, we may not hear as much about this, but what we are going to see is fewer foreign companies buying U.S. companies and, therefore, less investment in jobs going overseas.

In 2016, the last year for which we have numbers, three times as many American companies were bought by foreign companies as the other way around. Ernst & Young has done a study saying that over the past 13 years, 4,700 American companies were purchased by a foreign company that otherwise would still be American if we had in place this tax bill that we have now.

Part of the result of this tax reform and tax cut legislation we are talking about today is obvious. We will see better jobs, higher wages, more investment in companies, more investment in retirement—all the things we all want to see, Republican and Democrat alike. Part of it is the tax cuts. Today, with the IRS announcement, people will see this in their paychecks. If not

this next pay period, they will see it before February 15 because that is what the Treasury Department is requiring companies to do. So it is coming soon.

The other part we may not see, but is very real, is that the decline we have seen in American competitiveness—the result being that jobs and investment go overseas—is going to start to reverse, and it is none too soon. We needed to do this years ago. Many of us have been talking about it for years.

Finally, we are putting American workers in a position where they can compete and they can win. Isn't that what it is all about? I don't want these 4,700 companies going overseas. I don't want three times as many American companies bought by foreign companies instead of the other way around. We don't want that. What we want is people to say: I am going to invest in America and American workers.

I believe we have so many advantages in this country, and we are so blessed to be Americans. We have great universities. We have the opportunity here, through our workforce, to be as productive as anybody in the world. But when we have a tax code that is holding us back, it is unfair. It is our responsibility as Members of Congress to fix it, and that is what we have done. We should have done this sooner, but now that we have done it, I think we will see continued good results, as we have talked about today. We are going to see the opportunity for more investments in American workers, in American jobs, in American families, and in American businesses, and that investment will pay off for all of us.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. PERDUE. Mr. President, today I was honored to be invited to the White House and included in a small meeting with President Trump, and it was very clear that I was invited to the White House to stand firm with President Trump today. We talked about immigration, and today I was proud to stand with our President.

We have been crystal clear. Chain migration must end, period. Any solution to our current immigration crisis that the U.S. Senate will consider must include ending chain migration. Before I talk about the details of what chain migration is, I want to put it in perspective.

Our immigration crisis today has been longstanding. We had a law written in 1965 and other changes in 1986, but it has really not been since 1991 that there has been any meaningful immigration change.

Three times in the last 11 years, well-intended people in this body and in the House have done a yeoman's job of trying to solve the comprehensive problem of immigration in the United States—without success. Here we are, again, right now, facing a deadline that the President has put on, and rightfully so. We have a sense of urgency.

The President has done a couple of things. He has defined the scope of the problem, and he has defined a sense of urgency for the people in Congress.

The legal immigration system right now is broken, but to deal with that, we have to deal with our entire immigration system in pieces. The reason I believe most past efforts have failed is that they tried to do a comprehensive solution.

Today, we are breaking it into three areas. One is our legal immigration system, and the next step might be our temporary work visas. Today, we bring in about 1.1 million legal immigrants a year, and I will talk about how that relates historically. But we issue about 2.2 million temporary work visas a year. Then the third issue is, of course, the people who are in the United States illegally.

President Trump had a meeting 2 days ago at the White House. In that meeting, he had Democrats, Republicans, Members of the House, and Members of this body, the Senate, and he drove consensus in that meeting.

It was very interesting that he had the media in there for almost 60 minutes for an open dialogue, and we heard from all people in that room about their position on these topics. I thought it was very interesting that the President had the courage to put this issue in front of the American people and create an air of transparency that we have not had on this issue in decades. In that meeting, he drove two conclusions: one, a scope of the problem and, two, a sense of urgency.

The scope is very simply defined as this: We have to address the DACA situation. The President has given Congress the date of March 5 to come up with a solution for these individuals who are in the country illegally—but not of their doing.

The second issue is border security. We know that border security is a national security issue as much as it is an immigration issue. The good news is that we know that illegal crossings of our southern border are down dramatically this year just because of a couple of reasons. One is the enforcement of current law, and the second is an understanding around the world that we are going to deal with this issue.

The third piece of the scope is chain migration. Any solution to the DACA situation or the legal immigration situation must include addressing the chain migration issue.

Then the last is this archaic diversity visa lottery we have in the United States that was related to at least one of the terrorist attacks, and chain migration was involved in both of the terrorist attacks we have recently experienced here in the United States.

With regard to DACA, the first item on the scope is that we know we have a March 5 deadline. There is a growing consensus in this body of how to deal with that, and there is great latitude on the part of Republicans in this body to deal with that in a way, with our

Democratic partners here, to get a consensus bill that solves this once and for all.

The second is border security. Here, with the President's leadership and in these recent meetings with Democrats and Members of the House, there is a growing consensus that we can deal with the national security issues related to our southern border. We don't need a 2,000-mile wall, as even the President of the United States has said just this week. But there are things we need to do, and we need to do them quickly.

The President today said that his goal is to get this done this year. Coming from the real world, I know that is possible. This President, who comes from the real world and is an outsider to this community here in Washington, knows that is possible, and I think he is going to hold us accountable to that.

The third area I mentioned before is chain migration. I will say more about that in a minute.

The fourth is the diversity lottery. This diversity lottery has not served us well. It is not the number; it is the way it is being handled. We know there is fraud, and we know this is a loophole terrorists are now using to put people in their chain inside the United States.

There is a growing consensus on these four items of this scope that the President has defined, and we had a consensus in that room 2 days ago in the White House. There is consensus that we can get to a solution within the timeframe here, but let me be very clear. Any deal—whether it is in business, sports, or certainly in politics—has to have some symmetry. Therefore, any solution for the DACA situation must include a solution for our chain migration crisis.

We must continue working with the President. He is holding us accountable. He is moving at a business pace, but to do that, we really have to talk about chain migration. I understand there are other areas that we have to talk about, as well, but there is a lot of disinformation about what it really is.

Chain migration is nothing more than a law put in place in 1965 to allow legal permanent residents and U.S. citizens to sponsor people for U.S. citizenship. It was put in place in 1965. It has been updated a little bit. But today, a legal permanent resident—for the most part, this is someone who has come in qualified in our legal immigration system, who goes through a 5-year waiting period, who eventually can apply for U.S. citizenship. While they are a legal permanent resident, almost immediately they can sponsor spouses, minor children, and unmarried adult children. That is current law.

Once they become a citizen—and this is true of any U.S. citizen, whether they were a recent immigrant or were born here; a U.S. citizen can sponsor their parents, their spouses, minor children, unmarried adult children, married adult children, and siblings.

The issue around this is pretty simple. We have a chart here which shows

that in 1965, when this law was put in place, approximately 300,000 U.S. citizens were brought into the United States in that year under this system. Last year, we had, roughly, about 1.1 million. We had a high of somewhere close to 1.3 million. But we can see, this is a geometric progression that increases unbounded. It is not really the number here, but it is the balance that we have lost.

What happens, and the criticism I have as a business guy looking at this, is that the individuals who determine who future immigrants are going to be are current and recent immigrants.

We don't have many guidelines. We have a country cap system which says that most countries have a percentage of the total they have to have, and they can't exceed that. But there is no real cap here, such that if all these numbers were maximized, then over time you would see this number go up geometrically.

We have a second chart that shows this and demonstrates that over a very short period of time, the numbers can increase dramatically, as we have seen in the last 40 or so years.

There have been studies on this. Princeton has a study which says that right now, based on recent history, any immigrant who comes in sponsors somewhere around 3.5 future immigrants within a short period of time. We don't know what the 3.5 immigrants do when they get sponsored and become citizens or legal permanent residents, but if you extrapolate this out—let's say we start with 2 million as a starting point. They become citizens and they sponsor—let's just say the number is 3. In the first iteration, now we have 6 million people sponsored by the original 2 million; then the second iteration goes from 6 to 18; and in the fourth iteration we are at 54 million people. So all of a sudden, as you can see, there is no limit here, other than the country caps, and the country caps do not limit the total number. They limit the mix.

What is wrong with this system? The problem, as I said just now, is that future immigrants are determined by current immigrants without any regard to their ability to participate in the system.

The second one is that because you can bring parents in, immigrants who come in under this system and become U.S. citizens can bring their parents in, and all of a sudden, now we have an aged population coming in—not a younger population—and they then draw social services on an already bankrupt system.

Chain migration is not based on skill or the ability to participate in the current economic situation in the United States. Last year, we brought in 1.1 million immigrants. Of that, 140,000 were immigrants who were related to the worker; 70,000 were the workers, and the other 70,000 were their immediate family. So we can see that over 950,000 people were derivative iterations of what I am talking about.

The third thing is that if chain migration is not stopped, it continues to incentivize future illegal immigration because of what you can do once you get here.

Chain migration is another problem with the DACA situation because if you permit a pathway to some sort of legalized situation in the United States for the DACA population, you end up with a situation where those people who are then legalized can sponsor their parents. The problem with that is, the DACA population is not violating fair law, but their parents have.

The last issue I will bring up is, the national security issues are profound. We have seen two national security incidents just this past year related to chain migration and the diversity visa lottery. There is more than enough evidence to show this has to be addressed.

Again, any symmetric deal on immigration has to include, I believe, the four points the President talked about the other day. We have to deal with the DACA situation. We have to deal with our border security, and that means building a wall. We have to deal with the chain migration issues, and we have to deal with this diversity visa lottery. The President demands it. The American people demand it. Today, as a matter of fact, over 80 percent of America believes we need to deal with the DACA situation. Likewise, 72 percent of people in America believe the immigration law should be the worker, the spouse, and their immediate minor children only—72 percent. I can't think of another issue that has come before this body where we had those sorts of agreements in the American population.

The President wants results. He has charged leadership in this body and the House and those of us who have been involved in this for some time to get to it. There is a March 5 deadline looming. Some people say there is a January 19 date that has to do with funding the government. I personally believe the two have nothing to do with each other, but we want a sense of urgency. The President has demanded it. We need it.

We know there are going to be other steps. This is not the last step to this problem. We know we have to deal with how we bring people to the United States. We need a balance. Of course, we want to continue to be the open arms of the world today in terms of welcoming people to our shores. Just look at what is written on the Statue of Liberty. Who can argue with that? At the same time, we have to have a balance. Right now, we don't bring in people who are contributing to the economy, for the most part, and we are eliminating—we are not bringing in people who can contribute. All we are asking for is a dialogue to bring balance back to that system.

I am excited to be a part of this dialogue because I believe we have a unique, historic opportunity with people on the other side and people on this

side who generally have hearts that are not that dissimilar with regard to how to deal with the DACA population, how to deal with the Dreamers population, how to deal with future immigrant populations that are coming to the United States. We can have those debates, and we are having them now. I welcome input from all points. I am anxious to get to the bottom line of this.

I will close with this. It is exciting to have leadership from the executive branch on this issue that has put the responsibility back on this body to come up with something that will not allow us to be back here in the next 3, 5, or 20 years dealing with this same problem. We have a historic opportunity. It is time to get to it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, I have been consistently voting against cloture motions to proceed to debate on judicial nominations, and I would like to take this opportunity to explain why. The Senate has a constitutional obligation to provide advice and consent on judicial nominees, and I take this obligation very seriously.

The American people depend on the Senate to fully consider and vet each judicial nominee because throughout the course of their lifetime appointment, judges will issue rulings and opinions that touch each of our lives. The process of nominating, considering, and confirming judges should be a deliberate one. Its purpose should not be to confirm as many judges as quickly as possible. Senators should be able to provide input on who should sit on the Federal bench; Senators should have an adequate opportunity to hear from third-party experts about the records and qualifications of each nominee; and Senators should have enough time to question and examine a nominee during a confirmation hearing.

Insisting on a deliberate and comprehensive process is not, as some of my Republican colleagues might argue, an effort to deny the President his prerogative to nominate judges to lifetime appointments to the Federal bench. Instead, this process is essential in determining whether each nominee is qualified for the job and can separate their personal ideology from the decisions he or she renders. For a lifetime appointment to the Federal bench, this shouldn't be too much to ask.

Over the past year, we have observed a number of concerning issues in the nomination and confirmation process for Federal judges that need to be corrected. The President has essentially outsourced the judicial selection process to two organizations with strong, ideologically driven agendas—the Federalist Society and the Heritage Foundation.

The Federalist Society, for example, describes itself as “a group of libertar-

ians and conservatives dedicated to reforming the legal order.” This is a group that has supported legal efforts to undermine environmental protection, erode the constitutional right to choose, and blur the lines between church and State.

The Heritage Foundation describes its mission as one to “promote conservative public policies.” Over the past few years alone, this organization, this group, has fought to undermine the Affordable Care Act, oppose LGBTQ rights, and erode the ability of Federal agencies to issue lifesaving regulations. It is not unreasonable to assume that these organizations, through their close association with the White House, expect their ideologically driven agendas to be reflected in the nominees they recommend.

While I concur with Justice Rehnquist's assertion that no judge joins a court *tabula rasa*, or as a blank slate, we should have a baseline expectation that lifetime appointees should be able to render justice free from their own personal ideologies. At the same time as the Trump administration relies more heavily on the Federalist Society and Heritage Foundation to select its judicial nominees, it is devaluing the work done by the American Bar Association. The ABA has reviewed and vetted judicial nominees in a non-partisan manner for over 60 years. With the exception of George W. Bush and now Donald Trump, Presidents in both parties have consulted with the ABA prior to officially nominating to the bench.

President Obama, for example, provided a great demonstration for how this process should work. Working closely with the ABA, President Obama routinely submitted potential candidates for scrutiny prior to their formal nomination. After conducting their independent, nonpartisan reviews, the ABA issued “not qualified” ratings for 14 candidates who had been proposed by President Obama. President Obama followed the ABA's recommendation and did not formally nominate any candidates rated “not qualified.”

Under President Trump, on the other hand, we no longer wait for the ABA to complete its assessment of nominees prior to a nomination hearing itself, much less before the nomination. We no longer have an opportunity to review the ABA's report and, in many cases, do not have the chance to question an ABA representative at a nomination hearing about its review of the nominee.

We have seen the serious consequences of this change in practice in two high-profile nominations this year.

Despite having never tried a case, President Trump nominated Brett Talley to serve the District Court for the Middle District of Alabama. Mr. Talley was nominated, given a hearing, and listed for a Judiciary Committee vote before the ABA could even finish its evaluation. Given his complete lack of qualifications for the job, it wasn't

surprising that the ABA unanimously rated him “not qualified.” Because he was rushed through the nomination process, we only learned later that Mr. Talley failed to disclose that his wife works in the White House Counsel’s office. After two Republicans on the committee—Senator GRASSLEY and Senator KENNEDY—expressed their opposition to Mr. Talley, he, fortunately, withdrew from consideration.

We were not so lucky with Steven Grasz, who was recently confirmed to the Eighth Circuit. Mr. Grasz was nominated and scheduled for a Judiciary Committee hearing before the ABA could complete its review. By the time the ABA finished its exhaustive evaluation, during which it found him to be not qualified, Mr. Grasz was scheduled to appear before the Judiciary Committee in less than 48 hours. This was not nearly enough time to adequately address and assess the ABA’s conclusion that Mr. Grasz would not be able to serve as a judge without the undue influence of his personal beliefs.

Courts are supposed to protect the rights of minorities, and it is troubling to reflect on the ABA’s conclusion that Mr. Grasz would be unable to divorce his positions on issues like reproductive and LGBTQ rights from the cases he will hear on the Eighth Circuit. Circuit court judges are only one step away from the U.S. Supreme Court and deserve to be scrutinized closely in the Judiciary Committee. Unfortunately, last year, the Judiciary Committee overrode the objections of the minority to hold four nomination hearings with more than one circuit judge nominee considered simultaneously.

To put this in some historical context, the Judiciary Committee held four such hearings in the entire 8 years Barack Obama was President, and it held each of these hearings with the consent of the Republican minority on the committee. During hearings on circuit and district court nominees, each committee member generally has only 5 minutes to question nominees—many of whom are highly controversial and deserve maximum scrutiny. Five minutes, which includes the time the nominee takes to respond, is not nearly enough time to engage in meaningful dialogue about a nominee’s judicial philosophy or to examine controversial cases a nominee may have decided in the past.

The American people deserve much more as we consider lifetime appointments to the Federal bench. I am also concerned about the erosion of the blue-slip process, which has traditionally been a collaborative mechanism to enable Senators to confer with the White House on nominees from their States. Although there have been exceptions over the years, Presidents and Senate majorities of both parties have both respected the blue-slip process.

In 2009, the Democrats controlled the White House and had a filibuster-proof majority in the Senate. Every Senate Republican signed a letter to President

Obama urging him to respect the blue-slip process. I would like to read a passage from that letter for emphasis.

Regretfully, if we are not consulted on, and approve of, a nominee from our states, the Republican Conference will be unable to support moving forward on that nominee.

Despite press reports that the Chairman of the Judiciary Committee now may be considering changing the Committee’s practice of observing senatorial courtesy, we, as a Conference, expect it to be observed evenhandedly and regardless of party affiliation. And we will act to preserve this principle and the rights of our colleagues if it is not.

Because of the profound impact that lifetime federal judges can have in our society, the founders made their appointment a shared constitutional responsibility.

This is the Republican conference asking the Democratic majority, the Democratic President, and the chair of the Judiciary Committee to observe the blue-slip process.

President Obama, and the Democratic majority at that time, upheld the blue-slip process without exception. Last year, the Judiciary Committee held a nomination hearing for David Stras to serve on the Eighth Circuit despite his not receiving two positive blue-slips from his home State Senators. This is the first time since the early years of the George W. Bush administration that the Judiciary Committee has held a hearing for a nominee when a home State Senator has not returned a blue slip. If the Senate proceeds to vote on and confirm Mr. Stras, it will be the first time since 1989 and only the third time in the last 100 years that a judicial nominee will be confirmed without having two positive blue slips.

I, certainly, take the chairman at his word that this was a onetime exception to the blue-slip process, but I will hold him and the President to the same standard they demanded from President Obama in 2009.

I will continue to rigorously defend the Senate’s constitutional obligation to provide advice and consent on lifetime appointees to the Federal bench. Until we return to a normal process through which we can provide this kind of advice and consent, I will continue to oppose invoking cloture on any judicial nominee, and I encourage my colleagues to join me in this position.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

TRIBUTE TO JEFF COOK

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, every week, I try to come down to the floor and talk a little bit about my State and do a little bit of bragging in what we call our “Alaskan of the Week” series. Now, there is a lot to talk about with regard to Alaska. We would love for the people in the Gallery and the people who are watching to come out and visit our great State. It will be the trip of a lifetime. The scenery, of course, is gorgeous, and the mountains are rugged, but it is really the people who make my State so special—rugged, self-sufficient, kind, and very generous

people all across an area that is over two and one-half times the size of Texas.

I apologize to my Texas colleagues, as they get a little upset when I talk about that, but it is true.

Every week, we have been recognizing a group or a person who has worked to make Alaska a stronger place, a stronger community—a State that, I think, is the best State in our great Nation. I call these individuals our Alaskans of the Week.

Today, I take all who are watching to Alaska’s interior, to a town called Fairbanks, AK, where about 32,000 of my fellow Alaskans live. It is a beautiful, wonderful place. Fairbanks is hot in the summer. My wife and I were married there many years ago. It was over 90 degrees when we got married in August, but it is really cold in the winter. We spent January 1, 2000—the millennium celebration—in Fairbanks with our kids and our family. It was 50 below zero without the windchill—cold. It is a place I love, where my wife was born and raised, where we lived, where my in-laws still live, and the place Jeff Cook, our Alaskan of the Week, calls home.

Jeff has been in Fairbanks his whole life. His parents moved to Fairbanks in 1938. He went to college in Oregon, and his wife Sue was there, but the couple moved back to Alaska, to Fairbanks, and started a family. He is now 74 years young. He and Sue have four children, two of whom have settled in Fairbanks, and they have five grandchildren. He is the patriarch of not only a great family but of many community organizations throughout Fairbanks and, really, Alaska.

Throughout the years, Jeff has had a career in real estate, in business. He has sat on numerous boards—community boards—and been in community groups. Let me just give a couple of examples of his community work, of his sitting on the board of the Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce, the University of Alaska Board of Regents, the Rotary Club of Fairbanks, the Greater Fairbanks Community Hospital Foundation board, the board for the State of Alaska Chamber of Commerce, the Rasmuson Foundation board, and the boards for Alaska Airlines and Wells Fargo Bank. This is an individual—a leader—who has been involved in his community for decades. He is a perfect example of the community-minded individual whom we call our Alaskan of the Week.

We could be done right here. It is a pretty amazing career—a great example of someone who is dedicated to his State, to his country, to his community. Yet Jeff has done a lot more. He recently used all of his energy, all of his experience, all of his community involvement to embark on what really has become an extraordinary fundraising campaign to raise money for cancer research—so important for our Nation, so important for Alaska. This became a personal issue for Jeff. Let me tell you this story.

Last March, he and Sue received, really, a devastating phone call from their youngest daughter Chrissy, who is 34 and lives in Las Vegas with her husband and 2-year-old daughter. She called to tell them the bad news—really, the horrible news that millions of American families hear every year—that she had been diagnosed with breast cancer and that she had a positive match for the BRCA2 gene, which increases one's risk of developing breast cancer or ovarian cancer.

Jeff and Sue felt powerless against this disease when they heard this. He said: "When you're a parent, it doesn't matter how old your children are; you're supposed to slay the dragons and conquer the monsters" and protect your kids.

If that were not devastating enough, weeks later, he and his wife made sure that everyone in the Cook family got tested. Unfortunately, five other members of the family tested positive for this gene. They are all being monitored now.

Here is what Jeff said: "We couldn't conquer the cancer, but we just had to do something." He said he had heard about the American Cancer Society's "Real Men Wear Pink" campaign—a fundraising program that is held in October. October, as everybody knows, is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. About 3,000 men from across the country participated in the program this year, the "Real Men Wear Pink" campaign.

So Jeff started. He started with the pretty impressive goal of raising \$5,000 for cancer research and an email list of about 70 people, most of whom were in Fairbanks. Within 90 seconds after sending his first email, he had raised \$1,000. Pretty good. Then what happened? The community of Fairbanks, of Alaska—really of the whole country—started opening up to his plea. Donations kept coming in. The more donations he received, the more Jeff worked at raising funds. Many of the people he knew were donating, but what happened? Strangers from across Alaska and from across the country started to send money for this very worthy cause of breast cancer research—often with heartfelt stories of their loved ones, of their own struggles with cancer, or of those of their kids. Someone from a small town in New York State sent him \$250.

As the weeks passed, he began to pay attention to how he was stacking up against others across the country. Jeff is a competitive guy. He is very successful. When he reached No. 10 in the country in terms of fundraising for this very important matter, he told one of his friends there was no way he could beat the No. 1 person ahead of him who had raised \$30,000—no way. That was a high number. Now, Fairbanks is not a very big city, and the other people on the list above him were from much bigger cities from across the country and had what he thought were larger connections and larger networks. Yet his

friend told him: "Don't underestimate yourself, Jeff." After he read that, he said: "Okay. I'm going for broke." This is what he did.

He was all in. He started fundraising everywhere. When it was all said and done, on this campaign, Jeff Cook, from Fairbanks, AK—a town of a little over 30,000 people in Alaska's interior—was the No. 1 fundraiser in America for breast cancer research this year—No. 1. In terms of the American Cancer Society's "Real Men Wear Pink" campaign, Jeff Cook raised over \$120,000.

If my colleagues were down here, I would ask them for a round of applause.

That was for the entire country. Think about that. We come down to this floor a lot and debate cancer research, medical research—very important. Here is one individual in America who raised over \$120,000 through his own energy and passion and for the love of his daughter. This is a testament to Jeff's perseverance, but it is also about the good people in Fairbanks, throughout Alaska, and really throughout the country.

As Jeff said, "It says so much about our community. There was such an outpouring of love, goodness and generosity. That was the most touching part of [this entire experience]."

What else did Jeff learn? He learned that his daughter Chrissy, who underwent chemotherapy and a double mastectomy, is stronger than he ever imagined. She is recovering well, but she is still in recovery.

I am going to humbly ask my colleagues and those who are watching here and those who are watching on TV to put a prayer in for Chrissy and other cancer victims like Senator HIRONO, who was just on the floor. Put them on your prayer lists as they are in recovery—all of them.

I want to end with a big thanks to everybody in Alaska and across the country who are part of the "Real Men Wear Pink" campaign who are literally raising hundreds of thousands of dollars for breast cancer research.

I thank Jeff, of course, for not underestimating himself but for another—another—mission well done as a community leader in Fairbanks and throughout Alaska.

Congratulations for being our Alaskan of the Week.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I would have joined Senator SULLIVAN in a round of applause. I thank him for sharing that inspiring story.

FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. President, I come to the floor this afternoon just to talk very briefly about the real-world impacts of the decisions we are going to make in the next week or so regarding the future of the budget and to really implore my Republican colleagues here, most especially the Republican leadership, to get this job done and not put us on another

continuing resolution. This is not a theoretical or a rhetorical exercise; this is about people's lives and our failure to do our job—our failure to pass a budget and to extend lifesaving programs, like the Children's Health Insurance Program. It is not about politics, and it is not about headlines. It is not about point scoring. It is about making people's lives better.

I really just want to share three stories from Connecticut to talk about the impact of the decisions that we are going to make with respect to the Federal budget. Let me first talk about this often esoteric-sounding concept of parity. One of the most important things that we are discussing is how many additional dollars are going to be in the budget for 2017 and 2018 versus in the prior fiscal year.

There seems to be fairly widespread agreement that we are underresourced when it comes to the Department of Defense. We have a multitude of kinetic challenges that are presented to the United States. A group of us just got briefed, once again today, by our military leadership on the scope and extent of the North Korean threat. I agree with many of my Republican colleagues that we need to increase funding for national security, but national security is not just housed in the Department of Defense. National security is also about making sure that our families are secure and that our communities are secure.

We believe that we should increase funds for the Department of Defense, and we should also make sure that our schools have teachers. We should also make sure that we have cops on the streets. We should also make sure that our bridges aren't falling down. That is national security as well. It is not too much to ask to make sure that our security is taken care of internationally and domestically as well.

Let me give you a perfect example of how you can't just plus-up defense spending and leave the rest of the budget unattended to. We love defense spending in Connecticut. Why? Because we make a lot of big ticket items for the Department of Defense. We make the helicopters at Sikorsky. We make the jet engines at Pratt & Whitney. We make the submarines at Electric Boat.

We are proud of all of them, but let me tell you what happens at Electric Boat if you plus-up the Defense Department at the expense of all of the other discretionary accounts. We are going to be building a lot more submarines over the next 10 years. We are now building two fast attack submarines a year. We are going to start building the new ballistic submarines, the *Columbia* class, and Electric Boat needs to hire 14,000 employees over the next 10 years. Much of that is because their workforce is older, and so they are going to have a lot of retirements. They have to find 14,000 new employees over the next 10 years. If they can't, we cannot make the submarines in the United States, or we cannot make the parts that go into

the submarines in the United States. Either the job will not get done, or the work will happen somewhere else in another country. You can't assemble the submarines anywhere other than at Electric Boat, but those parts will go to foreign companies rather than American companies.

The way in which we are going to fill the 14,000 jobs is through the Department of Labor. The Department of Labor has a partnership with an organization called the Eastern Connecticut Manufacturing Pipeline. That is a public-private partnership that seeks to train hundreds of individuals in the skills necessary to build the submarines. They received 4,500 applications over the past year. They can't place all those people because they only get a certain amount of funding from the Department of Labor, but they were able to train 500 new workers for Electric Boat, putting them right into those jobs that are necessary to build these submarines. The problem is the money for that program is running out, and with another CR, they can't get renewed funding for that program. So if you plus-up the Defense Department without increasing funding for the Department of Labor, you can't get the stuff that you want to build for the Department of Defense because you can't get the workers in order to fill the contracts.

If you don't renew this contract, if you don't renew this funding agreement with the Eastern Connecticut Manufacturing Pipeline, the work will not get done, and the jobs will go overseas. I just want my colleagues to understand that this isn't some philosophical belief that we need the same amount of money in the Department of Defense as we need in the rest of the budget. It is practical. It is practical because we need domestic economic security, but you also can't execute the Department of Defense contracts without funding in the rest of the budget.

Second, let me talk to you about the real-world implications of not funding the Children's Health Insurance Program. You know that healthcare more than any other issue has become a political football. Democrats toss it to the Republicans, and Republicans toss it back to Democrats. Yet there is no other issue that is more personal than this. If someone doesn't have healthcare for their family, nothing else in their life can happen.

I want to share one story. These letters and emails are flooding into our offices with respect to the real-world impact of not funding the Children's Health Insurance Program.

In Connecticut, letters have gone out to families whose children are insured through CHIP, telling them that by the end of this month—that is 20 days away—they lose their insurance. So here is what Tara from Washington, CT, writes. She said:

Despite our full time employment—

She works as a small business manager, and her husband is a full-time electrical apprentice—

my husband and I do not make enough money to buy health insurance for our children in addition to our other mandatory expenses.

She explains that her children go to daycare, which costs \$1,800 a month, which she says is more than their mortgage plus taxes and insurance.

To go back to her letter, she says:

This is where the [Children's Health Insurance Program] comes into play in our lives. I cannot even begin to tell you the anxiety I faced when I was pregnant with my daughter, crying every day because I didn't know how we were going to make ends meet. Thank God for a family friend who happened to be an insurance agent. She told us about [CHIP] and suddenly some of that anxiety was quelled.

We have been blessed to have [CHIP] in our lives.

I say CHIP. She says in the letter HUSKY. HUSKY is the name of the CHIP program in Connecticut.

We have been blessed to have [CHIP] in our lives. Last month my daughter got RSV and was prescribed a nebulizer. Two weeks ago, my son caught it from her and that developed into a double ear infection and pink eye, requiring two expensive medications. The co-pays and premiums are manageable though and they got the care they needed.

I read in the [local paper] this weekend that letters were going out to parents of children . . . telling them that their coverage will end on January 31, 2018.

She is writing this in December.

We are a week away from Christmas, and what should be a happy time of year has now turned into stress and depression. How am I going to get insurance for my kids? My daughter turns two on February 10th, how am I going to pay for her well visit? I can't just skip it, they won't allow her back into daycare.

I cannot believe the dysfunction going on in this country. I cannot believe tax cuts for the wealthy have taken precedent over the health of my kids. . . . What is Congress doing to ensure their continued healthcare?

This story is repeated literally millions of times over all across this country. People went through the holiday anxious and depressed because they were convinced that we weren't taking seriously the healthcare of their kids. When we debate the budget, it has to have attached to it a long-term, if not permanent, extension of the Children's Health Insurance Program because there are families just like Tara out there who are doing everything we ask them to. She is full-time employed, her husband is full-time employed, and they can't afford health insurance for their kids without CHIP.

Let me talk to you about the importance of making sure that we get the right amount of disaster funding to Texas, Florida, and in particular Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico matters to us in Connecticut because we have the largest percentage of our population with Puerto Rican roots than any State in the country. We are so proud of that. The Puerto Rican community in Connecticut is vibrant, economically and culturally, powerful politically, involved in our cities and towns and in State government.

The Governor of Puerto Rico has requested \$94 billion for Maria recovery

and rebuilding, and I am just back from Puerto Rico. I can report to you that the island is still in crisis. One hundred days after the hurricane hit, more than half of the country—half of the households—still don't have electricity.

If that were happening in Connecticut, Alaska, or Louisiana, there would be riots in the streets, but for some reason it is acceptable in Puerto Rico. We are 100 days after the hurricane, and we still haven't approved a disaster recovery package, and the Trump administration is nickel-and-diming the island.

I walked through the poorest, most densely populated neighborhood in San Juan, the capital of the Commonwealth. They have no power. Mold is growing in these homes because they can't dry out the moisture without electricity. Kids are enduring more frequent and more intense bouts of asthma. People are dying because they can't refrigerate their medication or keep their ventilation equipment running. This is what is happening in the United States of America. We need to authorize significant, robust funding for Puerto Rico and for Texas and Florida. We need to do it now.

We need to do it now because the day that I arrived on the island—I think it was January 2—it was reported to us that there was the highest volume of people leaving Puerto Rico since the hurricane—on that day, January 2. The exodus is getting more intense. More people are leaving, not less. Why? Because they don't think we are committed to rebuilding the island. Puerto Ricans don't think that Congress is serious about putting back on the electricity. They waited 1 month. They waited 2 months. They waited 3 months, and then they said: Enough, we can't put our kids in these conditions.

They started leaving in record numbers. They were leaving right off the bat, but they are now leaving in record numbers. While most of them are coming to places like Florida, many of them are coming to Connecticut. Why? Because when they make that move, they often go first to stay with friends. Because we have such a compassionate, large Puerto Rican community in Connecticut, many of these families are coming to Connecticut.

So let me just give you a couple of the numbers here. We asked our school systems to try to keep a rough track of how many new Puerto Rican students are showing up. Our cities are small in Connecticut. We don't have a city that is much bigger than 100,000. In Hartford, they have 388 new Puerto Rican students—"new" meaning having come since the hurricane from the island. Waterbury, CT, has 268. New Britain, a very small city, has 213. Bridgeport has 179. These are kids who are glad to have shelter and schooling in Connecticut, but they don't want to be in Connecticut. They came under duress. They came to Connecticut as refugees. They want to be back in Puerto Rico.

The stress that this is putting on the schools is serious. We are in a budget crisis in Connecticut. Schools have already had their funding cut from Hartford. Yet these schools are now having to staff up to deal with this influx of students from Puerto Rico. We are glad to do it. We see it as our obligation, and we know that these kids will be a part of Connecticut's strength. But it is not easy to do when we haven't authorized any money to help States like Connecticut to deal with this influx of students. At McDonough Middle School in Hartford, these kids are thriving, but they have had to set up a new immersion lab to handle all these kids coming in. They have had to hire new staff to teach English as a second language. These are schools that were already seeing their funding hemorrhage from the State government.

The impact is real on McDonough Middle School. The impact is real on Tara and her family from Washington. The impact is real for an important supplier in our industrial base, Electric Boat. If we just continue to push CR after CR, these families, schools, and companies will not succeed. This isn't about political headlines. This isn't about numbers on a page. This is about real-world impact for businesses, families, and schools.

So let's get the job done. Let's write a budget. Let's at least agree to the overall budget numbers. Let's fund the Children's Health Insurance Program. Let's get Puerto Rico, Florida, and Texas everything they need. News flash: That is our job.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

TRIBUTE TO EARL BUSH

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize Earl Bush, the judge-executive in Bracken County, KY, who will retire at the end of his current term. In my home State, a judge-executive is the highest elected county official, and since 2011, Earl has earned a reputation for accomplishment on behalf of the people of Bracken County.

After graduating from Western Kentucky University, Earl served our Nation in the U.S. Air Force, earning the rank of captain. For the next three decades, Earl worked at Dayton Power and Light in various construction management positions.

In 2010, Earl decided to put his efforts to work for his neighbors because, like so many of us in public life, he wanted to make a difference. Along with his

team, Earl has spent his time in office working to help the men and women of Bracken County. As a former county judge-executive myself, I know firsthand about Earl's wide-ranging responsibilities. Looking at his results, Earl seems to have found success.

In addition to equipment upgrades and road improvements, Earl has also championed the addition of recreational trails and a fishing lake at a local industrial park. Working with other officials, Earl also lowered taxes and helped the county's largest employer bring new jobs to Bracken County. By nearly any standard, that is an impressive record of accomplishment for a public official.

I have enjoyed every opportunity I have had to work with Earl. Throughout his time in office, he has been a strong partner as we serve the people of Kentucky. In retirement, Earl looks forward to spending more time with his wife and grandchildren. He also plans to work with his brother to restore classic cars. Along with many in Bracken County, I wish him a relaxing next chapter, and I am confident that my Senate colleagues will join me.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for votes relative to the nominations of Michael Lawrence Brown to be a U.S. district judge for the Northern District of Georgia and Walter David Counts III to be a U.S. district judge for the Western District of Texas.

On vote No. 7, had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on confirmation of the Brown nomination.

On vote No. 8, had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on the motion to invoke cloture on the Counts nomination.

(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. 389, the motion to invoke cloture on Executive Calendar No. 435, and the confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 435.

On vote No. 7, had I been present, I would have voted yea on the confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 389.

On vote No. 8, had I been present, I would have voted yea on the motion to invoke cloture on Executive Calendar No. 435.

On vote No. 9, had I been present, I would have voted yea on the confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 435.

Mr. President, I was also necessarily absent for the vote on the motion to proceed to the House message to accompany S. 139.

On vote No. 10, had I been present, I would have voted nay on the motion to proceed to the House message to accompany S. 139.●

250TH ANNIVERSARY OF SANFORD, MAINE

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, today I wish to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the city of Sanford, ME. Sanford was built with a spirit of determination and resiliency that still guides the community today, and this is a time to celebrate the generations of hard-working and caring people who have made it such a wonderful place to live, work, and raise families.

The year of Sanford's incorporation, 1768, was but one milestone in a long journey of progress, a journey that is inextricably linked to the history of our Nation. In 1661, British Army General William Phillips purchased large tracts of land from two chiefs of local Abenaki Tribes for his growing lumber business. Called Phillipstown, the lands remained largely uninhabited due to the ongoing conflict between England and France for control of the northern American Colonies.

Hostilities in the region ceased in 1739, and the new community grew rapidly, reaching a population of 1,500 within just a few decades. At the time the town was incorporated in 1768, Maine was a province of Massachusetts, and the Governor of Massachusetts used the occasion to honor Peleg Sanford, stepson of William Phillips and former four-term British Governor for the State of Rhode Island.

When the American Colonists fought for independence, Sanford stood with them. The city's cemeteries contain the headstones of 33 patriots who joined freedom's cause.

With the Mousam River providing power, Sanford was home to more than a dozen sawmills and gristmills. In the 1860s, Sanford truly became a city of industry when Thomas Goodall established a massive textile mill that produced everything from material for clothing to railroad car upholstery. Skilled textile workers poured into Sanford from Europe and French Canada, giving the city an international flavor that still exists today.

In the 1950s, the owners of Sanford's textile mills began moving operations to southern States, leaving behind thousands of jobless workers and vast, empty factories. Local business and community leaders responded with the energy and determination that defines the city, traveling throughout the country to entice new employers. Noting this remarkable effort, LIFE magazine called Sanford "the town that refused to die." Today Sanford has a diversified industrial base, from textiles to technology.

Sanford is among Maine's oldest municipalities, but it also is Maine's newest city, having changed its charter from the town form of government to that of a city in 2013. It is also new in the sense of embracing the technology of the future through the construction of both the largest municipally owned broadband network in Maine for economic development and a 50-megawatt solar array for renewable energy generation. The new Academic and Career

Technical High School that will open this summer reaffirms Sanford's commitment to education.

The celebration of Sanford's 250th anniversary is not merely about the passing of time. It is about human accomplishment. We celebrate the people who, for longer than America has been a nation, have pulled together, cared for one another, and built a great community. Thanks to those who came before, Sanford, ME, has a wonderful history. Thanks to those there today, it has a bright future.

80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SHAWNEE PEAK SKI AREA

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the 80th anniversary of the Shawnee Peak Ski Area in Bridgton, ME. Shawnee Peak is the oldest continually operated major ski facility in Maine and possesses natural beauty, which combines with the love of the outdoors and the strong sense of community of the region's residents.

Originally called Pleasant Mountain Ski Area, the facility opened with a rope tow on January 23, 1938. That day of celebration was preceded by many years of hard work by Bridgton's Lions Club and Chamber of Commerce, Bridgton Academy, the Pleasant Mountain Ski Club, and the local Civilian Conservation Corps to plan, raise money, and clear trails. With Maine's Western Mountains providing spectacular views of the Lakes Region and Mount Washington, Pleasant Mountain soon began attracting skiers from throughout New England.

Renamed Shawnee Peak in 1988, the ski area has long been a place of innovation, including the site of Maine's first T-bar and chairlift. Shawnee Peak pioneered night skiing and in the 1970s helped to lead the acrobatic freestyle skiing movement that is now a favorite event in the Winter Olympics. Shawnee Peak also is a leader in offering youth programs in skiing and snowboarding to encourage children to stay active and to challenge themselves.

In 1994, Shawnee Peak was purchased by business leader and entrepreneur Chet Homer and his family. Echoing the conservation ethic that defines our State, Mr. Homer has stated he does not think of himself as owning the mountain, but rather of being its steward.

For 80 years, Shawnee Peak Ski Area has strengthened Maine's skiing industry, spurred economic development in a rural region, and brought families and friends together in wholesome recreation. It is a pleasure to congratulate Chet Homer and his team for the accomplishments of this Maine family business and to wish them continued success in the years to come.

TRIBUTE TO DR. HOWARD WILLSON

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I am honored to recognize my friend, Dr.

Howard Willson, as Wyoming's 2018 Physician of the Year. Over the course of his distinguished career, Dr. Willson tirelessly worked to improve healthcare in Wyoming. His contributions in medical education, quality improvement, and public health touched countless patients in our State. Outside of medicine, Dr. Willson served Wyoming as member of the University of Wyoming's board of trustees and as an officer in the U.S. Air Force.

In addition to his many professional accomplishments, folks in Basin and Thermopolis simply know Howard as their family doctor. Multiple generations of patients benefited from Howard's caring and compassionate approach to medicine. From Dr. Willson's perspective, being entrusted to care for his neighbors was the highest compliment he could receive.

While Howard Willson made his greatest impact in Wyoming, he was born in the small town of Spring Lake, FL. After completing his undergraduate degree from Florida State University, he was commissioned as an officer in the U.S. Air Force. Howard then attended medical school at the University of Florida and graduated in 1965. After graduation from medical school, he completed his internship at the U.S. Air Force Hospital at Andrews Air Force Base. In total, Dr. Willson served in the Air Force for 10 years, eventually rising to the rank of captain.

Over the next several years, Dr. Willson practiced medicine in Florida, where he served as an active member of the medical community. Then in 1976, he decided to make the move to Wyoming, a decision that has benefited the people of our State ever since. Howard began his practice in the town of Basin and eventually moved to Thermopolis. Once he arrived in Wyoming, Howard not only became a valued doctor, but also an energetic member of the community.

He quickly became active in his county's medical society and in the Wyoming Medical Society, eventually becoming president of the Wyoming Medical Society in 1986. In addition, he was an active leader of the medical staff of two different Wyoming hospitals, South Big Horn County Hospital and Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital.

In addition to his active medical practice, Dr. Willson was passionate about training the next generation of Wyoming healthcare providers. In particular, Howard wanted to introduce medical students to the joys and rewards of working in rural communities. This is why he was an active preceptor in the Wyoming Family Practice program for over 20 years.

To this day, medical students in Wyoming are benefitting from Dr. Willson's passion for medical education. This is because he was vital in bringing the WWAMI medical education program to Wyoming. Folks in Wyoming are now very familiar with

this program, which allows students from Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, and Idaho to attend medical school at the University of Washington. Wyoming joined this unique and highly effective program in 1996. As Professor Joe Steiner, former dean of the University of Wyoming's College of Health Sciences, said, "Howard Willson was instrumental in bringing WWAMI to Wyoming. He was also a strong supporter of all health care professions and was eager to share his knowledge with students."

Aside from teaching, Dr. Willson was passionate about improving the quality of healthcare received by Wyoming patients. He served as medical director of Mountain-Pacific Quality Health Foundation-Wyoming. This organization is dedicated to working with Medicare to lower the cost and improve the quality of healthcare. In particular, Howard understood that achieving this goal meant serving as a partner with providers and healthcare facilities. It was through this work that virtually all the patients in Wyoming were helped by Howard's work, even though they never knew it.

Finally, Howard knew the importance of public health in helping keep folks well. He served as the public health officer for Hot Springs County, starting in 2004. It was only with deep regret that the board of commissioners accepted his resignation in 2016. These folks knew what an impact Dr. Willson had made on their community.

Outside of medicine, Howard was always involved in the local communities in which he lived. The Governor of Wyoming appointed Howard to the University of Wyoming's board of trustees. He served the university with distinction from 2003 to 2015. Simply put, all the students of the University of Wyoming benefited from Howard's passion for making sure that everyone in our state could get a great education.

Clearly Howard Willson is one of the most accomplished doctors in the history of Wyoming. I can think of no person more deserving of being our State's Physician of the Year.

In closing, I would like to congratulate Howard, his wife, Belenda, and their six children on this most well-deserved achievement.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNIZING MONTANA YOUTH CHALLENGE ACADEMY

• Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, this week I have the distinct honor of recognizing the Montana Youth Challenge Academy (MYCA), located in Dillon, MT. The MYCA is sponsored by the Montana National Guard and the State of Montana and assists at-risk youth in our state to develop the skills necessary to become productive citizens. This academy focuses on the physical, emotional and educational

needs of the youth using a quasi-military style technique of discipline and motivation. To date, they have graduated over two thousand students.

I would like to thank six of the original staff who began work at MYCA when it opened in 1999 and who are still employed there today. Director Jan Rouse, Deputy Director Trent Gibson, Lead Teacher Carolyn Bielser, Lead Counselor Ben Stewart, Counselor Tammy Pittman and Cadre Team Leader Cheryl Miskowic have spent years working to help Montana's at-risk youth and their work has touched the lives of many. Along with the other staff at MYCA, they have helped students become contributing members of our Montana communities. Thank you to all those working hard at the Montana Youth Challenge Academy in Beaverhead County.●

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 10:02 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, with an amendment, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

S. 140. An act to amend the White Mountain Apache Tribe Water Rights Quantification Act of 2010 to clarify the use of amounts in the WMAT Settlement Fund.

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

H.R. 4567. An act to require a Department of Homeland Security overseas personnel enhancement plan, and for other purposes.

At 12:40 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, with an amendment, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

S. 139. An act to implement the use of Rapid DNA instruments to inform decisions about pretrial release or detention and their conditions, to solve and prevent violent crimes and other crimes, to exonerate the innocent, to prevent DNA analysis backlogs, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the House has agreed to the following concurrent resolution, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H. Con. Res. 98. Concurrent resolution directing the Secretary of the Senate to make a correction in the enrollment of the bill S. 139.

MEASURES REFERRED

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

H.R. 4567. An act to require a Department of Homeland Security overseas personnel enhancement plan, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

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

EC-4027. A communication from the Comptroller of the Currency, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Office of the Comptroller's 2017 Annual Report to Congress; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-4028. A communication from the Senior Counsel for Regulatory Affairs, Financial Stability Oversight Council, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Revision of Freedom of Information Act Regulations" (12 CFR Part 1301) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 5, 2018; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-4029. A communication from the Deputy Chief Financial Officer and Director for Financial Management, Office of the Chief Financial Officer and Assistant Secretary for Administration, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Civil Monetary Penalty Adjustments for Inflation" (RIN0605-AA48) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 5, 2018; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4030. A communication from the Secretary of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled "Roadside Safety Hardware Identification Methods"; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-4031. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, the semiannual report on the continued compliance of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan with the 1974 Trade Act's freedom of emigration provisions, as required under the Jackson-Vanik Amendment; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-4032. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, the certification of a proposed license for the export of defense articles, including technical data and defense services to Saudi Arabia in support of the assembly and integration of cannons onto weapons stations in the amount of \$50,000,000 or more (Transmittal No. DDTC 17-044); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-4033. A communication from the Director of Regulations and Policy Management Staff, Food and Drug Administration, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "New Animal Drugs for Investigational Use; Disqualification of a Clinical Investigator" ((RIN0910-AH64) (Docket No. FDA-2011-N-0079)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 5, 2018; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-4034. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 22-219, "Office on African American Affairs Establishment Act of 2017"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4035. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 22-220, "Advanced Practice Reg-

istered Nurse Signature Authority Amendment Act of 2017"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4036. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 22-222, "Public School Health Services Amendment Act of 2017"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4037. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 22-223, "D.C. Healthcare Alliance Re-Enrollment Reform Amendment Act of 2017"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4038. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 22-224, "Department of Health Care Finance Independent Procurement Authority Temporary Amendment Act of 2017"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4039. A communication from the Director, Office of Congressional Affairs, Federal Election Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the Commission's competitive sourcing efforts during fiscal year 2017; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEE

The following executive reports of nominations were submitted:

By Mr. GRASSLEY for the Committee on the Judiciary.

Fernando Rodriguez, Jr., of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Texas.

Joseph D. Brown, of Texas, to be United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Texas for the term of four years.

Matthew D. Krueger, of Wisconsin, to be United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Wisconsin for the term of four years.

Norman Euell Arflack, of Kentucky, to be United States Marshal for the Eastern District of Kentucky for the term of four years.

Ted G. Kamatchus, of Iowa, to be United States Marshal for the Southern District of Iowa for the term of four years.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

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

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

S. 2293. A bill to amend section 214(c)(8) of the Immigration and Nationality Act to modify the data reporting requirements relating to nonimmigrant employees, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

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

S. 2294. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to ensure that individuals may access documentation verifying the monthly housing stipend paid to the individual under the Post-9/11 Educational Assistance Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. SCHATZ (for himself, Mr. BROWN, Mr. CARDIN, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. WARNER, Mr. MERKLEY, Mrs. MURRAY, and Mr. VAN HOLLEN):

S. 2295. A bill to increase the rates of pay under the General Schedule and other statutory pay systems and for prevailing rate employees by 3.0 percent, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. JOHNSON:

S. 2296. A bill to increase access to agency guidance documents; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. THUNE (for himself and Mr. ROUNDS):

S. 2297. A bill to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to transfer certain National Forest System land to Custer County, South Dakota; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. WHITEHOUSE (for himself, Mr. MARKEY, Ms. HASSAN, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. REED, Mr. KING, Ms. WARREN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Ms. COLLINS, and Mr. MURPHY):

S. 2298. A bill to prohibit oil and gas leasing on the Outer Continental Shelf off the coast of New England; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. INHOFE (for himself and Mr. UDALL):

S. 2299. A bill to amend the Food Security Act of 1985 to provide wildfire regulatory relief, to modify the evaluation of a major disaster declaration request, to provide regulatory relief for banks during major disasters, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mrs. GILLIBRAND (for herself and Mr. SCHUMER):

S. 2300. A bill to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 111 Market Street in Saugerties, New York, as the "Maurice D. Hinchey Post Office Building"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Ms. WARREN (for herself, Mr. BROWN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Ms. BALDWIN, Ms. SMITH, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. SANDERS, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. KAINE, Ms. HARRIS, and Ms. HASSAN):

S. 2301. A bill to strengthen parity in mental health and substance use disorder benefits; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. HATCH (for himself and Mr. LEE):

S. 2302. A bill to direct the Secretary of the Interior to convey certain Bureau of Land Management land in Cache County, Utah, to the city of Hyde Park, Utah, for public purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

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

S. 2303. A bill to amend title XXVII of the Public Health Service Act to preserve consumer and employer access to licensed independent insurance producers; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. TILLIS (for himself, Ms. WARREN, Mr. HELLER, Mr. TESTER, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. MANCHIN, Mr. BURR, Mr. SCHATZ, Mr. SULLIVAN, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. SCOTT, and Mr. DONNELLY):

S. 2304. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to protect veterans from predatory lending, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. BROWN:

S. 2305. A bill to require a study and report on the housing and service needs of victims of trafficking and individuals at risk for

trafficking; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

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

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

S. Res. 372. A resolution congratulating the North Dakota State University football team for winning the 2017 National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I Football Championship Subdivision title; considered and agreed to.

By Ms. HARRIS:

S. Res. 373. A resolution supporting the goals and ideals of "Korean American Day"; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 515

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

S. 878

At the request of Mr. MARKEY, the name of the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) was added as a cosponsor of S. 878, a bill to establish privacy protections for customers of broadband Internet access service and other telecommunications services.

S. 963

At the request of Mr. YOUNG, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 963, a bill to encourage and support partnerships between the public and private sectors to improve our Nation's social programs, and for other purposes.

S. 1028

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the name of the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1028, a bill to provide for the establishment and maintenance of a Family Caregiving Strategy, and for other purposes.

S. 1693

At the request of Mr. DAINES, his name 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. 1738

At the request of Mr. WARNER, the name of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1738, a bill to amend title XVIII of the

Social Security Act to provide for a home infusion therapy services temporary transitional payment under the Medicare program.

S. 1767

At the request of Mr. LEAHY, the name of the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1767, a bill to reauthorize the farm to school program, and for other purposes.

S. 1808

At the request of Ms. BALDWIN, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1808, a bill to extend temporarily the Federal Perkins Loan program, and for other purposes.

S. 1827

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the name of the Senator from Alabama (Mr. JONES) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1827, a bill to extend funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program, and for other purposes.

S. 1989

At the request of Ms. KLOBUCHAR, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1989, a bill to enhance transparency and accountability for online political advertisements by requiring those who purchase and publish such ads to disclose information about the advertisements to the public, and for other purposes.

S. 2037

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the names of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) and the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. HASSAN) were added as cosponsors of S. 2037, a bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 regarding proprietary institutions of higher education in order to protect students and taxpayers.

S. 2054

At the request of Mr. MORAN, the name of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2054, a bill to amend the Agricultural Credit Act of 1978 to establish a program to provide advance payments under the Emergency Conservation Program for the repair or replacement of fencing.

S. 2152

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the names of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY), the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) and the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS) were added as cosponsors of S. 2152, a bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to provide for assistance for victims of child pornography, and for other purposes.

S. 2235

At the request of Mr. DONNELLY, the name of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2235, a bill to establish a tiered hiring preference for members of the reserve components of the Armed Forces.

S. RES. 367

At the request of Mr. CRUZ, the name of the Senator from Utah (Mr. LEE) was

added as a cosponsor 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. BARRASSO, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 368, a resolution supporting the right of all Iranian citizens to have their voices heard.

At the request of Mr. CORKER, the names of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. REED), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY), the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON), the Senator from Utah (Mr. LEE) and the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 368, supra.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 372—CONGRATULATING THE NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY FOOTBALL TEAM FOR WINNING THE 2017 NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION DIVISION I FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP SUBDIVISION TITLE

Mr. HOEVEN (for himself and Ms. HEITKAMP) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 372

Whereas the North Dakota State University (referred to in this preamble as “NDSU”) Bison won the 2017 National Collegiate Athletic Association (referred to in this preamble as the “NCAA”) Division I Football Championship Subdivision (referred to in this preamble as the “FCS”) title game in Frisco, Texas, on January 6, 2018, in a victory over the James Madison University Dukes by a score of 17 to 13;

Whereas NDSU has now won 14 NCAA championships;

Whereas NDSU has now won its sixth NCAA Division I FCS championship in 7 years, an extraordinary achievement;

Whereas NDSU has now tied the record for most NCAA Division I FCS championships with 6 in only 10 years of eligibility;

Whereas the NDSU Bison have displayed tremendous resilience and skill over the past 7 seasons, with 97 wins to only 8 losses, including a streak of 33 consecutive wins;

Whereas estimates state that more than 13,000 Bison fans attended the championship game, reflecting the tremendous spirit and dedication of Bison Nation that has helped propel the success of the team; and

Whereas the 2017 NCAA Division I FCS championship was a victory not only for the NDSU football team, but also for the entire State of North Dakota: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) congratulates the North Dakota State University Bison football team as the 2017 champions of the National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I Football Championship Subdivision;

(2) commends the North Dakota State University players, coaches, and staff for—

(A) their hard work and dedication on a historic season; and

(B) fostering a continuing tradition of athletic and academic excellence; and

(3) recognizes the students, alumni, and loyal fans that supported the Bison while the Bison sought to capture a sixth Division I Football Championship Subdivision championship for North Dakota State University.

SENATE RESOLUTION 373—SUPPORTING THE GOALS AND IDEALS OF “KOREAN AMERICAN DAY”

Ms. HARRIS submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 373

Whereas the influence of Korean Americans may be observed in all facets of life in the United States, including politics, industry, entrepreneurship, volunteerism, the arts, and education;

Whereas 102 courageous Korean immigrants arrived in the United States on January 13, 1903, initiating the first chapter of Korean immigration to the United States, the land of opportunity;

Whereas these pioneer Korean immigrants faced tremendous social and economic obstacles as well as language barriers in the United States;

Whereas in pursuit of the American dream, Korean immigrants initially served as farmworkers, wage laborers, and section hands throughout the United States;

Whereas, through resilience, tenacious effort, and immense sacrifice, first generation Korean immigrants established a new home in a new land that became the home for future generations of Korean Americans;

Whereas the centennial year of 2003 marked an important milestone in the history of Korean immigration;

Whereas the House of Representatives passed House Resolution 487 to commemorate “Korean American Day” in the 109th Congress;

Whereas the Senate passed Senate Resolution 283 to commemorate “Korean American Day” in the 109th Congress;

Whereas, just as other immigrants before them, Korean Americans—

(1) came to the United States seeking opportunity and a better life; and

(2) have thrived in the United States due to strong work ethic, family bonds, and community spirit;

Whereas Korean Americans have made significant contributions to the economic vitality of the United States and the global marketplace;

Whereas Korean Americans have invigorated businesses, nonprofit organizations and other nongovernmental organizations, government, technology, medicine, athletics, arts and entertainment, journalism, religious communities, academic communities, and countless other facets of society in the United States;

Whereas Korean Americans have made enormous contributions to the military strength of the United States and served with distinction in the Armed Forces during World War I, World War II, and the conflict in Korea;

Whereas South Korea will host the 2018 Winter Olympics in PyeongChang, South Korea; and

Whereas the Centennial Committees of Korean Immigration and Korean Americans have designated January 13 of each year as “Korean American Day” to commemorate the first step of the long and prosperous journey of Korean Americans in the United States: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) supports the goals and ideals of “Korean American Day”;

(2) urges the people of the United States to observe “Korean American Day” so as to have a greater appreciation of the invaluable contributions that Korean Americans have made to the United States; and

(3) honors and recognizes the 115th anniversary of the arrival of the first Korean immigrants to the United States.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 1870. Mr. MCCONNELL proposed an amendment to the bill S. 139, to implement the use of Rapid DNA instruments to inform decisions about pretrial release or detention and their conditions, to solve and prevent violent crimes and other crimes, to exonerate the innocent, to prevent DNA analysis backlogs, and for other purposes.

SA 1871. Mr. MCCONNELL proposed an amendment to amendment SA 1870 proposed by Mr. MCCONNELL to the bill S. 139, supra.

SA 1872. Mr. MCCONNELL proposed an amendment to the bill S. 139, supra.

SA 1873. Mr. MCCONNELL proposed an amendment to amendment SA 1872 proposed by Mr. MCCONNELL to the bill S. 139, supra.

SA 1874. Mr. MCCONNELL proposed an amendment to amendment SA 1873 proposed by Mr. MCCONNELL to the amendment SA 1872 proposed by Mr. MCCONNELL to the bill S. 139, supra.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 1870. Mr. MCCONNELL proposed an amendment to the bill S. 139, to implement the use of Rapid DNA instruments to inform decisions about pretrial release or detention and their conditions, to solve and prevent violent crimes and other crimes, to exonerate the innocent, to prevent DNA analysis backlogs, and for other purposes; as follows:

At the end add the following.

“This Act shall take effect 1 day after the date of enactment.”

SA 1871. Mr. MCCONNELL proposed an amendment to amendment SA 1870 proposed by Mr. MCCONNELL to the bill S. 139, to implement the use of Rapid DNA instruments to inform decisions about pretrial release or detention and their conditions, to solve and prevent violent crimes and other crimes, to exonerate the innocent, to prevent DNA analysis backlogs, and for other purposes; as follows:

Strike “1 day” and insert “2 days”

SA 1872. Mr. MCCONNELL proposed an amendment to the bill S. 139, to implement the use of Rapid DNA instruments to inform decisions about pretrial release or detention and their conditions, to solve and prevent violent crimes and other crimes, to exonerate the innocent, to prevent DNA analysis backlogs, and for other purposes; as follows:

At the end add the following.

“This Act shall take effect 3 days after the date of enactment.”

SA 1873. Mr. MCCONNELL proposed an amendment to amendment SA 1872 proposed by Mr. MCCONNELL to the bill S. 139, to implement the use of Rapid

DNA instruments to inform decisions about pretrial release or detention and their conditions, to solve and prevent violent crimes and other crimes, to exonerate the innocent, to prevent DNA analysis backlogs, and for other purposes; as follows:

Strike "3 days" and insert "4 days"

SA 1874. Mr. McCONNELL proposed an amendment to amendment SA 1873 proposed by Mr. McCONNELL to the amendment SA 1872 proposed by Mr. McCONNELL to the bill S. 139, to implement the use of Rapid DNA instruments to inform decisions about pretrial release or detention and their conditions, to solve and prevent violent crimes and other crimes, to exonerate the innocent, to prevent DNA analysis backlogs, and for other purposes; as follows:

Strike "4" and insert "5"

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I have 3 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 FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Committee on Foreign Relations is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, January 11, 2018, at 10 a.m. to conduct a hearing entitled "U.S. Policy in Syria Post-ISIS".

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

The Committee on the Judiciary is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, January 11, 2018, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing on S. 2152 the "Amy, Vicky, and Any Child Pornography Victim Assistance Act" and on the following nominations: Stuart Kyle Duncan, of Louisiana, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit, David Ryan Stras, of Minnesota, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Eighth Circuit, Fernando Rodriguez, Jr., to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Texas.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

The Select Committee on Intelligence is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, January 11, 2018, at 2 p.m. to conduct a hearing a closed roundtable.

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that floor privileges be granted to Laura Carey, who is a fellow on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff, on loan from

the State Department, during today's session.

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

APPOINTMENT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair announces, on behalf of the Democratic leader, pursuant to the provisions of Public Law 114-196, the appointment of the following individual to serve as a member of the United States Semiquincentennial Commission: Rosa G. Rios of Maryland.

CONGRATULATING THE NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY FOOTBALL TEAM FOR WINNING THE 2017 NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION DIVISION I FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP SUBDIVISION TITLE

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 372, submitted earlier today.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 372) congratulating the North Dakota State University football team for winning the 2017 National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I Football Championship Subdivision title.

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

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

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

The resolution (S. Res. 372) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

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

AUTHORIZING THE PRESIDENT TO AWARD THE MEDAL OF HONOR TO JOHN L. CANLEY FOR ACTS OF VALOR DURING THE VIETNAM WAR

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 4641, which was received from the House and is at the desk.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4641) to authorize the President to award the Medal of Honor to John L. Canley for acts of valor during the Vietnam War while a member of the Marine Corps.

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

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I further ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read three times and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The bill (H.R. 4641) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

ORDERS FOR FRIDAY, JANUARY 12, 2018, AND TUESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2018

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn, to then convene for a pro forma session only, with no business being conducted, on Friday, January 12, at 1 p.m., and that following the pro forma session, the Senate adjourn until Tuesday, January 16, at 4:30 p.m.; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and morning business be closed; further, that following leader remarks, the Senate resume consideration of the House message to accompany S. 139; further, that the filing deadlines under rule XXII with respect to the cloture motion filed during today's session regarding the House message to accompany S. 139 be at the following times on Tuesday, January 16: 4:45 p.m. for all first-degree amendments and 5:15 p.m. for all second-degree amendments; finally, that the mandatory quorum call with respect to the cloture vote be waived.

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

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 1 P.M. TOMORROW

Ms. MURKOWSKI. 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 4:29 p.m., adjourned until Friday, January 12, 2018, at 1 p.m.

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate January 11, 2018:

THE JUDICIARY

MICHAEL LAWRENCE BROWN, OF GEORGIA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA.

WALTER DAVID COUNTS III, OF TEXAS, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS.