

not for the commander or the court but for the victim. The bill before us requires that these victims' counsels advise victims on the advantages and disadvantages of seeing their case prosecuted in a military court or in a civilian court. The bill also requires that when victims express a preference for one or the other, that preference be given great weight.

The bill before us includes other important new protections for sexual assault victims. For example, it allows victims of a sexual assault who leave the military to challenge the terms or the characterization of their discharge. The bill requires a confidential process enabling victims to seek a review of discharge decisions in order to look for possible instances of retaliation for their having reported a crime.

The bill we will soon vote on also includes an important new provision to boost accountability for commanders. It requires their performance appraisals analyze whether they have established a command climate in which sexual assault allegations are properly and fairly handled and in which a victim can report a sexual assault without fear of reprisal or ostracism.

These and other provisions in the McCaskill-Ayotte-Fischer bill add further weight to the important reforms included in the National Defense Authorization Act we adopted and was enacted very recently. The bill we will be voting on contains real important reforms which deserve not just our support and our votes but our thanks to Senators McCASKILL, AYOTTE, FISCHER, and others for crafting these additional reforms because they will surely make a major contribution in protecting the troops who protect us.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I rise in support of S. 1917, the Victims Protection Act of 2014, and S. 1752, the Military Justice Improvement Act of 2013.

I have worked on this issue for years, and I am tired of lip service and empty promises of zero tolerance policies. Sexual assault in the military and service academies continues to rise. The data speaks for itself. Roughly 26,000 sexual assaults took place in the military last year.

I am so proud of the seven women on the Armed Services Committee who led this effort. And I appreciate the fine men who supported them, especially Chairman CARL LEVIN.

We are now 20 women total in the Senate. We disagree on some issues, even the bills before us. But we agree on the goal of providing more prosecutorial tools to punish criminals, ensuring fairness in the process, and getting help to victims.

The 2013 National Defense Authorization Act, NDAA, included more than 30 reforms addressing sexual assault in the military. They include: 13 prosecutorial reforms, 5 reforms to improve reporting of crimes, 10 reforms to improve victims services, and 2 reforms to expand the training of first responders.

This is a historic piece of legislation that takes a serious and significant step towards addressing this issue.

However, our work is not done. That is why I support Senator McCASKILL's and Senator GILLIBRAND's bills to further reform our military justice system.

Senator McCASKILL's bill builds on the provisions included in the 2013 NDAA by providing additional support to victims. It prevents defendants from using a good military character defense unless it is relevant to the crime. And it ensures these improvements also apply to the service academies which are also dealing with the epidemic of sexual assault.

I also support Senator GILLIBRAND's bill which would take the job of deciding which crimes to prosecute out of the hands of commanders and, instead, give it to independent military prosecutors with expertise in these crimes.

This approach has value for victims, commanding officers, and the accused. Victims are assured of a fair process. Commanders are given an independent source on an issue that they might not have expertise or experience. And those accused of sexual violence get legal protections through the process.

These two bills take another step towards cracking the code on addressing sexual assault in the military. Our men and women in uniform face enough stresses on the battlefield. We can't allow sexual violence to be another one.

I urge my colleagues to support these bills.

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

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

(The remarks of Ms. COLLINS pertaining to the introduction of S. 2100 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Ms. COLLINS. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT ANNIVERSARY

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, it was just one year ago last week that victims of violence, members of law enforcement and those committed to working against domestic and sexual violence celebrated the signing of the Leahy-Crapo Violence Against Women Act reauthorization and the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act. The signing of this important legislation on March 7 last year was an enormous accomplishment for a divided Congress, which came together to pass meaningful and historic legisla-

tion that protects all victims. One year later, we honor those victims and survivors by renewing our commitment to our shared goal of ending domestic and sexual violence.

Our bipartisan effort last year is making lives better today. The new nondiscrimination provisions we fought so hard to protect are ensuring that all victims, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, have access to lifesaving programs and cannot be turned away. As I have said many times, "a victim is a victim is a victim." While some called for us to cast the most vulnerable groups among us aside and pass a watered down bill, I am proud that we held firm in our beliefs. This could not have been done without the leadership and commitment of Senator CRAPO and Senator MURKOWSKI, who fought within their caucus to preserve a fully inclusive reauthorization and stood with me in the Senate to protect all survivors. In the House, Congressman TOM COLE was a critical voice in calling for the particularly urgent need to address abuse on tribal lands. I thank them today, as I did 1 year ago, for their dedication and their partnership.

Every week, we are learning more about the impact of this important law. Last month, the Department of Justice launched a pilot project in which three tribes—the Umatilla, the Pascua Yaqui, and the Tulalip—will begin to exercise their authority to prosecute non-Indian offenders who commit acts of domestic violence against an Indian on tribal land. Until now, non-Indian abusers were essentially immune from prosecution, a fact they would use to terrorize their victims. This new authority marks the beginning of the end of those days and is a watershed moment in our commitment to end the epidemic of violence against Indian women that has for too long been ignored. We fought hard to ensure this provision remained in the bill and it will save lives. Attorney General Holder, associate attorney general West and deputy associate attorney general Hirsch deserve praise for making careful implementation of the Leahy-Crapo Violence Against Women Act a top priority.

Less than 2 weeks ago, the Department of Homeland Security announced it was taking additional steps under our VAWA reauthorization to prevent the sexual assault and abuse of immigrants in our detention facilities. This was in response to a provision in the VAWA law requiring that all DHS facilities comply with the Prison Rape Elimination Act to prevent sexual abuse and assault. There is still much work to be done to protect immigrant women, and I look forward to continuing to work with DHS to ensure that they are doing all they can to protect those in their custody. I also remain committed to passing legislation to increase the number of U visas available for immigrant victims of violence. That powerful law enforcement

tool helps keep all of us safe by encouraging victims to report criminals who pose a danger to our communities.

And last week, we heard about the impact services under VAWA have on victims—and how much more we must do. The National Network to End Domestic Violence, in their annual National Domestic Violence Counts Census, found that every day 9,000 service requests go unmet because of a lack of resources. This is not acceptable. Every day tens of thousands of victims turn to domestic and sexual violence services providers for support through emergency safe shelters, legal assistance, and child support groups, and we must do all we can to ensure these needs are met.

In my nearly 40 years in the Senate, few issues have meant more to me than passing an inclusive Violence Against Women Act. The law is an example of how the Federal Government, in cooperation with state and local communities, can help solve problems. By providing new tools and resources to communities all around the country, we have helped bring the crimes of rape and domestic violence out of the shadows. I am proud of the work we did last year and I hope that a bipartisan Senate can come together this year to pass other, meaningful bills to support law enforcement and victims, like the Justice For All Act and the Runaway and Homelessness Youth Act.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF CAROLYN B. McHUGH TO BE UNITED STATES CIRCUIT JUDGE FOR THE TENTH CIRCUIT

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

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Carolyn B. McHugh, of Utah, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Tenth Circuit.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order the time until 5:30 p.m. will be equally divided and controlled in the usual form.

The Senator from Vermont.

(The remarks of Mr. LEAHY are printed in today's RECORD under "Morning Business.")

Mr. LEAHY. I suggest the absence of a quorum and ask that the time be charged on both sides.

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

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam 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 REPUBLICAN LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader.

Mr. McCONNELL. Are we in morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is currently considering the McHugh nomination. We are not in morning business.

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I am going to proceed on my leader time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has that right.

APPALACHIA DEPRESSION

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, there is a depression in Appalachia—an absolute depression. Families are losing work because of government attacks on the coal industry and communities are hurting.

Tonight we are going to hear 30 hours of excuses from a group of people who think that it is just OK that we have a depression in Appalachia. Well, it is not OK. It is cruel. It is cruel to tell struggling coal families that they can't have a job because some billionaire in San Francisco disagrees with their line of work.

Let me relay a message from a Kentucky miner named Howard. What you are going to hear over the next 30 seconds is more important than anything these anticoal liberals will say over the next 30 hours.

Here is what Howard had to say:

I say to you, Mister President of the United States . . . We're hurting. You say you're the president of the people? Well, we're people too. No one loves the mountains more than we do. We live here. We crawl between them. We get up every morning and we go to the top of a mountain in a strip job in the cold rain and snow to put bread on the table. Come and look at our little children, look at our people, Mr. President. You're not hurting for a job; you've got one. I don't.

That is Howard from eastern Kentucky.

I am not sure how anyone can hear something like that and think that attacking coal families is OK. It is not just coal families who are suffering.

I have two electric bills from a farmer named John in Shelbyville. Shelbyville is not in coal country. It is in another part of our State. But 90 percent of our electricity is from coal-fired generation. We have some of the lowest utility rates in America. At least we used to.

In July of 2008, the year before the President took office, John's electric bill was \$64.70. That was John's electric bill before the President took office. In July of 2013, he paid \$107.30. This same farm, a new President, and a 66-percent increase in utility bills in my State outside of coal country. That is a cost increase the people of Kentucky and the Nation simply cannot afford.

My colleagues say they will spend the entire night talking about how we need to wake up and take action. They are going to spend all night saying how

we need to wake up and take action. I wish to challenge them to think about acting in a way that puts the Americans I represent first and not spend 30 hours pretending as though they don't exist.

As I said, we have a depression in the coalfields of Kentucky created by this administration. Utility bills are soaring all over my State because of the actions of this administration. Tonight our colleagues are going to spend all night talking about just how great that really is. There is another side to the story. We need to care about and think about the people who are being hurt by the policies of this administration.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If neither side yields time, the time will be equally divided.

The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Madam President, I am pleased to have the nomination of Judge Carolyn McHugh before the Senate today. Throughout her life Judge McHugh has demonstrated a commitment to the highest standards of academic excellence, professional distinction, and public service.

Judge McHugh graduated magna cum laude from the University of Utah, where she later earned her jurist doctorate, graduating Order of the Coif and serving as the editor on the Utah Law Review.

After excelling in law school, Judge McHugh clerked for the Honorable Bruce Jenkins of the District of Utah. She then spent more than 20 years in private practice, where she excelled, focusing on complex commercial litigation.

Throughout her career in private practice, Judge McHugh has demonstrated a strong commitment to pro bono work. She has been awarded several honors for her work to advance women in the legal profession. In 1996 the Utah State Bar recognized her with a Distinguished Committee Award from the Needs of Children Committee.

It was nearly 10 years ago when I first met Judge McHugh when I was working for then-Governor Jon Huntsman. During his first year as Governor, it was time for him to appoint someone to the Utah Court of Appeals. At that point the nominating commissions began their work, and shortly after their work concluded, the Governor's staff started interviewing various applicants, various people who had been considered by the nominating commission. It soon became apparent that there was a real standout in this very impressive group of candidates for this court of appeals position, and Judge McHugh's name rose to the top of the list.

During discussions I had with her and with my colleagues, as well as with Governor Huntsman, I found her to possess a keenly insightful legal mind, and I found her to be someone who really understands the role of judges—the necessarily limited role—and the