Mr. COATS. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER), the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. MCCASKILL), the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY), and the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. ROCKEFELLER) are necessarily absent.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS), the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY).

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

The result was announced—yeas 67, nays 24, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 190 Ex.]

YEAS—67

Alexander	Hagan	Murray
Baldwin	Harkin	Nelson
Begich	Hatch	Portman
Bennet	Heinrich	Pryor
Blumenthal	Heitkamp	Reed
Booker	Hirono	Reid
Brown	Isakson	Schatz
Cantwell	Johanns	Schumer
Cardin	Johnson (SD)	Sessions
Carper	Johnson (WI)	Shaheen
Casey	Kaine	Shelby
Coats	King	Stabenow
Coburn	Kirk	Tester
Collins	Klobuchar	Udall (CO)
Coons	Landrieu	Udall (NM)
Corker	Leahy	Walsh
Donnelly	Levin	Warner
Durbin	Manchin	Warren
Feinstein	Markey	Whitehouse
Flake	Menendez	Wicker
Franken	Mikulski	Wyden
Gillibrand	Murkowski	
Grassley	Murphy	

NAYS—24

Ayotte	Fischer	Paul
Barrasso	Graham	Risch
Blunt	Heller	Roberts
Boozman	Hoeven	Rubio
Cornyn	Inhofe	Sanders
Crapo	Lee	Scott
Cruz	McCain	Thune
Enzi	McConnell	Vitter

NOT VOTING—9

Boxer	Cochran	Moran
Burr	McCaskill	Rockefeller
Chambliss	Merkley	Toomey

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Stanley Fischer, of New York, to be Vice Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System?

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER), the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. MCCASKILL), the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY), the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON), the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. ROCKEFELLER), and the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) are necessarily absent.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS), the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Ariona (Mr. MCCAIN), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY).

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

The result was announced—yeas 63, nays 24, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 191 Ex.]

YEAS—63

Alexander	Franken	Menendez
Baldwin	Gillibrand	Mikulski
Begich	Hagan	Murkowski
Bennet	Harkin	Murphy
Blumenthal	Hatch	Murray
Booker	Heinrich	Portman
Brown	Heitkamp	Pryor
Cantwell	Hirono	Reed
Cardin	Isakson	Reid
Carper	Johanns	Schatz
Casey	Johnson (SD)	Schumer
Coats	Johnson (WI)	Shaheen
Coburn	Kaine	Stabenow
Collins	King	Tester
Coons	Kirk	Udall (CO)
Corker	Klobuchar	Udall (NM)
Cornyn	Landrieu	Walsh
Donnelly	Leahy	Warner
Durbin	Levin	Warren
Feinstein	Manchin	Wicker
Flake	Markey	Wyden

NAYS—24

Ayotte	Grassley	Roberts
Barrasso	Heller	Rubio
Blunt	Hoeven	Sanders
Boozman	Inhofe	Scott
Crapo	Lee	Sessions
Cruz	McConnell	Shelby
Enzi	Paul	Thune
Fischer	Risch	Vitter

NOT VOTING—13

Boxer	McCain	Rockefeller
Burr	McCaskill	Toomey
Chambliss	Merkley	Whitehouse
Cochran	Moran	
Graham	Nelson	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, with respect to the nominations just confirmed, the motions to reconsider are considered made and laid upon the table and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

VOTE EXPLANATION

● Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I was unable to attend the rollcall votes on the following nominations: Crystal Nix-Hines to be Ambassador to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization; Lael Brainard to be a member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System; Jerome H. Powell to be a member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System; and Stanley Fischer to be Vice Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. Had I been present for these votes, I would have voted aye.●

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume legislative session.

COMMERCE, JUSTICE, SCIENCE, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2015—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

Ms. WARREN. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. WARREN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO SENATOR JIM BUNNING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I rise to pay tribute to a great friend of mine and a friend of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, former Senator Jim Bunning. Jim has been an inspiration to Kentuckians for decades in many different roles—as a public servant, a man of integrity, a devoted father of 9 children, grandfather of 35, and a great-grandfather of 12, with 1 more on the way. But few public servants or family men can also claim to be in the Baseball Hall of Fame. Jim Bunning can, for his extraordinary Major League pitching career with the Detroit Tigers and with the Philadelphia Phillies.

With Father's Day approaching this weekend, I thought it appropriate to remember what Jim Bunning accomplished on Father's Day 1964. The date was June 21, and in front of his wife Mary, his eldest daughter Barbara, and more than 32,000 cheering fans, Jim Bunning delivered the perfect Father's Day gift by pitching a perfect game.

Let me take a moment to explain, for those who do not spend their youth playing baseball and collecting baseball cards as some of us did, what pitching a perfect game means and why it is such a legendary feat. To pitch a perfect game, a pitcher must pitch a full nine innings without allowing a batter to get on base for any reason—no hits, no walks, no hits by a pitch, and no errors. Twenty-seven batters must step to the plate and all 27 must sit down. It is an achievement that has been accomplished only 23 times in more than 135 years of Major League Baseball history—23 times in the history of Major League Baseball.

At the time Jimmy's pitching perfection was only the seventh perfect game in Major League Baseball history. It was the first perfect game in regular season play in more than 42 years and the first in the National League since 1880. As the Philadelphia Phillies were the visitors against the New York Mets, it was also the first-ever perfect game pitched in Shea Stadium.

Jimmy's day started as did any other Sunday. He went to 9 a.m. Mass and

had a breakfast of eggs and sausage. He was worried about getting tickets for his wife and daughter to attend the game. He showed up at Shea Stadium to warm up for the first game of a doubleheader. ''I felt good and loose,'' Jim recalls. ''I realized right away that I had exceptional stuff.''

With a combination of fastballs, curveballs, and sliders, Jim began to make short work of the Mets' batting order. By the sixth inning, he began to consider that he was on the cusp of history.

''Everyone is supposed to do perfect work, but perfection in the game of baseball is a rarity I never expected to accomplish.'' That is what the big right-hander had to say about that.

The final Met at bat was John Stephenson, a lefty. Here is how the Philadelphia Inquirer described the game's dramatic conclusion:

The rookie swung at a low-breaking ball and missed, took a pitch for a second strike, then took two balls, one low outside and the other high and away. Bunning came back with a curve at the knees on the outside part of the plate. Stephenson swung and missed and the Phillies made a bee-line for the mound. They came running from their positions and streamed out of the dugout to pound the former American Leaguer on the back and escort him to the dugout.

The story continues:

A few minutes later, [Bunning] went on television for an interview during which his wife and daughter rushed up to kiss him. It was the thrill of a lifetime for the pitcher, who richly deserved it.

That he did.

For baseball fans, the statistics on Jim's perfect game are truly numbers to behold. He threw only 90 pitches in the Phillies' 6-to-0 victory—an average of only 10 per inning. He struck out 10. He did not miss the strike zone more than four times in any inning. And he went to a three-ball count on only two batters. Statistically, it may be the most perfect of perfect games ever pitched.

Acclaim was instant. Jim appeared on ''The Ed Sullivan Show'' that night. This man, who was always a fierce competitor both on the pitching mound and in the Halls of Congress, had reached the pinnacle of his profession. But it won't surprise any of my colleagues who know and worked with Jim that he did not let this sudden rush of fame go to his head. ''Fame is fleeting as far as the next hitter at the plate is concerned,'' says Jim. I admire my friend and former colleague's ability to keep such a momentous event in perspective.

It is fitting that his perfect game occurred on Father's Day because family is really what Jim Bunning is all about. The Bunning family celebrated their dad's perfect game not at a fancy Manhattan restaurant but at the Howard Johnson's on the New Jersey Turnpike. And I know his lovely wife Mary has been his rock and his foundation for his entire career in both baseball and politics.

Jim Bunning was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1996. But for any baseball fan, including this Senator, the thrill of Jimmy's perfect game is as fresh as if it happened yesterday, not 50 years ago.

Jim Bunning always stood tall, firm, and unafraid, whether in sports, politics, or life. That is how he became one of Kentucky's favorite sons. That is how he became an inspiration to his family and his friends and his colleagues. And that is how he threw that perfect game on Father's Day 1964. It is his strength of spirit that has enabled Jim to succeed. Kentucky is honored to have had Jim Bunning pitching for our home team for so many years.

I am sure that every Father's Day brings back special memories for the Bunning family. I am proud to wish my friend and former colleague well on the eve of this Father's Day and to extend my best wishes to him and to his family.

Thank you, Jim. Thank you for the example you have set for how to compete, how to win, and how to live a good and full life.

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

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

U.S. MANUFACTURING

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, American manufacturing has taken quite a hit in the last 15 years in this country. Some 30 years ago, U.S. manufacturing made up some 25 percent of gross domestic product. Today that number has declined to somewhere in the vicinity of 10 or 11 percent of gross domestic product. That has meant literally millions of jobs paying good wages in cities and suburbs and rural America that have simply disappeared. Some have been lost to technology. Far too many have been lost to unfair trade practices, as jobs are moved overseas. Some of that responsibility lies with this Congress, which has written laws or refused to change laws that encourage companies through trade agreements and through tax laws to shut down production in Worcester, MA, or Wooster, OH, and move to Wuhan, China.

But we have seen some good news. From 2000 to 2010, we lost about 5 million manufacturing jobs; 60,000 plants closed in this country. The good news we have begun to see is that since the auto rescue in 2008 and 2009 and since this President has been relatively aggressive—better than his predecessors—in enforcing trade laws, we have seen growth in manufacturing. Since 2009—again, because of trade enforcement, because of the auto rescue—about 500,000 manufacturing jobs have been created.

We see new investments in advanced manufacturing. We see new investments in clean energy. Natural gas production is providing domestic manufacturers with an affordable energy source. Natural gas prices have remained pretty constant at $4 or $5, with a likely predictable, stable price for the next several years—maybe for a decade.

This production in natural gas has also increased demand for world-class tubular steel. Nearly 8,000 workers across the United States make what we call oil country tubular goods. That is the steel pipes that are some of the strongest steel ever invented, ever developed, because that steel needs to be able to absorb high-speed, high-rotation deep drilling into water and into stone. Only the best kind of hardened steel can withstand that kind of pressure. These jobs—these 8,000 jobs making oil country tubular goods—support another 7 jobs in the supply chain.

We have an opportunity to grow the economy by investing in manufacturing to create more good-paying jobs. But here is the problem: When foreign steel is dumped into our country, American workers pay the price. What that means simply is that when South Korea—which literally has no domestic market. South Korea has begun to produce oil country tubular goods. They do not use this kind of steel in their domestic economy. So they began this production, they started up, they ramped up this industry all for export, which they are free to do. But global oversupply is a major challenge facing our domestic steel industry. It threatens thousands of steel jobs.

OCTG—oil country tubular goods—imports have doubled since 2008. Imports account for more than 50 percent of the pipes being used by companies drilling for gas and oil. If that were done through fair competition, it would be one thing, but here are some things we know:

We know that in South Korea they need to go to mostly Australia and Brazil to get the iron ore and the coal and the limestone for their steel production. Plants in Ohio, in the Midwest, go to Minnesota to get iron ore or they go to Indiana for their coke, which is made from coal. Their coal is processed into coke. They may go to Ohio to get their limestone. So the Koreans, obviously, to get their raw materials—their raw materials have to travel much longer distances for their Korean steel industry than the U.S. steel industry, No. 1.

No. 2, American workers are paid only slightly more than Korean workers, so there is not much difference in the cost of labor.

No. 3, the U.S. steel manufacturers have upgraded and invested many billions of dollars in their production. There is a 2-year-old steel mill in Youngstown, OH. There are major investments in Lorain and Cleveland to make oil country tubular steel—major investments. I was at the Wheatland steel plant north of Youngstown in Warren, OH. There is a $20 million new

investment there. So our mills are just as modern—maybe more modern—than the Korean mills.

Lastly, after this oil country tubular steel is produced in Ohio or in Pennsylvania, it is transported maybe 50 miles to use in the oil and gas fields at the Marcellus or Utica shale in Ohio or in the region. Korean steel tubes, on the other hand, are transported maybe 10,000 miles to the fields in this country to use in oil and gas drilling.

So clearly we know that the Koreans simply are subsidizing their steel. We call it steel dumping. Call it whatever technical or nontechnical term you want, it is clear that the Koreans are not playing fair.

If they can design an industry—think about this—if Korea can decide: Well, there is a market in the United States for this kind of steel; we will just design an industry, we will subsidize that steel, we will sell into that market, and we may put some of them out of business—if we as a government accept this kind of behavior from Korea, it will show the rest of the world a blueprint on how you take jobs from the United States of America, how you start a business, how you invest in this business, how you illegally subsidize this business, how you export from your country into the United States, throwing American workers out of work, undercutting American companies, and in the end making our manufacturing in the United States of America experience even more decline than we have seen over the last 30 years.

We are asking the Department of Commerce to reconsider its preliminary decision to make sure they look at what, in fact, has happened in this industry. There is no question that the deeper you look—or there is no question on the surface—that Korea is subsidizing its steel, that it is breaking trade rules.

There is clear evidence that our workers and manufacturers are being cheated in another way; that is, by currency. My bipartisan legislation—I have worked with Senator SESSIONS and Senator GRAHAM and others, Senator STABENOW on the Democratic side—our bipartisan legislation would crack down on China's currency manipulation. It would treat currency manipulation as an unfair trade subsidy and require the Commerce Department to investigate that currency manipulation.

If you cheat on currency, if you devalue in playing this game with currency at the rate of 30 percent, what that means is when China exports a product to the United States, it is 30 percent cheaper, making it very hard for U.S. companies to compete—another way of subsidizing is through currency—or if U.S. companies try to sell into the Chinese market, our goods cost 30 percent more than the Chinese goods. So, again, we simply cannot play on a level playing field.

A report released earlier this year said that 254,000 Ohio jobs would be created if currency manipulation were eliminated by 2015.

When foreign steel is dumped into our country, American workers pay the price. When foreign steel is dumped into our country, American businesses pay the price. When foreign steel is dumped into our country, the communities where these mills are, these communities that supply, feed into, and sell items and sell goods into the supply chain, pay the price too. So it means fewer teachers, fewer police officers, fewer people working, less income, less prosperity in those communities.

Again, when foreign steel is dumped into our country, workers pay the price over and over.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARKEY). The Senator from Florida.

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

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

IRAQ

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I come to the floor this afternoon to talk about an emerging issue of the highest order for our country's national security. I say that because I believe the coverage in the news over the last few days about Iraq has missed the greater point about the importance of the issue we are now facing.

Much of the attention—and I understand why—has been paid to the fact that the United States invested a tremendous amount of money and unfortunately lost many, many lives in the efforts to liberate Iraq from Saddam Hussein. These views we now see of Al Qaeda-linked groups taking over cities in Iraq rightfully trouble us. We hear the question being asked of why did we do all of this. This is without a doubt a legitimate concern and one I will touch upon in a moment, but the issue of what is happening in Iraq at this moment is much deeper and more serious than simply just that.

Let me begin by describing the emerging situation. There is a radical Islamic group by the name of ISIL, as it is called, or ISIS according to some. It has different terminologies. But it is a group linked to Al Qaeda that emerged in Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein in western Iraq. They were involved in efforts against Americans after we liberated Iraq. They killed and maimed countless Americans. However, thanks to the assistance we provided, the Iraqis were able to put that group on a defensive posture.

After the United States left Iraq, however, many of this group were able to reorganize. They did so increasingly with new leadership, and they were able to do it in parts of Syria that became largely ungoverned after the Assad regime began to lose control over large swaths of land in Syria, and they grew stronger. They grew stronger still when foreign fighters from all over the world, who sympathized with their Islamic jihadist cause, began flowing into Syria, providing them new fighters.

Over the last few months, as I warned, by the way, in a hearing that we had late last year when we debated the issue of the use of force in Syria, this group, based largely now in Syria, began to conduct operations in Iraq, initially to limited success, and then limited operations that had some success. But now, over the last 72 hours, they have begun to make dramatic gains in Iraq. In fact, they have overrun the second largest city, and there are expectations that they are on the way toward Baghdad.

The goal of this group is pretty straight forward: to establish what would be known as an Islamic caliphate, basically an Islamic fundamentalist area, country—a terrorist government. By the way, this group does not necessarily respect any borders. They are looking to carve out pieces of land that they can use to train terrorists and to plan operations.

If we look at the situation in Iraq over the last 72 hours, we have legitimate concerns that, in fact, that is what they are on the verge of doing, if they have not done so already. When you add up the land they now control in Syria and the land they now control in Iraq—by the way, in many parts of the towns they are now taking over in Syria, they have already began imposing Sharia law. They have banned music; they have forced women to wear full veils. This is a radical Islamic group. It has shown what it is capable of in its conflict in Iraq when Americans were there and thereafter. This is a brutal and murderous group that has shown what they are capable of doing to those who oppose them. Unfortunately, this is a military-capable group that has made dramatic gains over the last few years in Iraq.

Most startling of all, by the way, has been what has happened with the Iraqi military, which we spent money to train and equip. In many instances the reports are they just abandoned their posts. They took off their uniforms, they put on civilian clothes and just walked away. Our fear should be that even as I speak to you now, emerging in the center of the Middle East, emerging in this area of the world is an Islamic caliphate controlled by the most radical group in that area of the world today. That is saying a lot.

Why should this matter? Well, first, as was pointed out earlier, Americans sacrificed greatly so that Iraq could be freed from tyranny. Now those gains seem to have evaporated almost overnight. But the most concerning long-term aspect of this is that in this part of the world, using territory in what was Syria and now Iraq, is the emergence of a safe haven. A safe haven is what made 9/11 possible. Al Qaeda was able to go into Afghanistan, then controlled by the Taliban, another radical Islamic group, and use it as a place to

train and plan 9/11 and other terrorist acts against the United States.

Perhaps one of the greatest successes in the post-9/11 efforts has been the denial of safe havens where terrorists could do this. But suddenly, rapidly a new safe haven is emerging where radical jihadist fighters from all over the planet are able to go and be trained. They will not simply be satisfied with conducting efforts in that part of the world. Rest assured that their targets and ambitions include us, including right here in the homeland, right here in the United States.

If, in fact, they are able to hold on to this territory, Jordan, an extraordinary ally of the United States in the region and an ally of Israel, is directly threatened. They are the next country—right next door. Already Jordan is facing tremendous challenges because of the conflict in Syria. Beyond Jordan, you can foresee where Israel could be threatened by the existence of the safe haven for a terrorist organization right next door—but ultimately us here in the United States.

The goal of these groups is to carry out Western operations. The goal of these groups is to attack Americans here, to terrorize. They believe and know that perhaps the most effective way to terrorize Americans is to not strike us in remote areas of the world, although they will do that as well, but to strike us right here in the United States. If they have an area where they are able to do this, a piece of land where there is no government to drive them out, where in fact they are the government, where they can attract the most radical people on the planet to come, to train, and to prepare to carry out these attacks, it puts in grave danger the security of every American living here in the United States.

This is the risk before us now emerging in Iraq. It is not simply the fact that we have lost the gains that were once made. That is important and worthy of outrage, but what is most startling and concerning of all is the emergence of this safe haven and what it can mean to the long-term security of every single one of us.

What can we do about it is the next question? I must say that while national security issues should never be of a partisan nature, I am concerned that despite this emergence, we have yet to hear a cohesive policy pronouncement from the White House. In fact, a number of my colleagues on the other side of aisle—Democrats—have shared the same frustration.

I want to make a couple of brief points with regard to the sorts of measures we should be thinking about in outlining a response to prevent the creation of a safe haven. The first good news is that this group is not invulnerable. This group is vulnerable. No. 1, they have not proven to be very good at controlling territory for long periods of time. This creates a vulnerability. Here is the other point. This is a Sunni Muslim group. But they are not popular among the Sunni population in Iraq. Sunnis feel terrorized by them, and they certainly do not like the Maliki government. But this is not a group that is popular among them.

Beyond that, I would say the first action we need to take is to make sure our personnel are protected, particularly in Baghdad and in the Green Zone in Baghdad, the international area, which is vulnerable to suicide attacks. We must ensure that our personnel there are protected. I understand that steps have been taken and continue to be taken to do that. I am encouraged by that. We need to make sure that happens, that the men and women who are representing us and are working on our behalf in Baghdad are protected.

One of the reasons why this is happening is because the Maliki government has been so terrible. It is not just corruption. It is the way this government has created no space for Sunnis living in Iraq that has created the possibility of this occurring. This Maliki government must be worth saving. Right now the Maliki government is a dysfunctional government as evidenced by the collapse of their military forces, but also as evidenced by the way they treated their Sunni population, giving them no space or voice in their government. That must change. That must change.

The third step is that if in fact that begins to change and conditioned upon that change, the United States must continue to provide lethal assistance, to the extent possible, to help these Iraqi forces, particularly those concentrated in Baghdad, to repel and push back against this group. Right now it is my opinion, based on everything I know that they are not capable of doing that and in many instances are not willing to do that. Without our assistance, they will have no chance of doing that.

Ultimately, while the use of force is never popular around here, I want to be blunt and clear about something. We are going to have to take some sort of action against this radical group. That is not the choice before us. The choice before us will be whether we take action now or we take action later, because what we can never allow is for another safe haven like pre-9/11 Afghanistan to emerge anywhere in the world, where terrorists can plan, practice, and ultimately conduct attacks against us here in the homeland or on our interests around the world.

Therefore, I believe that we should not rule out and, in fact, conduct, to the extent they are effective, military actions from the air against this group wherever they are located.

I do not take that lightly. I am not one to come to this floor and call for military engagement as a response to every conflict. I have opposed them in the past when they have made no sense or there was no clear plan moving forward. But this issue rises to that level of urgency. We must never forget the lessons of September 11, 2001, where a group of radical jihadist terrorists used a safe haven in Afghanistan to murder innocent Americans and carry out the most devastating attack in the history of our Nation.

It was not that long ago that this happened. There are groups around the world that aspire to that now. What they need is a place to do that from. We cannot allow that place to emerge. There is no greater responsibility on the Federal Government than to provide for the security of our people. The choice before us will be whether we prevent it now or whether we deal with the consequences of it later. I urge the White House to take this matter with the importance that it deserves and to come to this Congress as soon as possible with a clear and concrete plan on how we are going to deal with it and engage in this emerging emergency situation that we now face and that threatens the national security of the United States and places a grave threat to the national security of our country in the years to come.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

VETERANS HEALTH CARE

Mr. BEGICH. Mr. President, I appreciate an opportunity to speak on a bill we passed here yesterday, the veterans access reform bill. We passed it 93 to 3, which is amazing when you think about it—in this body—as we struggle to get issues in front of us and work on them. What we saw was an incredible bipartisan piece of legislation basically saying: We are for vets. We want to make sure that veterans have the best care they deserve and they earned fighting wars—not only the recent ones but in the past.

I want to talk a little bit about the piece of legislation, and then I am going to talk about some pieces that are important to Alaska. I will show some examples here in a second. But I ultimately want to talk about what is left still ahead of us. As a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, it is not just about passing one bill and saying: We are done; we have done our chore; we have done our job. No, there is a lot more work ahead of us.

This bill we passed is a bipartisan bill, with Democrats and Republicans coming together because veterans are not a partisan issue; it is an American issue. In my State it is an American-Alaskan issue; in the Presiding Officer's State, a Massachusetts issue. It is important for all of us to step to the plate and make sure we do the right thing.

This now provides the VA Secretary the authority to dismiss those senior executives who are not performing, are not doing the jobs. But also it ensures that if there are situations, as we have heard and seen and then had shown to us, where there are people who falsified data, then they are going to be held accountable. As we know, recently we have heard the FBI is now reviewing some of those situations.

Whoever is at fault and has done anything to falsify needs to be held accountable and brought to justice. But it also brings out an issue that we have been dealing with in Alaska for several years—an issue that when I ran for office I remember I called the ''Heroes Health Card'' because I thought it was important, no matter where you were as a veteran, you should be able to go and access health care all throughout Alaska. My State is a very rural State, very vast in its size, and where people are and where they live. It is not easy to describe until you see it or are there.

Just for example, here in Anchorage, flying up here to Barrow is 700 miles, a long distance. But if you lived in Barrow, and you were a veteran, you could not get health care there. A VA facility does not exist. You would have to come down here to Anchorage, and that is just for a clinic, because we do not have a VA hospital in Alaska. So then if you need hospital services, you would have to go to Seattle—long distances.

So for several years we have worked on this issue. I continue to push. I brought General Shinseki out to Alaska, to rural Alaska, to show him the impact on veterans who live in rural Alaska. But yet across the street medical services provided by Indian Health Services through our Native health clinics were being delivered by our tribes—incredible health care. But veterans could not utilize it.

So I tried to show him that the care there is incredible, high quality. We need to be able to access this. It is all paid with Federal dollars so why not figure out how to access it. Why not figure out how to maximize our public resources for the betterment of not only our Alaska Natives but also our veterans in Alaska? So we worked on an idea where today we have now agreements with 26-plus tribes. All of these black dots on this map show all the new areas that veterans can access health care if they want.

This is another choice. It is not a requirement, but if they want to stay in their region, stay close to their homes, be part of their own health care system there, they can and the VA will reimburse them, reimburse the clinic so it is no money out-of-pocket for the Indian Health Service or tribes that deliver health care.

For example, in Nome I was very proud when we debated a big issue a few years ago, trying to figure out how to deal with the stimulus bill and how to bring economic revival to our economy. One of those in that bill I voted for brought a new hospital to Nome, AK, run by a tribe—a $170 million hospital, but again 800 veterans in Nome, AK, could not access that hospital. They still had to fly to Anchorage or Seattle.

But now those 800 veterans, Native or non-Native, can access that hospital, get care, and end up staying closer to home. All throughout Alaska now people can access Indian Health Services run by our tribes and delivering incredible services.

Along with that, in Anchorage, we have a federally qualified health center that now also allows access for our veterans. Again, the bill we passed, the veterans access reform bill, took some of these examples we have been doing in Alaska and showing great success—not perfect but improving.

To give an example of this next item—and these numbers fluctuate a little bit, but I want to give a general understanding of where we were and where we are. Before we had all of this integrated within the Indian tribal system—the Alaska tribal system delivering health care—it used to be 1,000 people, almost 1,000 people on the waiting list; today, a few dozen. This changes, this fluctuates, don't get me wrong. So when people call me and say it is not 10, it is 50 or 5, it does fluctuate, but it is no longer the 1,000.

In the waiting period, in the audit that was just done, as we all know in the 140 facilities they audited throughout the country, we, Alaska, our VA, was tied for first in the best response in regard to appointments on the waiting list. Because that was the big debate, how to improve the number of people who are on the waiting list because it is appalling—appalling—what has been happening in Arizona and other places. I have seen the list now through this audit, in some cases 2,000, in some cases 3,000 on the waiting list, waiting for care.

The bill we passed yesterday will help improve that, and the numbers for Alaska show we have an example, not perfect but yet improving significantly the care for our veterans.

No. 1, appointments, appointments scheduled within 30 days or less.

When we look at a couple of other pieces, for example, mental health, which is a new issue, growing significantly, new patient mental health average wait time in Alaska is in the top 6 percent. Again, it is a great record for us, but we would love to be No. 1 in that category, to be frank, and we are going to continue to strive to do that, but the way we have improved the system was to make sure we had more opportunities to access.

The bill we passed yesterday, again, takes some of the great things we are doing in Alaska to show access. I think this will enhance the capacity for veterans all around the State.

This is something that, again, when I campaigned on the Heroes Health Card, I believed we had this resource we could maximize, that we could move forward on, that we could make a difference for our veterans, and we are seeing it. When we look at this issue 1 year from now, we hope the model we have laid out in Alaska is not only in Alaska but across the country.

I will say we need to also keep track, because when you deliver health care through our Indian Health Service Program—in our case the tribes of Alaska or through our federally qualified clinics—they can provide the health care per patient at a cheaper rate, and no disrespect to the private doctors who are out there whom we do contract with, the VA does. They are more expensive because they work in a different model, a different business model. That is understandable. But this is a more cost-effective way.

Hopefully, by passing the bill we don't just say we passed the bill and we are done, but 6 months from now or 1 year from now we review the cost of delivering this health care to make sure we are getting the most cost benefit but also delivering quality care to our veterans, no matter where they live.

As a matter of fact, 25 percent of veterans live in rural America. That means we have to make sure our federally qualified clinics have the right resources they need so that when a veteran walks in that door, they can get the care.

I will say in the Anchorage ones—again, for people who don't know Alaska—the Federal clinics there, the one Anchorage neighborhood health center—when someone is enrolled as a veteran to utilize that facility for their primary care appointment, it is almost same day, in most cases almost same-day service—incredible. It is the same thing with our Southcentral facility health services. These are incredible clinics run by Alaska Native tribes in the Southcentral region. Again, same thing—same-day service if you are on the list. We want to make sure it is clear that once someone is on the list, they can get pretty good service, very direct service.

Let me put that aside a minute and give a general comment about veterans and veterans services we need. Again, I am going to leave this up so people see it, but the veterans access reform bill was just another step for us to improve the services to veterans. This is just one of many things.

One thing we did do on health care, the President and other Members remember when we had the shutdown, government services all stopped except VA health care, because when I first got here, there was a bill I cosponsored that gave advance appropriations.

Why were advance appropriations important? So when government shutdowns occur, health care still gets delivered for our veterans. They shouldn't be subject to the politics of this place, and we made sure of that.

But to be frank, we still have more work to do. I hear Members come down and start talking about disability claims, which still is a challenge for us. We still have a lot of work in this area to make sure we increase the capacity.

I know as an appropriator we put more money into this system so we can have more capacity to shorten the time of disability claims and make sure we get these done in a fast manner.

But we have to keep in mind, if we don't have advanced appropriations on that side of the equation, the benefits

side of the VA, and there is a government shutdown, guess what happens: GI benefits stop, disability payment claims may not be processed in a timely manner, other benefits that individuals receive as a veteran get stopped.

There is a bill pending, which I am very proud to be one of the prime sponsors of with the Republicans, both the House and the Senate, is a bipartisan bill. Every single veterans group supports it. It is important to improve the delivery system of the benefits side.

The health care side, we did some work yesterday. We have been doing work in Alaska for the last few years. Now we need to work on the benefits side.

There are many different bills out there, and a long list, working on homelessness that we need to keep focused on and making sure our benefits for our GI bill continue to move forward, helping our veterans. But I give you examples of a couple of people, and I want to speak about these case stories and then I will end. It is important to remind people of the work we did yesterday, the work we have been doing for years in Alaska, the results we are getting.

This example is now woven into the veterans access reform bill we passed yesterday—and Alaska is a great example—but here are a couple of cases in Anchorage I received recently.

One Anchorage veteran was in touch with my office and had been trying to get help from the VA since 1995 for an undiagnosed condition related to jet fuel exposure. Last week my office was able to get him an appointment immediately in order to get him service and have this looked at. He called to thank us. He is getting care and the appointments he needs and he appreciates this.

I will say it is the job for our offices—all of our offices as Members—to do everything we can for veterans. But we want to make sure this veteran—when he walks into that clinic or facility, doesn't have to wait this long or be in these situations.

Another veteran in Soldotna, with a back condition, about 150 miles away from Anchorage, which again is where we had the clinic for the VA—about a 3-hour drive in the mountains—needed to be seen closer to home. Again our office helped arrange it so he could get service right there, so he can get service closer to home.

It is important we look at these, and I see these examples all the time that we are working on every single day. I run into veterans all across Alaska who thank us for the work we do to make sure they have the access and capacity to get their benefits or their health care.

I am going to end by saying that there is no better job here than working with the veterans. It is something I enjoy—77,000 veterans in Alaska, the highest per capita in the Nation. Every day I run into a veteran who may have an issue or is just thanking us for the work or thanking this country for the service—what they get and the benefits they receive.

Yesterday was an example of what the Senate can do with veterans, come together unified, negotiate but never forget our principal job is to take care of the American people the best we can in the services we should render, and in this case it is for our veterans.

Again, Alaska is an incredible example—not perfect, let me be clear about that, and the numbers fluctuate, but at the end of the day the trend lines are the right trend lines. They are moving in the right way.

The bill we passed yesterday had some aspects of what we are doing in Alaska. It makes me proud to say Alaskan veterans should be proud that we are doing not only the best we can, but we are using our examples to help veterans all across this country, and I think that is a great statement.

We have more work to do. It is an honor to be here and explain once again what we are doing in Alaska and also yesterday being able to vote on that piece of legislation.

I know the House bill is very close to ours and we will have a compromise bill and veterans will get better care tomorrow than they are getting today.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE MARKUP

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I am on the Senate floor, but I should have had the opportunity today to be at an Appropriations Committee meeting.

We were scheduled this morning to mark up—that means to consider and vote on—the labor, health and human services bill for the next fiscal year. The labor, health and human services bill is one of the most important pieces of legislation we have.

It is the bill that spells out the priorities of the American people as worked out by their elected officials on everything from National Institutes of Health to Pell Grants for college students.

Passing an appropriations bill is an appropriate and important check on executive spending. It is one of our most important constitutional responsibilities. It is one we haven't been exercising very well over the last 4 years. Even though the Appropriations Committee has approved most of the bills to go to the floor, the majority leader has not brought most of the bills to the floor for our consideration.

In 2 of the last 4 years we considered zero appropriations bills on the floor. One of those years we considered one and another year we considered five.

I wasn't at the committee meeting this morning because our markup was indefinitely postponed. I asked why, and I couldn't get a clear answer, but apparently it was because some Senators don't want to vote on difficult or tough amendments.

I have repeated a certain line a lot in the past couple of years. I am from Tennessee, so I have said that being in the Senate and not being allowed to vote on amendments is like being asked to join the Grand Ole Opry and not being allowed to sing. That is what we do. I mean, this body, described as the one authentic piece of genius in the constitutional system of the United States, was created to have 100 men and women who come to the Senate and who have the opportunity to have extended debate on important issues until we come to a consensus. Sometimes we do that in a terrific way.

Even recently we have done that in important ways; for example, on the student loan agreement that we reached last year which cut nearly in half interest rates on all undergraduate loans, which are 85 percent of student loans. That was the result of an extended debate, working with the Republican House and a Democratic President. The government worked the way it was supposed to.

Coming to the Senate floor and having a say, offering a bill, offering amendments, and having a vote is the job of Senators. It is not so important that it is my say or my vote, it is the fact that this is what I was hired to do by my constituents, each one of us was. So we have a right to have our say on the issues—whether it is Iran, student loans, Ukraine, or health care. It is what we are expected to do. So I have objected to the fact that we have fallen into a pattern in this body of not having amendments. Senator BARRASSO of Wyoming has actually counted the number of rollcall votes on amendments since last July. He has discovered that Republicans offered only nine amendments that actually had a rollcall vote in that entire period of time. Then he counted what the Democrats have offered. Our friends on the other side of the aisle have offered more than 600 amendments, and they have only had 7 rollcall votes.

But today we have reached a new level of obstruction because it seems that our friends in the Democratic majority are moving the gag rule—which has existed on the floor of the Senate—from the Senate floor to the committee room. They have said we are going to indefinitely postpone a markup of a bill from one of the most important subcommittees in the Senate to decide how to spend more than a hundred billion dollars, apparently, because some Senators don't want to vote on tough amendments.

These aren't extraneous amendments. These aren't political exercises. These are relevant amendments critical to the process of setting spending priorities, and well within the scope of the bill.

So I have no alternative but to bring my tough amendments—the amendments that I planned to offer this morning at the markup—to the Senate floor, at least to talk about them in the hope that soon I will have a chance to offer them in the committee.

I am going to talk about four amendments I had planned to offer this morning—important, relevant amendments, part of what we are supposed to do. Senators shouldn't be afraid to vote on them. If so, we shouldn't be here, because that is what we do.

Amendment No. 1. My first amendment would reverse the trend toward a national school board for elementary and secondary education by protecting a State's control over its academic standards and tests.

My amendment does this by prohibiting the U.S. Department of Education—where I used to be the Secretary—from exercising any influence over the academic standards States use to define what students should know and be able to do, as well as the test States use to determine whether students have met those standards.

It also prohibits the Department from requiring or incentivizing States to adopt common standards and tests as a condition of an award of a Federal grant or a contract, or by providing additional points or a preference in a competitive grant program, or as a condition of approval for waivers of requirements under No Child Left Behind or any Federal law.

In other words, this amendment directs the Federal Government to keep its sticky fingers off State standards and not to interfere with the hard work States are doing to raise expectations for our students.

This is not a new issue. In 1992, 22 years ago, I was the U.S. Secretary of Education for President George H.W. Bush—who celebrated his 90th birthday today by jumping out of an airplane once again—a remarkable event. Happy birthday, President Bush. Democrats in Congress wrote an education bill in 1992 that would have set Federal standards not only for academic content but also for how that content should be delivered to students.

As Education Secretary, I wrote a memo to the President. I advised him to veto the bill if it came to his desk, because, I said then, it:

> . . . creates at least the beginnings of a national school board that could make day-to-day school decisions on curriculum, discipline, teacher training, textbooks, and classroom materials. . . . A federal recipe dictating how to operate a local school board does not make schools better.

I wrote this to President Bush in 1992. The President told the Congress he would veto the bill if it reached his desk. Fortunately, it never did.

The amendment that I would like to have offered this morning should not be necessary because Federal law already includes a number of specific limitations on the Federal Government's involvement in education standards and curriculum.

For example, section 9527 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act prohibits any employee of the Federal Government from mandating, directing or controlling a State, local school district or school's curriculum, program of instruction or allocation of State and local resources.

The Department of Education is prohibited from using any funding, says the law, to endorse, approve or sanction any curriculum of instruction used in the elementary or secondary school. That is the law today.

Furthermore, the law today prohibits requiring any State to have academic content or student academic achievement standards approved by the Federal Government in order to receive funding under the law, with the exception of the requirement that States must demonstrate that they have adopted challenging standards in their title I plan.

By including these prohibitions Congress has made it clear that it does not want a national school board—that primary responsibility for decisions relating to educating students rest with States and local communities, teachers, and parents.

But this administration has used the combination of No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, and waivers from No Child Left Behind to in effect convert itself into a national school board, making decisions that States and local communities ought to make for themselves—particularly decisions about standards and tests.

Under Race to the Top, the Department gave additional points to States which participated in the development of and adopted the Common Core standards, using the prospect of receiving Federal funds to coerce States into joining the Common Core.

Now, the Department might say it didn't write the words ''Common Core'' into their grant application, but Common Core then was the only game in town that could meet the requirements for those points.

More recently, the administration has used its waiver authority under No Child Left Behind to impose on States new requirements about standards that are not contemplated in and, I believe, prohibited by Federal law. So this amendment would strictly prohibit that overreach.

My second amendment would avoid the creation of a taxpayer-funded popularity contest by preventing the Department of Education from developing a rating system for our Nation's 6,000 colleges and universities.

So my first amendment would prevent the Secretary from becoming chairman of a national school board, and my second amendment would prevent the Secretary from claiming the role of national czar of higher education. It is a simple amendment to end what I see as a misguided errand initiated by the President and underway at the Department of Education. That is the rating of our colleges and universities by the Federal Government.

This amendment would prohibit the Department of Education from using any Federal funding to develop, refine, publish or implement a college rating system. In August of 2013, President Obama directed the Department of Education to rate each of our Nation's more than 6,000 colleges and universities based on their affordability and outcomes such as graduation rates and earnings. I am all for ensuring that parents and students have the information they need to make good college choices, but picking winners and losers with a rating system is not an appropriate role for the Federal Government in Washington, DC. Here is what an expert in education policy at the Brookings Institution—not exactly a hotbed of rightwing propaganda—had to say:

> There is a clear case to be made for the federal government using its authority to gather data like these for postsecondary institutions that receive taxpayer funding, but little precedent for the government producing ratings.

The Brookings scholar goes on to say:

> The Securities and Exchange Commission regulates stocks and bonds, but leaves it to private organizations to rate them. The Department of Transportation sets standards for the calculation of cars' gas mileage, but it doesn't opine on whether a Ford is better than a Toyota. The Food and Drug Administration decides which pharmaceuticals can be sold in the U.S., but it does not say whether Advil is better for a headache than Tylenol.

In other words, this is not the job of the Federal Government.

We don't need the Federal Government making these judgments for 22 million college students. What we need is the information so Americans can make these judgments for ourselves.

I also have serious practical concerns about the Department's ability even to begin this effort. I believe it will fall on its face when they try to write it. We already know the Department is struggling. They have had to delay the release of the draft ratings system from the spring to sometime in the fall. If they ever do move forward, I have little confidence in their ability to get it right.

The Federal Government simply can't develop ratings that account for the diversity of our higher education system. We have 6,000 institutions of higher education of all kinds Nashville's auto diesel college, Notre Dame, Randolph-Macon, Yeshiva, Berea College, Dyersburg Community College, Harvard. All of these are different. We need information. We don't need the government issuing ratings.

My third amendment would rein in the Obama administration's out-of-control National Labor Relations Board by stopping it from requiring employers to give labor unions their employees' personal email addresses and cell phone numbers and from forcing employers to let employees use employer-owned and operated email systems to campaign for a union.

Since 1966 the NLRB has required employers to provide a union with a list of names and home addresses of employees eligible to vote in a union representation election. This is called an Excelsior List.

In February of this year, the NLRB reproposed expanding the Excelsior List in its ambush elections proposed rule. Now, ambush elections are another Obama administration initiative which would shorten the time from the union's request to call an election to when the election is held to as little as 10 days.

But here is the NLRB's Excelsior List proposal: It would require employers to include voter-eligible employees' personal telephone numbers, email addresses, work locations, shift times, and job classifications on the Excelsior List. They rejected a suggestion I made that at least an employee ought to be able to opt out of sharing this information.

We have had many examples of unions violating people's privacy and even harassing them.

For example, in 2010, agents of Communications Workers of America Local 1103 in Connecticut used personal information they obtained about one woman who did not support the union to sign her up for hundreds of unsolicited and unwanted magazines and consumer products.

This NLRB-proposed rule has a lot of opposition. Senator GRAHAM was intending this morning to offer in our markup a similar amendment that would prevent funds from going to implement any of the so-called ambush election rule which this is a part of.

As I have said before, the NLRB has become far too politicized under recent administrations. It didn't start with the Obama administration, but it has gotten worse with this administration, as it has moved toward the side of union advocacy with such things as ambush elections and micro-unions and undermining State right-to-work laws.

The National Labor Relations Board should be an umpire rather than an advocate.

The fourth amendment I would have offered this morning—had our subcommittee markup proceeded as it had been scheduled, and had it not been postponed apparently because some Senators didn't want to take ''tough votes''—would simply require the Obama administration to be straightforward with the public about the Affordable Care Act by reporting basic facts on the Federally-run insurance exchange, which is running the exchange for 36 States—facts such as the number of people signed up and making premium payments.

I introduced similar legislation last year. The House of Representatives passed that legislation in January by a bipartisan vote of 259 to 154. A total of 33 House Democrats voted for it. It is very simple, noncontroversial, and shouldn't be considered tough.

It would simply require the Obama administration to provide weekly reports during open enrollment—which now runs from November to February—reports to Congress, to States, and to the public about the Federal exchange, including such easily tracked data as the number of individuals who have visited the site, the number who have successfully enrolled, their zip codes, the level of coverage they have obtained, and also at least monthly a list of the navigators and the brokers operating in each State. This is important especially to serve disadvantaged Americans.

This isn't complicated. This is the Internet age. Even before the Internet age, McDonald's could tell us how many hamburgers it made each day, and RCA could tell us how many Elvis Presley albums it had left on their shelves.

In May Politico reported the administration stopped releasing the barebones reports it had been providing the public every month. This is troubling.

Many Americans can continue to sign up for coverage through special enrollment periods, but we won't know how many Americans have continued paying their premiums after the first month of coverage. We will have no way of knowing the final number of confirmed enrollments.

So these are the four amendments I had expected I would be offering and debating today in the Senate Appropriations Committee. Instead, I am here late in the afternoon on the Senate floor because some Senators must be more worried about their reelection campaigns than about the process of governing and setting priorities.

If we are not willing to do what we are elected to do—no one is making any of us be here.

I hope the markup we had planned today will be rescheduled. I plan to offer these amendments then. I hope they will be voted on by the committee, and I hope I will have the opportunity to represent the people of Tennessee who have sent me here to represent their views.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

STUDENT LOAN DEBT

Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. President, for the first time in our Nation's history the total amount of student loan debt has exceeded the total amount of credit card debt. This very real problem weighs heavily on families in my home State of New Mexico.

Last year Congress narrowly stopped the student loan interest rate hike from going into effect—a rate hike that would have doubled student loan interest rates. As a result, undergraduate students borrowing this year are able to take advantage of reasonable student loan rates. But students who borrowed before this agreement could be paying rates as high as 9 percent. Those who pursued an education to get ahead are literally starting out from behind.

Student loan debt is proving to be a debilitating impediment to achieving the American dream.

Recently, I met a working mother in southern New Mexico who told me about her family's struggle to raise their children while paying her husband's student loans from a degree he had earned more than two decades ago.

Another woman shared her story of going back to school to become a teacher. She is a single mom who wanted to make a better life for herself and her daughter. She got a degree but not without acquiring more than $40,000 in student loan debt. She worries that she will be paying her loans off well into retirement. As a parent, she worries for her daughter who will be entering college and fears that she has no choice but to take out loans to pay for her education.

Unfortunately, these stories are all too common today. Outstanding student loan debt in America totals more than $1.2 trillion—trillion with a ''t.'' In New Mexico, students are graduating with an average of nearly $18,000 in debt.

Outstanding balances not only affect families working to pay those loans, it affects the entire American economy as well. Because of this debt, many are unable to buy a home, to start a business, to save for retirement or even start a family. In today's economy we should be eliminating the obstacles that keep Americans from earning the education they need to get ahead. College should not be a luxury; it should be an opportunity all Americans can at least afford to pursue.

The student loan refinancing legislation that was on the floor this week would have helped address this problem of skyrocketing student loan debt by allowing graduates to refinance and put more money into productive use and strengthen our economy as a whole. However, our colleagues across the aisle decided to filibuster this legislation. They don't seem to understand that crushing student loan debt is a serious issue that forces many Americans to put their American dreams on hold.

Higher education is one of the most important investments any person can make in their own future. From my perspective, making college affordable is an investment in America's future. Republicans should know this and even recently helped to do something about it. Just last year Democrats and Republicans came together in Congress to prevent a student loan interest rate hike that would have doubled student loan rates. This was a great money-saving piece of news for students taking out new loans. However, there are still approximately 134,000 New Mexicans—just in my small State of 2 million people, there are 134,000 New Mexicans who would benefit from passing this newest legislation which would allow them to access those same student loan rates.

We had an opportunity to come together to address skyrocketing student loan debt, and instead our colleagues on the other side of the aisle chose to leave families, students, and really the American economy behind.

A college education opens the doors of opportunity. It provides an avenue into the middle class for families. College graduates are nearly twice as likely to find work as those with only a high school diploma, and they will earn nearly $1 million more over the course of a lifetime.

We should be willing to give our aspiring college students a fair shot. Senate Republicans should reconsider their priorities and allow us to at least debate this student loan refinancing legislation, to end their filibuster so that we can move forward, so that we can provide immediate relief to student loan borrowers and put that money to work in growing the American economy.

I would yield back the rest of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

TAX EXTENDERS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Just last week the majority leader gave his view that tax extenders as an issue is dead in the Senate until the lameduck session. I presume that means we will have a lameduck session. The majority leader blames this on Republicans, the minority in the Senate, but as you all know, the majority leader is uniquely situated under our Senate rules to determine what legislation will be considered on the Senate floor.

The majority leader's excuse that was given for not proceeding to extenders before a lameduck session is that we Republicans are seeking to offer amendments unrelated to tax extenders. Of course, this excuse simply does not fly. Even an introductory report on Senate procedure from the Congressional Research Service will tell all Senators that there is no ''standing rule or general requirement that the amendments offered by Senators on the floor must be germane or relevant to the bill being considered.''

The CRS report states:

> The right to offer non-germane amendments is extraordinarily important because it permits Senators to present issues to the Senate for debate and decision without regard to the judgments of the Senate's committees or the scheduling decisions and preferences of its majority leader.

The majority leader has sought to circumvent the open amendment process by blocking amendments by filling the amendment tree. This allows the majority leader to effectively decide what, if any, amendments ought to receive consideration here on the Senate floor. Essentially, this allows the majority leader to impose his own will at the expense of the will of the Senate as a whole. Another way to say it: The majority leader decides what 99 other Senators can offer as amendments.

The real reason the majority leader does not want to bring extenders back is that he is concerned that Members of his party might have to take tough votes in an election year. Of course, in a parliamentary system, this is a poor excuse for putting off considering legislation that has broad bipartisan support, and this extenders bill does have broad bipartisan support. This approach puts politics before constituents.

Delaying tax extenders legislation until the lameduck session has real consequences for our constituents. We know from previous years what has happened when tax legislation is not passed in a satisfactory amount of time. Late action on tax extenders poses significant tax administration burdens that cause headaches and hardships for millions of taxpayers. When we fail to act in a timely manner, tax forms are not ready and refunds are delayed. We owe it to our constituents to see to it that these added complications are not a factor this year. Tax season is already unpleasant enough without our adding to it by failing to do our job in a timely fashion.

While many view tax extenders as benefiting businesses, the truth is the delay of widely used individual tax provisions will impact millions of taxpayers. I will give a few examples.

Three of the most widely used tax provisions are the State and local sales tax deduction, claimed by over 11 million returns in the latest year for which we have statistics—2011; the above-the-line deduction for teachers' expenses, claimed on over 3.8 million tax returns in that year, 2011; and the college tuition deduction, which was claimed on about 2 million tax returns. These 3 provisions alone give us over 16 million reasons—because of 16 million taxpayers being affected—to act now to ensure that we don't subject these taxpayers to needless delays and complications this coming filing season.

These 16 million tax filers should provide more than enough reason for not putting off tax extender legislation until the lameduck, but if you are in need of another reason, think of the small businesses that are anxiously looking on and wondering what we are going to do about the expiration of the enhanced expensing rules under section 179. I am sure I am not the only one hearing from small business owners and from farmers who are putting off purchasing that new truck or tractor because they do not know the fate of this provision. This is bad for economic growth, bad for jobs.

Then there is the lapse in the renewable energy incentives that support millions of jobs not only in my State of Iowa but in many other States across our country. The expiration of these provisions has already hampered the strides made toward a viable, self-sustainable renewable energy and fuel sector. Delaying extension of these important provisions is hurting the economy and costing jobs.

A biofuels organization found that nearly 80 percent of the U.S. biodiesel producers have scaled back production this year. Sixty-six percent of the biodiesel producers have reduced their workforce and anticipate cutting jobs. This is a direct result of the policy uncertainties here in Washington, DC, including the expiration of the biodiesel tax incentive.

The only thing standing in the way of passing the extenders package here in the Senate is decisions made by the majority leader and getting an agreement on a handful of reasonable amendments.

The delay in passing the extenders package is harming a whole range of renewable energy efforts. A letter delivered to every Senator from about 200 clean energy businesses urged quick passage of the bill.

The letter stated:

> The lack of timely action to extend these provisions injects instability and uncertainty into the economy and weakens confidence in the employment marketplace. Moreover, the extension of the expired provisions should not be delayed until the end of the year since companies are making decisions right now related to taxes that will have an immediate impact on the economy.

I would encourage all of those who support this bill to urge the majority leader to bring it back and allow for a fair amendment process. Could the Senate majority leader possibly argue that it is more important to protect Senators from tough votes than to move forward on clean energy and job creation? For such an important piece of legislation, there is no legitimate reason for the majority leader to refuse to bring extenders to the floor for an open and honest debate.

It has been quite a while since we have had a relatively open amendment process on major tax legislation. Because of this, many Senators view this bill as their one shot at getting tax priorities they have considered on the floor. There is no reason that an agreement cannot be reached that will provide opportunities to Members on both sides of the aisle to offer those amendments. As a former chairman and ranking member of the Finance Committee, this Senator knows this can be difficult, but it is more than doable.

I remember when Senator Baucus and I regularly worked out an amendment process on tax bills. Usually this would consist of alternating votes on a block of 10 or so Democratic and Republican amendments so each side was treated fairly. A tax bill that comes to my mind as an illustration of this process is a bill entitled Jumpstart Our Business Strength Act or, as we use the acronym, JOBS.

Like the extenders package, the JOBS Act had broad bipartisan support and ultimately passed the Senate 92 to 5. Though it had bipartisan support, there was no shortage of Members from the other side seeking to offer their amendments. Many of these amendments were in no way related to tax, although the JOBS Act was a tax bill.

As the bill's chief sponsor and floor manager, I had hoped to keep amendments somewhat relevant—at least related to tax. However, the then Democratic minority pushed for votes on everything from overtime laws to trade

adjustment assistance to unemployment insurance.

All of these amendments were political in nature. They were intended to make Republicans take tough votes. At the time, then minority leader—now Majority Leader—REID vigorously defended the right of the minority to get votes on these and other amendments that were entirely nonrelevant and nongermane. We Republicans took those votes because we wanted to get things done. We wanted to get a very important tax bill passed. That is what the American people need right now—new leaders who want to get things done.

Yet today we were told Republicans are unreasonable for even seeking tax amendments to tax legislation. But it is not just Members of the minority who would like to offer amendments. Members on the other side filed nearly as many amendments as Members of the minority, but under the procedure set by the majority leader, even Members of his own party were not able to offer amendments. We could have been debating amendments to an extender bill this week. Instead, we wasted time on other pieces of legislation that were designed to fail, so the other side could score political points.

We were all sent here by our constituents to represent them in the legislative process. So let's legislate, which means debating and offering amendments. A bipartisan bill, such as the tax extenders bill, would be a perfect opportunity to show our constituents our ability to work together and get things done.

I call upon the leadership of the Senate to bring the tax extenders bill back to the floor and to allow for reasonable amendments that permit individual Senators of both parties to have a say in crafting this legislation.

KADZIK NOMINATION

Madam President, I wish to speak about an issue I spoke to earlier this week that I feel is so important I want to remind colleagues of its importance to me and what I think is an important issue for the oversight work of the Senate.

On Monday I explained my opposition to the nomination of Peter Kadzik to be the Assistant Attorney General for Legislative Affairs at the Justice Department.

In my view, the nominee's record demonstrates contempt for congressional oversight. He has made a habit of providing evasive, nonresponsive, and plainly insufficient answers to congressional inquiries over the years. That practice alone disqualifies him from heading up the Legislative Affairs Office. That office has had a chronic problem with credibility in recent years—going back and forth with Mr. Kadzik as well.

Specifically, I am referring to the false denials regarding Operation Fast and Furious, which Mr. Kadzik's predecessor made and eventually had to retract. So it is pretty evident to me that this administration is sending a message to all of us in the Senate by nominating an individual with a track record as abysmal as Mr. Kadzik. That message is this: Expect more of the same. That is quite a message from the self-professed most transparent administration in history which, quite frankly, has not turned out to be so transparent.

But there is a lot more at stake regarding Mr. Kadzik's nomination than restoring credibility to the Legislative Affairs Office—a lot more. As we all know, at the beginning of this year the President boasted that he had ''a pen and a phone'' and that he intended to use it. What he meant, of course, was that he would bypass the legislative process and proceed with aggressive and unilateral executive action.

So in January I called on the Attorney General to disclose the opinions and memoranda from the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel, providing the legal justification for this President's unilateral executive action.

Four months later, Mr. Kadzik replied to me in a 1-page response. He said, in short, he would not disclose those legal opinions. But he said if I had additional questions regarding the legality of the President's actions, I should let him know. That was May 20. Well, 11 days later, on Saturday, March 31, we learned that the President had flouted the congressional notification provisions of the National Defense Authorization Act.

This latest example of the administration's flagrant disregard for its legal obligations to submit to congressional oversight has dominated the headlines. I am referring, of course, to the administration's failure to notify Congress of its plan to release the so-called ''Taliban Dream Team'' from Guantanamo last week.

As every Senator knows, the National Defense Authorization Act—a law this President has signed—required the administration to notify key congressional committees at least 30 days before arranging the release of a prisoner from Guantanamo. The law enumerates exactly what that notification needs to address.

Specifically, the administration was legally required to explain to Congress why the release is in the national security interest of our country. The administration was legally required to explain to Congress what action it had undertaken to mitigate the risk of reengagement of such terrorists by re-releasing the detainees.

The law requires these explanations and other disclosures because the Members of this body have an independent responsibility to ensure the national security of the United States. And, of course, we take this responsibility seriously. Each one of us swore an oath to protect and defend the Constitution—the same oath that the President took. Unfortunately, this administration has locked us out of the process that the National Defense Authorization Act requires. I know I need to be more clear for most of you.

The history of section 1035 and the negotiations surrounding it make it plain that Congress included those provisions because it wanted to avoid release of prisoners like this one. So congressional opposition should not exactly come as a surprise to this administration.

This administration broke not only the law but also the promise it made in 2013 when White House Press Secretary Jay Carney promised that the administration ''would not make any decisions about the transfer of any detainees without consulting with Congress and without doing so in accordance with U.S. law.'' The administration knows it broke the law. Certain Senators on our Select Committee on Intelligence have even reportedly received apologies from the administration officials for not notifying them.

I don't think apologies are enough, and I don't think this administration takes seriously its legal obligation to consult with us before acting. Take the recent statement made by the Deputy White House Press Secretary on June 9. He said that ''this administration continues to be committed to coordinating with our partners in Congress.'' But the law doesn't require mere ''coordination.'' Coordination under the law is not good enough.

The President is required by law to meet certain obligations, and he recklessly ignores those obligations. The President is required by the Constitution—a document the President claims to know a lot about because he was a constitutional law professor—to ''take care that the laws be faithfully executed.'' Yet we all know by now that this President picks and chooses which laws to enforce.

This is not how our constitutional system is designed. The President is not in power to ignore the law. So ''coordination,'' as the Deputy Press Secretary said, is not good enough. We need compliance with the law. This administration needs to commit—on the record—that going forward it intends to comply with the National Defense Authorization Act so that another one of these stealth detainee releases never happens again.

With the exception of the majority leader, this administration has kept every Member of the Senate and the House in the dark about releasing five of the most dangerous terrorists we were holding at Guantanamo. Even the majority leader was not given the 30-day notice the law requires. So it is clear that not a single Senator was notified in compliance with the law prior to the release of the Taliban Five. It is likewise clear that not a single Senator received an explanation regarding national security and risk mitigation that the law requires in advance of releases.

But the failure to notify us in Congress in accordance with the law does

not relieve this administration of its responsibility to justify the releases. There is a lot about this ordeal that is extremely concerning. Part of what is so troublesome is that this administration can't even seem to get its story straight regarding why it ignored the law. The justifications the administration has offered publicly thus far have shifted dramatically from one day to the next day.

I will show how the shift has taken place and the justifications that have been presented to the public.

Shortly, after the release of the Taliban Five on June 1, the administration sent—of all people—National Security Advisor Susan Rice back to the Sunday talk shows—in Benghazi fashion—to explain the administration's rationale.

Adviser Rice told CNN that the ''acute urgency'' of an unspecified ''health condition'' that Sergeant Bergdahl was suffering from had forced the President to act without notifying Congress. We haven't heard much publicly about the acute medical emergency since then. In fact, a number of my colleagues have expressed skepticism at what little information the Pentagon has provided publicly regarding Sergeant Bergdahl's physical condition. But since the administration has said it was an emergency because the terrorists had threatened Bergdahl's life, apparently that was the medical emergency.

But now the story has changed. First, on Monday, following the releases, according to press reports, the White House called the chair of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence to apologize for its so-called oversight in failing to consult with Congress. So they meant to inform Congress about the releases but didn't because it was an ''oversight.''

Is that the story now? No. It didn't take long for the story to change. The White House then offered a new explanation.

On Tuesday, the Deputy White House Press Secretary said that the release was ''a secret military mission in which disclosures of the mission could put into jeopardy not just the life of Sergeant Bergdahl but also the lives of the American servicemen who were involved in the mission, so discretion on this matter was important.''

Let's think about the new justification—this one I just quoted—let's think about it for a moment. The White House is saying essentially that disclosure of the operational details concerning the physical transfer of Sergeant Bergdahl could have jeopardized the mission. But the White House's justification is totally beside the point. To my knowledge, no Senator has claimed that the administration had a legal obligation under section 1035 to disclose the specific operational details of the transfer to our relevant committees. Section 1035 doesn't even require that. On the contrary, the law requires the administration to explain its rationale for the release in terms of national security and risk mitigation, not operational details.

So this particular justification is, of course, a colossal red herring, and it wasn't the last of the shifting justifications this administration has offered. Listen to the next one.

The administration claimed it simply ran out of time to notify us. On Tuesday the administration reportedly claimed that it knew only 1 day in advance that the transfer would take place and only an hour in advance about where it would happen. And then on Wednesday Defense Secretary Hagel told the House Armed Services Committee that the administration had only 96 hours from the time the deal was made to actually release Sergeant Bergdahl.

Again, both of these justifications miss the point. It is clear that the negotiations preceding the deal were in motion for months. According to the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, the administration reported that it had been engaged in negotiations with the Taliban since January 2014. So the administration had weeks—maybe even months—to communicate to Congress that it was in active negotiations that might result in the exchange deal in the near future. That, of course, never happened.

But even that wasn't the last of the shifting justifications. On Wednesday Defense Secretary Hagel told the House Armed Services Committee that the administration couldn't notify Congress because of the risk of a leak. Secretary Hagel said that the Qatari Government—which apparently was acting as a middleman in these negotiations with the Taliban—threatened to end all negotiations if details of the deal leaked.

It is pretty obvious that this justification doesn't wash either. Press reports indicate that the administration told Congress that anywhere between 80 to 90 members of the executive branch knew about the release of the Taliban five before it happened. That number includes officials in the State Department, the Department of Homeland Security, the White House, and the Department of Defense. If that many individuals—80 or 90 people in this town—are in the loop, the administration's stated concern about a leak just doesn't make any sense. The White House could keep all of those officials in the loop, but somehow it couldn't pick up the phone and call the chair and vice chair of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence.

Frankly, as we have seen over the last few years, when information is leaked to the press, the leak usually originates in the executive branch and more often than not from the White House itself. So it seems pretty clear that the administration is not being candid with us or with the American people about why it broke the law and locked the representatives of the people of the United States out of the process, contrary to what the law says.

So the bottom line is this: The White House ignored a Federal law that the President signed and that the White House Press Secretary promised it would follow. Yet the White House can't even get its story straight regarding why the law was ignored.

It is for these reasons—getting back to the point about the Office of Legal Counsel and Mr. Kadzik's nomination to be head of the Office of Legislative Affairs—it is for these reasons that I wrote to the Attorney General last week and called on the Office of Legal Counsel to release any and all materials concerning the legal justification for the detainees' release that the Department of Justice provided to the administration. It is the Office of Legal Counsel's job to look at every Presidential action and Executive order and decision to see if it complies with the law. And then it is my approach that if some lawyers are telling the President what he can legally do or not do, constitutionally do or not do, according to the Constitution, why shouldn't the American people know about it?

So this all becomes more important with each passing day, as the White House keeps offering new explanations for why it broke the law.

We know the Justice Department provides legal advice on this question to the Defense Department because that is one of the very first things the administration said publicly about the deal. On June 1 Susan Rice told CNN that the Defense Department consulted with the Justice Department before the decision to move forward was made. We need to know about the nature of that consultation. We need to know what legal justification the Department of Justice provided that would permit the administration to ignore its legal duties to notify Congress and to inform us of the reasons for the release. And, importantly, we need to know what specific facts on which the Justice Department based its legal analysis.

In other words, with all of these shifting explanations we have been hearing about the factual basis for the decision, which one of those many was provided to the Justice Department? Did they tell the Justice Department: We don't have time to tell Congress. If so, did they tell them that these negotiations had been ongoing for months, as they appear to have been? Did these executive branch people tell the Justice Department that Sergeant Bergdahl was, as Susan Rice claims, suffering from an acute condition that required the administration to take immediate action? Did the Justice Department take the view that the administration did not have to comply with the law because of the President's powers under article II of the Constitution, notwithstanding the fact that the White House had already promised it would comply or was none of this even considered? Was all of this just an

''oversight,'' as the White House apparently told the chair of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence or was it that they didn't have to comply because they didn't trust the members of the select committee to keep a secret or should we expect that yet another justification will be forthcoming?

The bottom line is that Susan Rice went on CNN and said the Justice Department was consulted. But we don't know whether there was a written opinion provided by the Office of Legal Counsel and, if there was, what it concluded and what facts that conclusion was based on.

The General Counsel of the Defense Department testified yesterday that the administration had received legal advice from the Office of Legal Counsel in the form of an email chain. The administration needs to provide us with whatever written advice it received before it decided to contravene Federal law.

Given their failure to respond to my previous requests and considering Mr. Kadzik's track record in this regard, I am not optimistic. As I have stated previously, Mr. Kadzik's nomination embodies this administration's philosophy that it is OK to ignore its obligations with respect to congressional oversight—a constitutional responsibility of the legislative branch of government, by the way.

Let me conclude by saying that this nominee's record is emblematic of the administration's sorry record in complying with congressional oversight. And, of course, both have been abysmal.

If this administration is serious about honoring its legal obligations, the Attorney General would direct Mr. Kadzik to disclose the Office of Legal Counsel's legal reason for why the administration was entitled to ignore the law's requirement to notify Congress. No Senator should cast a vote on this nomination before Mr. Kadzik provides that legal reasoning to us.

If not now, when are all Senators—Republican and Democrat alike—going to take a stand against this President's unilateral decision to ignore the Congress and his obligations under law? If not now, when will Members of this body stand together in defense of our legislative prerogatives and assert our rights as part of a coequal branch of government under the Constitution?

In this Senator's view, a vote for this nominee is a vote endorsing this administration's contempt for our oversight authority and will lend support to the deal that released the Taliban five without adhering to the law. As my colleagues know, I will vote against this nominee. I encourage my colleagues to vote against this nominee as well.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HIRONO). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF SALVADOR MENDOZA, JR., TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON

Mr. REID. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 740.

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

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Salvador Mendoza, Jr., of Washington, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Washington.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. Madam President, there is a cloture motion at the desk and I ask it be reported.

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

The 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, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Salvador Mendoza, Jr., of Washington, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Washington.

Harry Reid, Patrick J. Leahy, Christopher A. Coons, Sheldon Whitehouse, Christopher Murphy, Al Franken, Jon Tester, Richard Blumenthal, Jeff Merkley, Richard J. Durbin, Kirsten E. Gillibrand, Benjamin L. Cardin, Bill Nelson, Dianne Feinstein, Elizabeth Warren, Tom Harkin, Mazie K. Hirono.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum under rule XXII be waived.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. REID. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

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

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF STACI MICHELLE YANDLE TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS

Mr. REID. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 741.

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

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Staci Michelle Yandle, of Illinois, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Illinois.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. Madam President, there is a cloture motion at the desk and I ask it be reported.

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

The 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, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Staci Michelle Yandle, of Illinois, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Illinois.

Harry Reid, Patrick J. Leahy, Richard J. Durbin, Elizabeth Warren, Tim Kaine, Richard Blumenthal, Robert P. Menendez, Barbara A. Mikulski, Debbie Stabenow, Christopher Murphy, Sheldon Whitehouse, Sherrod Brown, Patty Murray, Tom Harkin, Tom Udall, Christopher A. Coons, Robert P. Casey, Jr.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum under rule XXII be waived.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. REID. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

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

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF DARRIN P. GAYLES TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA

Mr. REID. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 778.

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

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Darrin P. Gayles, of Florida, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Florida.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. Madam President, there is a cloture motion at the desk and I ask it be reported.