

Blumenthal	Harkin	Murray
Blunt	Hatch	Nelson
Booker	Heinrich	Paul
Boozman	Heitkamp	Portman
Boxer	Heller	Pryor
Brown	Hirono	Reed
Burr	Hoeben	Reid
Cantwell	Inhofe	Risch
Cardin	Isakson	Roberts
Carper	Johanns	Rubio
Casey	Johnson (SD)	Sanders
Chambliss	Johnson (WI)	Schatz
Coats	Kaine	Schumer
Coburn	King	Scott
Cochran	Kirk	Sessions
Collins	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Coons	Landrieu	Shelby
Corker	Leahy	Stabenow
Cornyn	Lee	Tester
Crapo	Levin	Thune
Cruz	Manchin	Toomey
Donnelly	Markey	Udall (CO)
Durbin	McCain	Udall (NM)
Enzi	McCaskill	Vitter
Feinstein	McConnell	Walsh
Fischer	Menendez	Warner
Flake	Merkley	Warren
Franken	Mikulski	Whitehouse
Graham	Moran	Wicker
Grassley	Murkowski	Wyden
Hagan	Murphy	

NOT VOTING—2

Gillibrand Rockefeller

The nomination was confirmed.

VOTE ON SCHULTZ NOMINATION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that all time on this nomination be yielded back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Eric T. Schultz, of Virginia, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Zambia?

The nomination was confirmed.

VOTE ON DAUGHTON NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Thomas Frederick Daughton, of Arizona, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Namibia?

The nomination was confirmed.

VOTE ON PRESSMAN NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of David Pressman, of New York, to be Alternate Representative of the United States of America for Special Political Affairs in the United Nations, with the rank of Ambassador?

The nomination was confirmed.

VOTE ON PRESSMAN NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of David Pressman, of New York, to be an Alternate Representative of the United States of America to the Sessions of the General Assembly of the United Nations, during his tenure of service as Alternate Representative of the United States of America

for Special Political Affairs in the United Nations?

The nomination was confirmed.

VOTE ON WADA NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Debra S. Wada, of Hawaii, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Army?

The nomination was confirmed.

VOTE ON WERTHEIMER NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Laura S. Wertheimer, of the District of Columbia, to be Inspector General of the Federal Housing Finance Agency?

The nomination was confirmed.

VOTE ON HUTHER NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Bradford Raymond Huther, of Virginia, to be Chief Financial Officer, Department of Housing and Urban Development?

The nomination was confirmed.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BANK ON STUDENTS EMERGENCY
LOAN REFINANCING ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume legislative session.

The Senator from Arkansas.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 503

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, last month we marked the 24th anniversary of the beginning of the gulf war. In August 1990 Iraq invaded Kuwait. Shortly after this development the United States launched Operation Desert Shield, which led to Operation Desert Storm to drive Iraqi forces out of Kuwait.

Arkansas made a huge sacrifice during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. The Arkansas Army National Guard had 13 units called to serve during these operations, and 10 units of the Arkansas Air National Guard were called up. More than 3,400 Arkansas Guard soldiers were called up altogether—the second highest percentage of any State. Of those Arkansans called to serve, nine of the Army Guard units served in combat, including the 142nd Field Artillery Brigade—the only National Guard artillery brigade called to Active Duty during the gulf war.

I thank all of the men and women—more than 600,000 Americans from across the United States—who served and sacrificed in Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield.

These servicemembers deserve a place of honor and recognition in our

Nation's Capital. My friend and colleague Senator DONNELLY and I have been working toward that goal. I am proud of my colleagues in the House who unanimously passed H.R. 503, the National Desert Storm and Desert Shield War Memorial Act in May. I ask that we bring this bill up for final passage here in the Senate.

In a time where we are facing budget constraints, this bill is budget neutral. Private funds for construction of the memorial will be raised by the National Desert Storm War Memorial Association. This bill simply authorizes the establishment of a monument on Federal lands here in our Nation's Capital, which is what Congress needs to act on to honor all of those men and women of the Armed Forces and their families. Passing this bill will be a great step in honoring our gulf war veterans. I am grateful to have the support of the full Senate and look forward to a swift ultimate passage.

I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 403, H.R. 503. I further ask that the bill be read a third time and passed, and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, with a great deal of respect and deference to my good friend and an extraordinary Senator from Arkansas, I actually do object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUESTS—H.R. 1033 AND
H.R. 503

Mr. BOOKER. What I would like to do, because I fully support what an extraordinary and very important piece of legislation this is, honoring those who served and fought and fell in Desert Storm—what I object to is the decoupling of the two bills, both of which honor our veterans.

Therefore, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 398, H.R. 1033, the American Battlefield Protection Program Amendments Act, and Calendar No. 403, H.R. 503, the Desert Storm Memorial en bloc, that the committee-reported amendment to H.R. 1033 be agreed to, that the bills, as amended, if amended, be read a third time and passed en bloc, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, let me explain to the people watching what is happening here. We have a bill that everybody agrees to that is not going to get passed because everybody does not agree to another bill that is linked to it. We have offered multiple compromises on the battlefield protection act. We just have a \$17.8 trillion deficit.

We are going to have a \$599 billion debt this year. Yet this program they want to authorize that will keep this program that the Senator from Arkansas would like to honor our Desert Storm from happening—they refuse to take yes for an answer.

There are 26 critical sites that need to be protected that we know of. We said: Do that. We have said: Do not authorize more than we can afford. We will not do that. We have made compromises so that we can do what the intent of the battlefield protection act is and accomplish the leverage against the bill honoring our Desert Storm veterans. But that is not good enough. So what we have asked for is to quit allowing States and localities to game the system with any kind of pay-fors and do not have the Federal Government pay for the State's share or the local community's share plus the Federal Government's share. We have said some good government stuff.

You can pass this bill today if, in fact, they will take some adjustments to the bill. So what I would offer is rather than object, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from New Jersey modify his request so that my substitute amendment to H.R. 1033, which is at the desk, be agreed to.

If you agree to these simple, straight-forward, good government, financially secure items, you do not get the full basket, but you get the things that are critical to this country in terms of protecting battlefield sites and we will honor our Desert Storm veterans.

I ask that we have that modification be agreed to which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Senator from New Jersey so modify his request?

Mr. BOOKER. There is no more eloquent a person when it comes to good government than Senator COBURN, but I do not modify my request. I object. I ask unanimous consent that the previous request I made be agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the original request?

Mr. COBURN. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, the sad thing is the people who were involved in Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield are in the middle of this. We have this other bill that there are some concerns about. That is fine. That is what this place is all about. But the idea of holding the Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield bill hostage in this situation is not good. We live in an era of gridlock, and we have problems getting things done.

This bill passed the House unanimously and would pass the Senate unanimously. So I would hope that we can again get together and get things worked out. The reality is and the problem is that there is no reason to couple these two together. If the other bill has problems, it needs to be worked out. That is what it is all about. Let's have that discussion.

But the Operation Desert Storm and Desert Shield bill has nothing to do with that. So I would hope that in the near future we can move forward and honor these 600,000 people who participated, so that one day their children can come and visit Washington and be able to look at the monument about which the committee will decide as to what is appropriate so that we can honor these individuals.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—CALENDAR
NO. 12

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, 24 years ago, on July 26, 1990, President George Herbert Walker Bush, in a glorious sun-filled day on the White House lawn, attended by more people than had ever attended a bill signing in the history of our country—President Bush signed into law the Americans with Disabilities Act, a bill broadly supported by Democrats and Republicans here in the Senate and in the House.

It was a momentous occasion. You see, most people thought of civil rights as pertaining to people of color, religion, national origin, sex—that type of thing. But up until July 26, 1990, people with disabilities had no civil rights. I remember when President Bush signed that law, he uttered these words. He said: "Let the shameful walls of discrimination come tumbling down." It was a wonderful day.

Looking back over those 24 years, can anyone deny that our country has made great progress in expanding our concepts of the rights of people with disabilities: the right to be educated and well educated; the right of people with disabilities to have independent living, to live on their own, not to be institutionalized; the right of people with disabilities to associate freely with others; the right of people with disabilities, children with disabilities, to go to school with other kids who are not disabled; the right of people with disabilities to travel freely with barriers broken down, ramps not stairs, buses that are fully accessible now, trains, everything accessible, every building designed in America. Think about that. Every building designed and built in America today is fully accessible.

We have gone a great way in making older buildings—even some of our national monuments—totally accessible to people with disabilities. People with disabilities are finding more and more employment. They are working—not at some minimum-wage job—but working alongside others, showing that they too can contribute to our society and be fully functioning members of our society.

That is what the Americans with Disabilities Act did for our country. In 1991 the United Nations decided that what we had done in America could be an example for the world. So a commission was established to draw up a convention, a treaty on the rights of per-

sons with disabilities. I might point out, it was negotiated under the George W. Bush administration. It took several years, but it was hammered out with the concurrence—get this—with the concurrence and the approval of the George W. Bush administration.

That U.N. treaty has been sent out to nations to be ratified. Over 150 nations have now ratified it. Think about that. Of 196 members of the United Nations, 150 have already ratified it. One country is singularly absent—the United States—from whence it all started. If you look at the treaty—if you just read it—it just echoes the Americans with Disabilities Act language in what it does.

So I will have more to say about this later. But I just want to give that background. We brought it up 2 years ago for a vote. Now, under our Constitution, a treaty requires a two-thirds vote—two-thirds of those present and voting. It was brought up 2 years ago in December of 2012. We did not get a two-thirds vote. It failed. Well, that Congress ended and a new Congress started, so the President had to resubmit it. It had to go back to the committee, now under the leadership of Senator MENENDEZ.

As requested, the committee has reported out the bill again with new reservations, understandings, and declarations. Now it is incumbent upon the Senate to debate and vote again on this treaty.

I am hopeful we would have the votes this time—after due consideration over the past couple of years, that we would have the votes necessary.

The unanimous consent request I am about to proffer is the mirror image of the same one 2 years ago. I want everyone to understand that this unanimous consent request was not denied 2 years ago. We went ahead, debated, and we had a vote.

That is what this unanimous consent request would do, provide us with, again, 2 hours of debate, evenly divided in the usual form, and then an up-or-down vote. We have the time to do it.

I mean, what are we doing around here, one quorum call after another? People want to leave here tomorrow night. Two hours of debate, a vote, that is nothing to pass this momentous piece of legislation.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—TREATY
NO. 112-7

I ask unanimous consent that at a time to be determined by the majority leader, in consultation with the Republican leader, the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 12, the disabilities treaty document No. 112-7 (disability); that the treaty be considered as having advanced through the various parliamentary stages up to and including the presentation of the resolution of ratification; that any committee declarations be agreed to as applicable; that there be no amendments in order to the treaty or the resolution of ratification; that

there be 2 hours for debate, equally divided in the usual form; that upon the use or yielding back of time the Senate proceed to vote on the resolution; that any statements be printed in the RECORD; that if the resolution of ratification is adopted, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that if the resolution is not adopted, the treaty be returned to the calendar, and that there be no motions or points of order in order other than a motion to reconsider; and that the Senate then resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Reserving the right to object, I wish to note that this is a treaty that has attracted a fair amount of controversy. It is a treaty that was voted on in 2012 and failed to receive the requisite two-thirds majority vote in order to be ratified in this body.

This treaty received additional consideration this year in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on July 22 and received a 12-to-6 vote. There are a number of our colleagues, both on and off the committee, who have concerns with this treaty, who would like the opportunity to propose amendments, along with our consideration of this document. Under the proposed unanimous consent request, we would not be allowed to propose any amendments, and we would be given 2 hours—only 2 hours—to debate it.

Given the significance of treaties, and the fact that they carry the effect of the law of the land once ratified, I think this body deserves more, certainly, than the opportunity to debate it for only 2 hours. To be precluded here from the ability to present any amendments would not be an appropriate thing for us to do.

On that basis, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, this is another sad, irresponsible day in the Senate. I say to my friend from Utah, he was here 2 years ago when we proposed the same exact unanimous consent request, and the Senator did not object.

It also did not allow for any amendments. That is usual when we have treaties and it comes through the committee. So why is the Senator from Utah objecting today to even doing what we did 2 years ago? Maybe he has the votes to defeat it. I don't know. We won't know until we vote on it. But 2 years ago, the Senator from Utah did not object to the very same unanimous consent request.

He says there has been a lot of controversy about it. Well, that is not so. The only controversy has been raised by the tea party and some whom I call the black helicopter crowd, people who just don't like the United Nations. I don't care if they like the United Na-

tions; that is up to them. But it seems to me we ought to at least bring it up again, debate it, and see if anyone has changed their minds. We have new people in the Senate who were not here 2 years ago—new Senators who have not had the opportunity to express themselves on this treaty.

I disagree with my friend from Utah. There is no controversy over this, basically. Controversy? This is a treaty supported by former President George H.W. Bush. Former President George W. Bush, former President Carter, and former President Clinton all support it. All the veterans groups support it. The American Legion, VFW, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, and Vietnam war veterans all strongly support ratification of this treaty.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has supported it strongly—and I don't just mean leaning back. Tom Donohue, the head of the Chamber of Commerce, has written, has called people about how important it is to the business community that we ratify it.

Former Governor John Engler, who is now the head of the Business Roundtable, brought this up to the Business Roundtable and they unanimously supported our ratification of this treaty.

I spoke to the Business Roundtable group last evening, and they all—the ones I talked to individually—couldn't understand why we would block this treaty because it is good for business, and they understand it.

It is supported by the Information Technology Industry Council—that is AT&T. I just spoke with the CEO of AT&T last evening who strongly supports it; Sprint, Adobe, Microsoft—all the high-tech people—because they understand we need strong, accessible standards for their products and their software across the globe.

All disability groups, every single disability group in America supports the treaty. Faith-based groups across the spectrum support it.

Senator Bob Dole has worked his heart out on getting votes to ratify this treaty. He has been on the phone, he has made appearances, and we have Republicans on it. Senator MCCAIN has been a strong supporter for this treaty from the very beginning. Senator MARK KIRK is a supporter. Mr. KIRK is a veteran himself.

We had a press conference with all the veterans groups here not too long ago and I thought Mr. KIRK said something very poignant. He said: A lot of disabled American veterans fought in places around the world to secure our freedom. They should have the right to travel freely in other parts of the world, even though they have a disability.

Think about that.

Senator BARRASSO is a strong supporter, and Senator MURKOWSKI, Senator COLLINS, Senator AYOTTE have all worked hard on this subject. But for a couple of people who have raised an objection, we can't bring up the treaty.

The Senator from Utah just objected to bringing it up for, what, 2 hours of

debate and an up-or-down vote. I say: Hey, look around the Chamber. There is nobody here. There won't be anybody here all afternoon. We could have a little debate on this, 2 hours; they could make their case, we could make our case and have a vote for 15 minutes—and yet the Senator from Utah will not let it be brought up, even though he let it be brought up 2 years ago. He said: Well, we can't offer amendments. That was the same 2 years ago, but they didn't object to bringing it up.

When we see all of the support this has—and I might address an issue that has come up, and it seems to have its genesis in the tea party. They have raised objections on the basis that somehow, by ratifying this treaty, we give up our sovereignty as a nation, that it erodes our sovereignty. That is based upon the fact that there is a commission under this treaty. There is a U.N. commission set up, a 16-member commission of experts, to draft standards and advise countries on what they need to do to meet their obligations.

Again, if we are a signatory to the treaty, I have no doubt we would get a seat on that commission, and the high-tech industry council and the business groups know that. That is where we have our input to making sure that accessibility standards, software standards, and other things are adaptable for us, our business community, our software, and our hardware.

The tea party, some of these people, have objected to this commission, saying that the commission can issue findings and such that take away our sovereignty.

We have operated, at least for the past 20 years, under two other treaties that have the same kind of commission of experts, and it hasn't eroded our sovereignty. Do you know why? Because it is advisory. That commission has no authority to assess penalties or anything else on the United States or any other country. All they can say is: Well, you should do this, you should do that—but it is only advisory. How does that erode our sovereignty?

Yet the very same people who make the argument that somehow this erodes our sovereignty will rush to the front to vote on a trade agreement—a trade agreement such as NAFTA or other trade agreements we have, which do erode our sovereignty, because it turns over to the World Trade Organization the ability to fine America, to tell us what we have to do in order to make trade right. They have the ability to tell America what to do. Yet my friends who are objecting to this probably support those trade agreements.

Yet when it comes to people with disabilities, why is it they are so adamant that we cannot join 150 other nations of the world to advance the rights of people with disabilities globally? Why is it just people with disabilities they focused on?

They didn't focus on torture, they didn't focus on the worst forms of child labor, they haven't focused on any of

our trade agreements. Why people with disabilities? It makes us wonder, is this another blatant form of discrimination against people with disabilities?

Maybe some in that tea party would like to undo the Americans with Disabilities Act. I don't know. But we can't say honestly that, yes, the Americans with Disabilities Act is good, it has done a lot of good for our country, for our business community, for people with disabilities, everyone, and say but we don't want to be involved in helping other countries advance the cause of people with disabilities so people with disabilities in other countries have the same kind of rights, accessibilities, and standards we enjoy in this country for people with disabilities.

Some people may say we are the best in the world on disability law and policy—and that is true, we are—so why don't we shine our light around the world?

President Reagan always referred to America as the “shining city on the hill.” If we are a shining city on the hill and no one can get there and we are not willing to help other countries, what does it mean to be a shining city on the hill? Is that some kind of an idea that only we can have? We are a shining city on the hill when it comes to disability rights, and we ought to be involved in spreading it globally. This is our opportunity to do so.

Some people say: We can work with other countries. If they want our advice, we can go to other countries to help them with disability policy. Think about that for a second. We don't have the personnel or the wherewithal to go to 150 separate different countries to help them in terms of changing policy. It takes a kind of collective action where we can join with other countries that have done pretty darned well. There are a lot of other countries that have done very well in disability policy. To join with them, we are much better and much stronger that way than us just going to another country.

I was in China earlier this summer meeting with people about this treaty, which China has adopted. They have signed on. We talked about the United States working with China, not only in China but with other countries, to help advance the rights of people with disabilities.

China is doing some interesting things. They are starting to move ahead.

One person said to me: What is so important about America being a part of the treaty is that when we speak to one another, we speak in a common language of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. It seems to me that if the United States is not a part of it, they speak to us in a different manner. It is: The United States, here is what we do; here is what you ought to do. That doesn't get us very far in diplomacy.

But if we work with the Chinese and other countries to say: Here is what we ought to do, here is what other coun-

tries have done, here are the standards we ought to abide by, there is much more force and effect than if we try to go it alone.

I assume there are military analogies to this. Think about the present situation. Should we go it alone simply because we are the most powerful, we have the biggest military, the best weapons, and everything else? Should we just go it alone because we are the best militarily in the world? I don't think the American people would want that.

We have to join with other countries and sometimes ask other countries to take the lead and we will provide that strong backbone. That is how I see the disabilities treaty. We have to join with other countries.

How can we give up the moral leadership we have had on this issue, both here and abroad, the moral leadership we have had on advancing the rights of people with disabilities?

How can we abdicate that because a handful of people are afraid of giving up our sovereignty—which is a bogus argument because that committee is advisory only. It makes recommendations, but it has no enforcement authority whatsoever.

By not ratifying this treaty, we are left behind. Think about that. We, the United States, are left behind in a field in which we have carved out leadership, and we are just going to give it up: No, we don't want to lead the world.

Why wouldn't we want to lead the world in disability policies? To not join 150 other countries, to not provide the leadership, to not provide the expertise we have developed over 24 years or more relinquishes our responsibility to people with disabilities, both in America and around the world. Why on Earth would we want to do that?

In Ghana, a great young advocate named Emmanuel Ofori Yeboah, a man born with no left leg but determined as a child to play soccer, turned his obsession for this sport into an obsession advocating for the rights of people with disabilities in Ghana.

Earlier this year in Malawi, 21 African nations met on this issue of changing their policies, advancing the rights of people with disabilities. I was asked to go and meet with them. I couldn't because we were in session in the Senate. But that is why they are reaching out to us. They want us to be involved with them to help move this issue forward.

In Nepal parents of children with autism banded together to start their own school to educate their children. They want their kids with disabilities to be fully included in society and have opportunities for work and for life. They want us to be joined together with them. It is conspicuous.

I was privileged to join Senator CARDIN earlier this summer in Baku, Azerbaijan, for a meeting of the committee for security and economic development in Europe. I offered an

amendment putting all the nations of Europe that are in that OECD, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development—OECD countries—that we supported ratification of this treaty. It was adopted unanimously. They want the United States to be a partner in this effort.

Talk to a disabled veteran who would like to travel overseas maybe with his or her spouse and their children.

I recently talked to a mother whose family immigrated from Italy. She wanted to go over for a big family reunion, but she has a child with a disability, and where they were going they had no accessibility. She could have gone and left her son at home, but she couldn't do that. So she missed that big family reunion because of the lack of accessibility in Italy.

It is a sad day that one individual on the Senate floor would object to bringing this up when it has such broad support.

I will say one last thing about the issue of sovereignty. I have heard a couple Senators on the Republican side talk about the fact that with this Commission, we give up our sovereignty, which I have said is a bogus argument.

Of my friends on the other side, the few who have objected to this on the grounds that we would lose our sovereignty, let me ask this question.

Former President George H.W. Bush supports this treaty wholeheartedly. Does he not understand about sovereignty or does he not care about sovereignty?

Former President George W. Bush, under whose administration this treaty was hammered out, supports it. Does former President George W. Bush not understand this or does he just not care about our sovereignty?

Bob Dole knows this treaty backward and forward—a World War II hero, Presidential candidate, Republican leader of the Senate, disabled American veteran.

Are those few people over there who say this would erode our sovereignty saying they know more than Senator Dole or are they saying Senator Dole doesn't care about our sovereignty—which is it—or those few who raise the issue of sovereignty, that the U.S. Chamber of Commerce doesn't care about our sovereignty? I don't think we would like to say that to Tom Donohue or to John Engler at the Business Roundtable. Of course they care about our sovereignty. Tell that to the American Legion. Tell the American Legion they don't care about our sovereignty or they don't understand this or they are too stupid to understand it. Is that what they are saying or are they saying they are the arbiters—those few, they are the arbiters of what is and is not our sovereignty. They rise above all former Presidents. They rise above Republican leaders. They rise above JOHN MCCAIN, a war hero. Believe me, I think JOHN MCCAIN understands about our sovereignty. He knows this treaty. He supports it wholeheartedly. Are

those few who raise this issue of sovereignty saying JOHN McCAIN doesn't get it or he doesn't care about our sovereignty? Which is it? The fact is, JOHN McCAIN does care about our sovereignty, he does get it, and he knows this doesn't erode our sovereignty one single iota.

But I wish to make that point because those few keep raising this issue of sovereignty as though they are the guardians, they alone know what distinguishes our sovereignty and what erodes it—not former Presidents, former Republican leaders. In fact, every former Republican leader of this Senate still alive supports this treaty.

My, how far we have gotten off track since the adoption of the Americans with Disabilities Act that was strongly bipartisan and the Americans with Disabilities Act amendments we put through in 2008, strongly supported by both sides. I dare say, we have strong Republican support for this treaty but for a few on the Republican side who just want to adhere to that tea party nostrum that somehow this erodes our sovereignty and we can't join.

I will close where I started. The unanimous consent I offered today that was objected to by the Senator from Utah is the same as what we had 2 years ago and no one objected to it. The Senator from Utah was here 2 years ago, and he didn't object then to the same unanimous consent request. He did not object. So it goes back on the calendar. It goes back on the Executive Calendar and it will be there.

I guess I would say the action by a few on the Republican side blocking ratification of the convention on the rights of people with disabilities will not be the end. I may be retiring from the Senate, but I am not retiring from this fight. I will never retire in the fight for justice, fairness, and equality for people with disabilities both here and around the world. I will never retire from the fight to refute those absolutely unfounded and bogus objections to this crucial treaty.

I will continue to work with former Senator Bob Dole, with former Presidents, with veterans, with business leaders, with Republicans on the other side who support this treaty, with the national disabilities community, with our disabilities community. I will continue to work to advance this and to get it over the hurdle.

The false claims—the false claims—of those who object to this treaty will be overcome. We will succeed in ratifying this treaty. We will restore America's stature as the world leader on disability rights and we will continue to fight for justice and a fair shake for people with disabilities not just here in America but around the world.

It is a sad day, another sad and irresponsible day in the history of the United States Senate.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH

Mr. DONNELLY. I rise today in recognition of Suicide Prevention Month to once again bring attention to an issue that weighs heavy on many of our hearts and minds.

Last month the world paused to mourn the loss of a man who brought laughter and joy to countless lives, a man whose internal suffering didn't stop him from improving the lives of so many he touched, including our heroic men and women serving overseas. Robin Williams said the best audience he ever had was with the troops he entertained on USO tours. His death showed us that we may not always know who among us is living the life of unbearable pain and suffering. Even the strongest among us sometimes needs a helping hand, including the brave men and women in uniform who protect our country each and every day.

Today I wish to once again shine the light on the scourge of military suicide. Earlier this month the Department of Defense released a report which detailed the number of suicides among servicemembers during the first quarter of 2014. The Department of Defense reported that a total of 120 servicemembers committed suicide from January through March, including 74 active component servicemembers, 24 Reserve members, and 22 National Guard members. In 2013, 475 servicemembers took their own lives. In 2012, we lost 522 to suicide. We have seen 2 straight years of more deaths as a result of suicide than of combat in Afghanistan.

These men and women are giving their all to support our way of life and they risk making the ultimate sacrifice to protect our freedoms. At a minimum we should honor this service and sacrifice by doing all we can to support them.

We all understand this is not a simple issue. There is no one solution to the problem, no cure-all that ends it tomorrow. I do believe, though, there are commonsense steps we can take now to make meaningful progress.

In May I introduced the bipartisan Jacob Sexton Military Suicide Prevention Act of 2014. This legislation is named after Jacob Sexton, an Indiana National Guardsman from Farmland, IN, who took his own life while home on a 15-day leave from Afghanistan. Building upon legislation I introduced last year, the Sexton act ensures that mental health is evaluated regularly and is a central element of a servicemember's overall readiness in four key ways.

First, it requires annual mental health assessments for all servicemembers, including active duty, the Guard,

and the Reserves. Right now the military provides the most effective mental health care only for those who are preparing for or returning from deployment, despite research that shows the majority of military suicides occur among servicemembers who have never been deployed.

Second, it establishes a working group between the Department of Defense and the Department of Health and Human Services to find innovative ways to improve access to mental health care for members of the Guard and Reserve. Where servicemembers often rely on civilian health insurance and providers, as the Guard and Reserve do, we want to team up to be able to provide care right in their own communities. Suicide among Guard members hit a record high in 2013, and we are committed to bringing that number down to zero.

Third, the bill requires an inter-agency report to evaluate existing military mental health practices and to provide recommendations for improvement, including peer-to-peer programs I have proposed in the past.

Finally, the bill ensures that seeking help remains a sign of strength. It protects the privacy of the servicemember coming forward, because no one should be punished for seeking help. No one should be kept from their next promotion for seeking help.

I introduced the bipartisan Sexton act with my Republican colleague ROGER WICKER of Mississippi. Since then it has received the endorsement of numerous national organizations, including the National Guard Association of the United States, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, and the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. This bill is a step in the right direction in the fight against military suicide.

I was encouraged when the Senate Armed Services Committee passed this legislation as part of the fiscal year 2015 National Defense Authorization Act this past May. This is important progress, but we need to get this legislation signed into law. As the Senate prepares to recess, I call on the Senate to take up the NDAA as soon as we return to Washington. There is no reason why this bipartisan legislation should not be passed, and passed quickly, just as we have for the last 52 years.

Our country, as we all know, is faced with many serious issues, some of which we don't have good answers to yet; but the Sexton act is a good start to address the pressing issue of military suicide. This legislation helps save lives—helps save soldiers' lives. So let's pass the NDAA and with it the Jacob Sexton Act to show our service men and women that we are all in on supporting them the same way they support us.

This legislation is just the beginning. Combating suicide both in our military and elsewhere is an issue that continues to demand Congress's attention. We must continually evaluate what we

are doing, take a second and third look at the resources we are offering, and ask ourselves every day: Can we do better? Is there more we can do before it is too late? The answer more often than not is yes.

That is why we must be vigilant in the effort to let people know they are not alone. There is somewhere they can go, someone to talk to, and someone to help carry the load. We need to continue the conversation about what we can do to help our brothers and sisters, our sons and daughters, our husbands and wives, who may feel like they are struggling with seemingly insurmountable challenges all by themselves. These challenges can be overcome.

Suicide Prevention Month is a reminder of that fact. There are many resources available to those who struggle with suicidal thoughts. For our servicemembers, trained mental health specialists are available 24 hours a day through the military and Veterans Crisis Line. All you have to do is call 1-800-273-8255, and press 1. You will get immediate, confidential assistance 24 hours a day. For additional help, militarymentalhealth.org offers a free, 100-percent anonymous mental health assessment. This is a valuable tool for servicemembers unsure of where they stand.

I hope all of our servicemembers struggling with mental health concerns and with challenges know that we are here for them and that we are working nonstop to ensure they receive the care and support they deserve. Let's continue to spread that message throughout the rest of Suicide Prevention Month, and every month thereafter.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

(The remarks of Mr. PORTMAN pertaining to the introduction of S. 2839 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

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

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

ANGELS IN ADOPTION

Ms. LANDRIEU. Madam President, it is my pleasure today to come to the floor of the Senate to honor some very special constituents from all of our States who are here for 3 days, and they are very special because they actually have wings. We call them angels, and I think the Presiding Officer has met her angels who are here this week. They are Members who have been honored or constituents of ours who have been honored by Members of the Sen-

ate and Members of the House for the extraordinary work these individual citizens and sometimes entities and organizations have done on behalf of orphans here in the United States and around the world. There are happily over 124 angels here with us, 124 Members of Congress—70 Members of the House and 54 Members of the Senate—who took the time to identify someone in their district or State who has really stepped up for orphans through either the domestic adoption and foster care system or our international adoption world.

I am proud of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption. I am one of the founders of the organization. About 16 years ago a group of about 20 of us came together to begin really focused work on educating ourselves first and then our colleagues across the aisle and in both Houses of Congress on the barriers that were keeping children from families, the barriers that were causing children to be left and abandoned, never to be reunited with their birth families or ever placed with new families who could adopt them. We struggled to learn and educate ourselves about why families break up and disintegrate and what is the proper approach after that happens to try to pull that family back together and if not, how we can place children in homes where they can be raised and nurtured and cared for.

You heard me say this many times: Governments do some things very well—some things not so well—but raising children is not one of them. Parents, responsible adults, raise children. It is the way we are wired. It is the way we are created. It is the only real way that ever works well. I believe our job at the Federal, State, and local level, both here in the United States and around the world, is for the government to get out of the way and let this happen or start leading and helping with the kinds of policies that help children reunite with birth families and if that is not possible, to move quickly—because time is of the essence in a child's development—to make sure that child and sibling groups are placed in a loving, supportive family and not in an institution—not necessarily with people who are paid to be parents, not necessarily in group homes, but in real families. Sometimes governments, nonprofits, and charitable individuals want to help with stipends to support that effort. We perfectly understand that. It is perfectly legal. But we really love children to be in homes where they feel they are being loved out of a gift of love, and that is our goal.

There is so much gridlock and arguing going on. This is one issue about which there is no gridlock and no argument. Republicans and Democrats have come together. JIM INHOFE and I are proud to serve as the leaders in the Senate with many Members who have been very active. The Presiding Officer has been extremely active. I wish to say thank you to the Senator from

Wisconsin for her leadership on several pieces of important legislation. I would like to give a special shout-out to the Senator from Minnesota, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, who has been remarkable in her leadership; Senator GILLIBRAND, who has been extremely helpful; Senator SHAHEEN; Senator BLUNT; Senator BOOZMAN; and I could go on. There have been 20 or 25 real champions this year in the Senate on issues that affect orphans and children in foster care. Senator GRASSLEY, who leads the foster care caucus, has also been a very reliable advocate on behalf of these children.

To frame the challenge, there are about 500,000 children in the United States who are in foster care. About 100,000 have been deemed to be adoptable. Parental rights have been terminated due to gross neglect, abuse, et cetera. The courts have stepped in and said these children need a new home, new parents. That is a big number, 500,000, but it represents about one-half of 1 percent of all the children in America. From that standpoint, you can say America is doing pretty well with keeping all of our children in families, keeping them loved and supported. When families fail, the community, the government, and churches and places of worship need to step in and help and be supportive.

But we still have many problems. Some children are waiting too long. Some children are born in this country without birth certificates—I just met one in my office today, if you can imagine that—so their legal status has been compromised. There are millions of orphans around the world who don't have any advocacy and don't have the kinds of systems we have in the United States to help with their identification, their rescue, their placement, et cetera, so that is the work we do.

The Congressional Coalition on Adoption educates Members of Congress. We hold seminars for ourselves, educational opportunities. We hold an annual gala, and this year the Angels In Adoption gala is happening tonight in Washington. Angels are visiting Senate offices, telling their stories of adoption to our Members. Tonight we will be at the Ronald Reagan International Trade Center celebrating with almost 1000 people the work our angels are doing.

I wish to congratulate our three very special national award winners: adoptive parents Bill Klein and Dr. Jennifer Arnold, the stars of the TLC reality show "The Little Couple." They are very famous in America and well-known around the world. People have watched them overcome the great challenges they face. They are very tiny but have great hearts and great minds, and by being on television, they have an extraordinary reach. We are all very familiar with their show. They are married and have proceeded to build a family through adoption. They adopted a little, little child from India and another little child from China and are building their family. They have just

been remarkable models for all adoptive parents, of which I am one. They share the joys and challenges of being adoptive parents of children with very special physical needs.

It has just been remarkable. We will be so touched by their story tonight. They just left my office and they will share their story with us tonight. I just wanted to thank them for their leadership.

Shonda Rhimes is not with us in Washington. She will be receiving an award. She is the executive producer of the hit shows "Scandal," "Private Practice," and "Grey's Anatomy." She has been a tremendous advocate for adoption. She has written about some issues regarding adoption into her shows and has helped to educate the United States of America and the world about the needs of orphans and the great privilege of being adoptive parents.

Finally, our third national award winner is our Paul Singer awardee. Paul Singer is deceased, but he was a great leader in our corporate world and our organization gives an award every year to a corporate executive. This year our winner is Debra Steigerwaldt Waller, CEO of Jockey International. She founded an organization that really helps provide support with postadoption services because many of our adoptive families have adopted children with special needs and some have adopted teenagers or older children. There are all sorts of challenges that come with those adoptions, just as there are with infant adoptions, and those families need someplace to turn. She stepped up as a corporate leader and adoptee herself, and we are thankful for her leadership.

I wish to mention two other angels.

I see my colleague is on the floor ready to speak.

I ask unanimous consent for 5 additional minutes.

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

Ms. LANDRIEU. Madam President, I was proud to nominate Pastor Chad Harbarger and his wife Marsha. They served as foster parents in Louisiana for over 9 years. Amazingly, the couple has cared for 14 children from the foster care system and have adopted 6 of those children out of foster care. They have a 19-year-old, a 14-year-old, an 11-year-old, a 9-year-old, an 8-year-old, and a 7-year-old. They are in the process of adopting a special infant named Amber. All of them are here in Washington and have had a great tour of the city today.

Monique, Chris, Bryce, Jordan, Bailey, Gavyn, and Amber are a wonderful family that was brought together and into the loving home of Pastor Chad and his wife Marsha. They are now working with their local church in Shreveport—in the northwest Louisiana area—to help advocate and get other churches and other families involved in fostering and adopting.

I was so pleased to present the award to the senior pastor of Emmanuel Bap-

tist Church. He has established his own ministry, Fashioned for a Home, and he does so many great things to help our children.

These children don't have any fancy lobbyists or PR firms fighting for them. The pastors at home, their wives, and advocates are the ones who are doing a beautiful job. Congratulations to Chad Harbinger and his wife Marsha. I was so moved when I met Senator WICKER's angel at the pinning ceremony, and he was such an interesting angel that I wanted to put his story in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

Senator WICKER nominated Mendell L. Thompson, who has been president of America's Christian Credit Union in Glendora, CA, serving more than 48,000 members and has more than \$500 million in managed assets.

He serves as trustee and director of several different organizations. He received his award from Senator WICKER for designing a loan package at the credit union that would provide low-interest loans to families that were adopting, because sometimes the expenses can be overwhelming, particularly if you are adopting internationally but even if you adopt out of foster care. The foster care costs are minimal, but there are other costs when you adopt a child. Sometimes they have to add a room to the house or get a special vehicle if they have adopted a special-needs child. He has made over 1,000 loans to families that have adopted children.

I wanted to give a shout-out to Senator WICKER's angel, Mr. Mendell L. Thompson, and his board of directors at America's Christian Credit Union in California and thank them for believing that every child deserves a forever family and for taking an active role in crafting an affordable solution for America's adoptive parents. He has a passion at heart for the miracle of adoption and continues to promote this in California and around the country.

I thank the members for their participation. It is going to be one of our biggest events.

Before I take my seat, Madam President, I wish to speak on one more topic.

TRIBUTE TO REVEREND SAMUEL R. BLAKES

Madam President, I rise today to ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Rev. Samuel Raymond Blakes, pastor of New Home Family Worship Center in New Orleans, LA on his 19th pastoral anniversary. I was honored to participate in the recent anniversary celebration and worship alongside members of the congregation and friends.

Reverend Blakes is a graduate of St. Augustine High School. He attended Southern University at New Orleans and earned both a bachelors and master's degree in theology from Christian Bible College in Louisiana.

Rev. Blakes has devoted himself to New Home Family Worship Center where he has served as pastor since 1995. Through his leadership, the con-

gregation of New Home has expanded to a membership of over 10,000 worshipers. Reverend Blakes remains committed to making a positive impact on the lives of all people through his weekly televised spiritual broadcasts, live radio show and ongoing community outreach.

Rev. Samuel R. Blakes is the youngest son of the late Prophet Robert C. Blakes, Sr. and Minister Lois R. Blakes, both residents of New Orleans for decades. Prophet Blakes was an outstanding community leader, spreading his ministry across Louisiana and into Texas.

I commend Reverend Blakes and his congregation for remaining vigilant, faithful and steadfast in his service to his community. I join his wife Stacey, daughter Sariah and the entire New Home Family Worship Center congregation in celebrating his 19th pastoral anniversary. I pray that Rev. Samuel R. Blakes will continue to be blessed with many more years as a spiritual leader.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 3522

Mr. VITTER. Recently the House of Representatives passed, on a bipartisan basis, H.R. 3522, the Employee Health Care Protection Act by Congressman BILL CASSIDY. This bipartisan act that passed the House would keep the President's core promise throughout the ObamaCare debate when he told every American: If you like the health care coverage you have, you can keep it—period, end of story. I am bringing this up in the Senate because it is vital that the President, and everyone who made that pledge, keep that promise, and the bill that was enacted into law would do that.

Again, the bill is limited, focused, and straightforward. It lets small businesses and workers keep their health care coverage if they like it. It provides more affordable health care options for American workers who don't want or can't afford the other ObamaCare mandated plans.

Again, the President and every Democrat who voted for ObamaCare promised that explicitly again and again and again. When that didn't happen—when millions of Americans were kicked off the plan they had and liked and wanted to keep—Americans rightly felt misled. In fact, that led to the President's promise and commitment "if you like your plan, you can keep it" being labeled by nonpartisan sources in 2013 as the "lie of the year." This bill would fix that and make it good. It would not repeal ObamaCare. It would fix that part of ObamaCare. It would make that promise good.

The keep your plan bill would let insurers continue to sell those plans that people want to keep that are less expensive and cover basic but crucial needs. At least 2 million people would likely sign up for these plans.

Last fall nearly 5 million Americans all across the country had their health

plans canceled even though they wanted to keep them—even though the President told them they could keep them. In Louisiana, 93,000 received cancellation notices after getting that clear pledge and promise from the President and other supporters of ObamaCare.

Sadly, that hurt isn't over because the employer mandate for businesses that employ 100 or more workers is still coming. When that mandate kicks in in just a few months, we are going to see the same thing happen all over again with millions upon millions of Americans in Louisiana and in every single State getting pushed off the plan they had, they liked, and they wanted to keep. Small businesses are losing the plans they had, they liked, and they wanted to keep.

The bill passed the House, as I said, on a bipartisan basis, 247 to 167, and over 2 dozen Democrats voted to support this bill by Congressman BILL CASSIDY. Even Democrats on the House side see the importance of the legislation.

I ask all of us to recognize this is a crucial element of ObamaCare that needs to be fixed. It absolutely needs to be fixed. Thirty-nine Democrats in the House had previously voted for a similar bill to let Americans keep their plan in the individual market. Senate Democrats scrambled with the administration last year to find some way to let individuals who faced cancellations on the individual market keep their plan, but those cancellations are happening to a lot of folks. It has not been fixed for all those folks by a long shot, and more of those sorts of cancellations are on the way when the employer mandate finally hits.

I urge all of us to come together to pass this bill in the Senate as it has been passed on a bipartisan basis in the House.

With that, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 3522, which was received from the House. I further ask consent that the bill be read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Reserving the right to object, just bear with me. As the Senator knows, the President set forth a policy to let States, such as Louisiana, take advantage of this opportunity—through the work of the insurance commissioner—to allow those individuals to stay on their plans.

This bill would allow new plans to be offered that do not comply with the ACA—plans that would include the kind of discriminatory treatments that the ACA seeks to cure, such as higher costs for women than men and treatments that are discriminatory against individuals with preexisting conditions. For that reason, Madam President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. VITTER. Madam President, reclaiming the floor—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. VITTER. I think this is very unfortunate. My distinguished colleague alluded to what I know. Let me tell you what I know. I know 93,000 Louisianians were forced off a plan they had, they liked, and they wanted to keep. I know the President of the United States promised them exactly the opposite. I know my Louisiana colleague in the Senate promised them exactly the opposite, and I know thousands of more cancellations are on their way when the employer mandate is enforced. That is what I know.

I hold hundreds of townhall meetings in Louisiana, and that is what I know from talking to Louisianians, and that is why I know this is the central problem of ObamaCare and it needs to be fixed.

The bill passed the House on a bipartisan basis. I find it very unfortunate that we can't bring it up in the Senate on the same basis and pass it expeditiously.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CELEBRATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WILDERNESS ACT AND THE LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, this month America celebrates the 50th anniversary of both the Wilderness Act and the Land and Water Conservation Fund. I am going to spend a few minutes today—and I believe I am going to be joined at various times by a number of colleagues—to talk about the important role these two storied pieces of legislation have played in creating a legacy of protection and access to America's treasures.

First, people may not remember, perhaps given the way some in Congress talk about wilderness these days, but the Wilderness Act had an extraordinary bipartisan push behind it. It passed 73 to 12 in the Senate and 373 to 1 in the other body. Then congressional champions included leading Democrats and Republicans of that time. To celebrate the success of this landmark piece of legislation today—and it is the middle of Wilderness Week—I introduced a Senate Resolution, along with our colleague on the other side of the aisle, Senator SESSIONS, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the passage of the Wilderness Act.

Just like the original bill, our bipartisan resolution has numerous cosponsors and the support of our colleagues from both sides of the aisle. Part of the

beauty of the Wilderness Act lies in the balance that was forged between immediately designating some places as wilderness in 1964 as part of the enactment, while providing a pathway for future designation.

It is that balance that has helped to make the Wilderness Act one of our country's most democratic pieces of legislation in our rich history. By requiring future legislation, it compelled citizen activists to go out at the grass roots level to involve their friends and neighbors to seek permanent protection for the special places that were important to them.

While passing wilderness designations through Congress has been far from easy, the reward has been extraordinary.

Since the act was signed, Congress has designated more than 110 million acres of Federal lands as wilderness and each acre a gift to our future from our past selves.

Next to me a few of those acres are in a photo of Mirror Lake and Mount Hood, part of the Mount Hood Wilderness within the Mount Hood National Forest in my home State of Oregon.

Mount Hood is an Oregon icon. Ava and William Wyden, our twins, 6 years old—pictures available on my iPhone after this discussion—ski there. They have already recognized, at a very young age, that Mount Hood is an icon.

Wilderness, there and across America, has been called the gold standard of conservation, keeping areas under the strongest level of protection the law provides and ensuring that they remain wild for future generations to appreciate and enjoy. By identifying what places deserve wilderness protection in an open, inclusive fashion, the country ensures full public debate, opportunities to bring people together to build a consensus, sensitivity to rural traditions and local economic needs, with an end product being wilderness areas that all Americans can be proud of.

Creating wilderness is not only important for preservationists, it is also crucial for conservationists, outdoor enthusiasts everywhere, and for all those who make a recreation economy hum—the outfitters, the guides, the lodges, and the mom-and-pop diners. The fact is that the recreation economy supports hundreds of thousands of jobs in rural America and generates billions of dollars of economic activity across our country.

That is also where the Land and Water Conservation Fund comes in because it helps to secure and maintain public access to the country's public lands and wilderness areas for recreation and enjoyment.

Also celebrating its 50th anniversary this month is the Land and Water Conservation Fund. This exceptionally important program is responsible for protecting areas in all 50 States and our territories. This includes such special places, iconic places, as the Grand Canyon National Park, many of our storied

Civil War battlefields, and numerous national wildlife refuges.

In my home State of Oregon the fund has helped protect many of our most precious outdoor treasures, such as the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, Crater Lake National Park, the Pacific Crest Trail, and the Oregon Dunes. Equally important, the Land and Water Conservation Fund feeds States critical funds that help create and maintain the local parks, the trails, and the recreational facilities.

Every year the Treasury collects billions of dollars of revenue, from offshore oil drilling and other sources of energy production. Out of that total, the Land and Water Conservation Fund is authorized to receive up to \$900 million a year.

It is in my view a balanced approach, it is a simple approach, and it is a constructive approach to managing public lands with some of the money the country makes from extracting resources, taking that money and turning it around, and reinvesting it in the country's unique, open spaces.

There are tremendous economic benefits to the investment the fund makes. Nationwide, 98 percent of our counties contain land protected by the fund, and in these places America's outdoor recreation economy generates \$646 billion in consumer spending and supports more than 6 million jobs.

Few States enjoy the outdoors more than Oregonians. It is almost as if the outdoors is a part of our gene pool.

We see ourselves as outdoors people, and outdoor recreation accounts for nearly \$13 billion in consumer spending in our State, and it supports 141,000 Oregon jobs.

As I mentioned before, in addition to its Federal role, the Land and Water Conservation Fund helps the States. It provides matching grants so that State and local governments can use those funds to build new parks that are going to help struggling cities or towns develop. Or, they can maintain natural spaces that are critical to the quality of life in those local communities.

But the bottom line is, those investments—Federal, State, and local investments—lead to job creation. We know that recreation opportunities drive tourism, especially in our counties where there is a significant amount of protected lands.

Those who are recreating go to the local restaurants, go to the local shops, and they stay in the hotels. Often they look for outfitters and guides.

Economists note that job growth in rural western counties, where there is a significant amount of federally protected land, is four times faster than in areas where we do not have that measure of Federal protection.

These are just some of the many reasons why failing to give the Land and Water Conservation Fund the resources it needs, in my view, would be nothing short of legislative malpractice.

Unfortunately, despite the fact that 80 percent of Americans approve of the

program's mission, it has been consistently underutilized, underappreciated and, yes, underfunded. As a result, jobs, growth, and protection—needed protection for these treasures—are left behind.

I plan to introduce two bills that would help to secure the future of the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The first bill would provide a 1-year extension of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and the second bill—that I hope to be able to introduce very shortly—would make it permanent because I believe that dedicated, stable funding will ensure our public lands continue to be preserved and accessible to support those recreationists of the future, the conservationists of the future, and the local economic leaders of the future who will prosper as a result of those investments.

In closing I will simply note that we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act and the Land and Water Conservation Fund as millions of families across the country return from summer vacations to the parks and wilderness areas that these great laws have helped to preserve and enrich.

Children everywhere are sharing stories in their schools about how they went fishing, hiking, and camping in their Nation's backyards.

If realized to their greatest potential, the Wilderness Act and the Land and Water Conservation Fund are sure-fire ways to help guarantee that the next generation of Americans will continue to have access to beautiful recreation areas, captivating historic sites, and pristine wilderness. Strong, robust funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund will help grow economies and create jobs in every State nationwide.

Finally, let me note that until recently I had the honor of chairing the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. As chair, I had the opportunity to work particularly with two colleagues who are on the floor now, the distinguished Senator from Colorado, Mr. UDALL, and the distinguished Senator from New Mexico, Mr. HEINRICH. It makes me feel very good that they are here because, as Westerners, they see day in and day out what we are talking about with respect to the importance of this program and this extraordinary contribution it has made to the country.

These two great Western leaders, with respect to natural resources, understand it is not only about the past. It is not just about the wonderful half century that I have taken the time to note. These are two leaders—Senator UDALL of Colorado and Senator HEINRICH of New Mexico—who I think are going to be part of the leadership, the leadership that works to protect these two great programs for years to come.

I am very grateful to have the opportunity to be on the floor with them.

I had a chance particularly to see some of the treasures in Colorado recently. I can see why Senator UDALL feels so strongly.

New Mexico is one of the few States I have not visited, so I hope I will be able to wrangle an invitation to join Senator HEINRICH.

But I want to leave the floor knowing that as we make this commitment to do all we can to make the protection part of our extraordinary outdoor spaces part of the legacy we leave for our children and grandchildren, the case for these two programs—and advocating for them—is in very good hands with Senator UDALL and Senator HEINRICH.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN). The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. President, I wish to begin by thanking the Senator from Oregon. He has been a true leader in the Senate for many years and I know the Senator from New Mexico joins me in thanking him for his leadership and for his partnership.

I rise—as Senator WYDEN has to celebrate the public lands of his State of Oregon—to celebrate the public lands of Colorado. I make the point right out of the gate that our public lands support thousands of jobs across Colorado and they strengthen our special way of life.

This month marks the 50th anniversary of the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Wilderness Act. Both of these incredibly successful laws have been instrumental in protecting our public lands for future generations, growing our outdoor recreation economy, and ensuring access to public lands in Colorado and all across the country.

In sum, what I am saying is these landmark laws have touched every corner of Colorado over the past 50 years.

I am very pleased in that spirit to join Senator WYDEN and Senator SESSIONS in submitting a resolution honoring the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act.

From the snowcapped peaks of the Eagles Nest Wilderness and the desert arches of the Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness, to James Peak—which I worked hard to establish—the Wilderness Act has protected more than 3.6 million acres in Colorado alone. These places have inspired generations of Coloradans and remind us that we don't inherit the Earth from our parents, we borrow it from our children.

Let me turn to the Land and Water Conservation Fund. In 1964, some 50 years ago, President Lyndon Johnson worked with the Congress to establish LWCF—the acronym for the Land and Water Conservation Fund—to fulfill a basic promise to the American people.

That promise is, as we develop our oil and gas resources, we will also conserve other special places throughout our country for the next generations.

As we mark 50 years of the program, we can tangibly see, feel, and breathe its success in the 3 million acres LWCF has helped us to preserve as part of 40,000 local park and recreation development projects across all 50 States, as

well as over 4 million acres of public lands managed by the Federal Government.

In Colorado we have seen firsthand how LWCF dollars have helped protect access to the public lands that help define us as a State.

From my position as chairman of the national parks subcommittee, I have seen how these funds have been particularly useful to our parks.

After all, there is no better example than the creation of Great Sand Dunes National Park in Colorado. This magnificent place was protected by LWCF appropriations that were obtained with very strong local support. Great Sand Dunes National Park protects one of our Nation's great landmarks and is also a critical source of tourist dollars for the surrounding rural communities, and this economic boost is something we have seen all across our State and our Nation.

It is noteworthy that for every dollar coming out of the LWCF fund, we see four times that much created in economic value—\$1 equals \$4 in economic value—and this investment through the LWCF program is part of the reason we have seen strong growth in America's outdoor recreation industry. When I say the outdoor recreation industry, that is activities such as hunting, fishing, camping, skiing, biking—you name it—and those activities have generated over \$13 billion. That supports over 124,000 jobs in Colorado alone.

In another vein, LWCF resources have helped States such as ours become more resilient when it comes to national disasters. Last weekend I was in Lyons, CO, one of the towns hardest hit by Colorado's historic 2013 floods. This photograph is one of numerous examples of what we faced for about 3 days last fall a year ago.

Trout Unlimited has shared a story of how LWCF funds were used to help recover from a similar flood in the neighboring Big Thompson Canyon 30 years ago. Back in 1976 local officials had the foresight to make an LWCF purchase of 80 flooded properties and to replace the damaged homes with new parkland which then provided fishing access to the community and critical floodplain protection. That \$1 million investment in 1976 helped families who had lost their homes then and avoided an estimated \$16 million in property damages in 2013 that would have happened without those preservation efforts.

The Big Thompson Canyon flooded in a similar fashion last year as it did in 1976, but because of the LWCF moneys and the fact that 80 flooded properties were purchased, there weren't buildings and there wasn't human activity in those areas, and we saw the result. It was a way to rebuild smarter and better in 1976, and we are going to do that going forward from 2013's flood.

As a part of that, I was really excited and pleased to hear that the town of Lyons recently received \$350,000 of

LWCF funding to repair and rebuild the spectacular St. Vrain River corridor trail. Before that trail was destroyed last fall in the flood, it had been used as a regional connector for anglers, cyclists, kayakers, mountain bikers, and many others. This project will now help restore a vital economic asset for the community, and it will ensure access to the river and the river corridor for many generations to come. That is a success story, pure and simple.

LWCF has helped in many other less obvious ways. As we fight to get our kids—and ourselves—to spend less time in front of the television, outdoor recreation is still the best way to stay physically fit and active and emotionally healthy.

This past July I rafted the Browns Canyon Wilderness Study Area of the Arkansas River. You can see here what a spectacular and unique place Browns Canyon is—an area I have proposed to preserve permanently as the Browns Canyon National Monument and Wilderness. Along on that rafting trip we had a group of veterans, and several of them are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, as we know it. They told me how they use their time outdoors as a part of their healing—again, a success story.

How do we keep LWCF strong? Even though LWCF has been successful by any measure, while enjoying strong bipartisan support, the program has only been fully funded two times since its enacting law in 1964 promised \$900 million in annual funding. That is right—only two times out of the last 50 years. LWCF is a victim of the uncertainty of the annual appropriations cycle, which leaves a huge unmet need in Colorado and across our country. That is why I have been fighting—joined by many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle—for full, permanent funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund. I am very pleased to be working with Senator WYDEN, Senator HEINRICH, and others on a fix that would fulfill the LWCF promise. This is a promise to our kids, our grandkids, and all generations down the line, and we have an obligation to keep it.

The good news is that this potential fix would also reauthorize and fund two other programs that are critical to our rural communities: the Payment in Lieu of Taxes Program, which is also known as PILT, and Secure Rural Schools. I will talk briefly about both of those programs.

For decades the PILT Program has provided critical funding to nearly 1,900 rural counties to make up for diminished tax revenues stemming from Federal land ownership within those county boundaries. PILT helps ensure rural communities have access to basic services such as law enforcement, education, and health services.

Let me share an example. Ouray County in southwestern Colorado is still recovering from the recent economic downturn and the corresponding 36 percent drop in property tax collec-

tion. The county has already cut staff time significantly by reducing county operations to only 4 days a week. Without PILT, that would drop to just 3 days a week. PILT also ensures that the county can hire a sheriff and that students can get to school.

Unfortunately, permanent funding for this program expired, and PILT now experiences the uncertainty of short-term fixes, creating significant planning challenges for Colorado and rural Americans. I was proud to lead the effort last year to extend PILT funding through the farm bill, which delivered \$34.5 million to Colorado communities. But here in the Congress we have to do more. We have to confront this annual uncertainty over the future of the PILT Program. That is why I have championed a separate bill to permanently fund PILT. This is also a bipartisan effort, and it is why I have worked with Senator WYDEN to include such certainty in this comprehensive bill today.

I mentioned the Secure Rural Schools Program, and the same could be said of it. Rural Colorado communities rely on the Secure Rural Schools Program to hire teachers and strengthen our education system. In 2013 alone Colorado communities—where one teacher can make or break a school—received \$9.5 million through this vital program. So this important bill for our Secure Rural Schools Program would ensure that the Federal Government keeps its commitment to our rural counties to help offset the costs of public education, roads, and other essential services.

We have a dynamic trio of very important programs: LWCF, PILT, and Secure Rural Schools. They help support Colorado's rural communities and our special way of life.

I will conclude with this theme. We are a nation of risk-takers and explorers, always searching for the next challenge to overcome or the next mountain to climb. Our public lands are a reminder of that heritage, and finding the right balance for how to use our public lands is the next challenge to overcome. As we tackle problems such as growing our economy, disaster response, and taking care of our wounded warriors, let's not forget the important role of our public lands and the opportunities they provide for outdoor recreation, our economy, and our health. This year, let's reflect on what President Kennedy called "intelligent use of natural resources." Let's celebrate 50 years of the Land and Water Conservation Fund with bipartisan action for full and permanent funding for LWCF, PILT, and Secure Rural Schools.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. President, let me start out by righting a wrong. I hadn't realized Chairman WYDEN, our chairman from Oregon, had not had a chance to visit the great State of New Mexico. I will fix that right now and

make sure he is not only invited, but we might seek to show him some of the incredible places the two programs we are talking about today have helped preserve, protect, and make as assets to our local economy in the State of New Mexico.

As we heard from our colleague Senator UDALL and our colleague Chairman WYDEN of Oregon as well, this month we celebrate two incredible milestones in our country's conservation history. We celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act and the 50th anniversary of the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Both of these programs have been etched into the history of my home State by New Mexico conservationists with names such as Aldo Leopold, Senator Clinton P. Anderson, and Secretary of Interior Stewart Udall.

When Senator Anderson steered the passage of the Wilderness Act here on the floor of the Senate, he said on August 20, 1964:

In no area has this Congress more decisively served the future well-being of the Nation than in passing legislation to conserve natural resources and to provide the means by which our people could enjoy them. . . . While we stretch out the highways to carry ever-expanding traffic, while we build whole new communities to house a growing population, and while we consume more acreage for a burgeoning industry, we have set aside part of our land as it was when human eye first saw it—unscarred by man, primeval, a memorial to the Creator who molded it.

Senator Anderson was also unquestionably one of the principal architects of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and the 88th Congress, where so much of this work was done, was coined as the "Conservation Congress."

LWCF is the primary tool our Nation uses to fund the protection of our natural and cultural heritage, and I have worked diligently with my colleagues—including Senator UDALL, his cousin Senator UDALL of New Mexico, Senator WYDEN of Oregon, and others—to secure full and permanent funding for this program.

But even 40 years before the enactment of the Wilderness Act or LWCF, conservationist Aldo Leopold had the vision and influence to help protect 500,000 acres of mountains, rivers, and mesas in New Mexico—which eventually became the Gila Wilderness—in order to ensure a roadless and backcountry experience free of what Aldo Leopold called "Ford dust" for those hearty enough to saddle up or hike into the heart of this wild country. With the passage of the Wilderness Act, it became the National Forest System's very first designated wilderness area. New Mexico is also where the idea of tribally administered wilderness became a reality when Blue Lake was returned to Taos Pueblo.

Former Senator Jeff Bingaman's leadership was absolutely invaluable in conserving important public lands in New Mexico, such as the Rio Grande del Norte and Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks regions, both of which were des-

ignated national monuments within the last 2 years.

But the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act and the Land and Water Conservation Fund is not just about the past, as we have heard from my colleagues. The future of public lands conservation will depend on the continued collaborative efforts of our elected officials, our business owners, tribal leaders, sportsmen, conservation organizations, outdoor retailers, and others to work together to protect America's most treasured natural landscapes.

Our efforts should continue our proud bipartisan history. After all, it was Representative John Saylor, a Republican from Pennsylvania, who was the lead sponsor and champion in the House of Representatives for the Wilderness Act. And it was former Republican Senator Pete Domenici of my home State who championed legislation to designate the Sandia Wilderness, a place I look upon every time I go home to Albuquerque, and who said at the time that the area "forms a beautiful natural backdrop for the city which all the residents can enjoy."

In New Mexico, hunters and anglers, campers and *acequia* *parciantes*, chili farmers and urban dwellers, all have a deep connection to the outdoors and benefit from the recreation, wildlife, and the water that wilderness provides. Many of my own most formative moments, decisions, memories, and turning points have occurred in these public wildlands.

I remember a trip with my wife Julie to the Irish Wilderness in Missouri, a trip that we made as we were leaving our college days behind in the Midwest and heading back west to New Mexico to start our new life together. In 2001, shortly after 9/11, I backpacked through 53 miles of the Gila Wilderness and decided on that trip to run for a seat on the Albuquerque City Council.

I have many cherished memories from the trips my wife and I have made over the years along the spines of the American Rockies, the Sangre de Cristos, the Tetons, in places with names like the Pecos Wilderness, the South San Juan, Jediah Smith, and canyons with names like Dark Canyon, Desolation Canyon, Gray, Grand Gulch, the Goosenecks, the San Juan, and of course the Chama River Canyon near my home.

Wilderness is in my blood, and I make no apologies for believing that some places are so very special that we will never improve upon them. These are the places worth fighting for.

I am committed to carry on my State's rich conservation history. Senator TOM UDALL and I have introduced legislation to designate special places such as the Columbine-Hondo in Taos County, the San Antonio River and Ute Mountain in the new Rio Grande del Norte National Monument as new wilderness areas. It is clear that conservation and growing our economy are inextricably linked. Protected wild places contribute to the New Mexico

economy in a robust and sustainable outdoor recreation community which generates \$6.1 billion in consumer spending every year in the State, gives us 68,000 New Mexico jobs, and \$1.7 billion in wages and salaries, according to the Outdoor Industry Association.

The new Rio Grande del Norte National Monument in northern New Mexico has already yielded economic benefits since its designation. After less than 1 year since it was designated a national monument, the local community saw a 40-percent increase in visitors.

As we look back on the last 50 years since the Wilderness Act and the Land and Water Conservation Fund both became law, let us also look to the future. My children love wild places as much as I do. My son Carter will be backpack hunting for elk with me later this fall. My son Michael will join me on BLM land to chase mule deer. They have hiked the Columbine Hondo Wilderness Study Area and fished in Cruces Basin Wilderness.

It is up to all of us to ensure that their children have the same opportunities we had and that we have shared with their generation.

I close with a quote from Aldo Leopold's book, "A Sand County Almanac":

When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.

I yield the floor.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I wish to speak in support of the Land and Water Conservation Fund and to commemorate its 50th anniversary this month.

Fifty years ago, in an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote, the House and Senate passed and President Johnson signed into law the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act. And for 50 years now, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has helped protect and preserve our Nation's outdoor heritage all around my home State of Washington and across the country for our children and grandchildren.

The LWCF contains a set of unique tools that empower local communities to increase public access to open space, conserve forests, and protect wilderness areas. These funds help secure permanent, public access to lands and waterways for hikers, bikers, campers, hunters, anglers, and other outdoor enthusiasts. Senator Henry Jackson, from my home State of Washington, was one of the drafters of the original legislation. During debate of the bill on this very floor, he reminded his colleagues of the importance of open space to Americans, that these public lands are "the places they go to hunt, fish, camp, picnic, swim, for boating or driving for pleasure, or perhaps simply for relaxation or solitude." And that description still rings true today.

There are many examples of the LWCF at work in my home State of Washington. LWCF support flowing through its State and local assistance

grants, Forest Legacy Program, Federal Land Management Agency projects, and Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund have helped protect over 120,000 acres of land and create or enhance hundreds of recreational facilities. These funds have gone to a wide variety of projects, from Federal wilderness to private working farms and forests, from scenic rivers to urban water parks. From the Straits of Juan de Fuca to the crest of the Cascades, from the Columbia River Gorge to the Little Spokane River, the LWCF has made my State a better place for future generations.

But a common thread through all these projects has been the way LWCF funding has brought together local public officials, conservationists, farmers, business leaders, forest owners, and engaged citizens to create and enhance public access to open space and natural areas and help keep sprawl in check, all while allowing for sustained economic growth and development. Funding from the LWCF were key in allowing for many of the individual acquisitions needed to achieve this, and I am proud to have supported many of these projects which have helped make these communities' visions a reality.

It is important to remember that it isn't just rural areas in Washington that have been enhanced with resources from the fund. Dozens of projects in the hearts of our cities have given children access to much needed parks, sports fields, and swimming facilities. Families can now enjoy time together picnicking, biking, and even hiking in forests and other habitats, right outside their doorsteps. And we all benefit from the cleaner air and cleaner water that results from these high quality protected lands. Land and water conservation is good for our health, good for our families, and good for our souls.

But we also know it is good for our economy. In 2012, Americans spent over \$640 billion on outdoor recreation, and in Washington alone outdoor pursuits supported 227,000 direct jobs.

Our Nation has been blessed with an abundance of natural resources. That is why it makes perfect sense that when we develop some of those energy resources to fuel our economy, we set aside a portion of the royalties generated from that development to protect those other natural resources. But these conservation dollars are more than just outlays, they are also good investments. Studies have estimated that each dollar invested in land conservation returns between \$4 and \$10 in economic benefits to the economy, and we will see this return on investment for generation after generation.

Even with all the good that we see as a result of the LWCF, there is so much more that we could be doing. That is because in spite of all the benefits that we receive from LWCF spending, Congress has diverted the bulk of these conservation dollars to unrelated programs. We ought to fix that. Next year,

the funding authority for the LWCF will expire. We need to permanently reauthorize this program, and create an independent, dedicated stream of funding for it. Doing so will benefit all Americans, both now and for generations to come.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland is recognized.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized for up to 7 minutes, followed by Senator CORNYN for up to 10 minutes, and Senator BLUMENTHAL for up to 15 minutes.

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

ISIL STRATEGY

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I take this time to talk about the President's strategies on combating the threat of ISIL, or ISIS. I applaud the President's recognition that ISIL is a barbaric terrorist group that beheaded Americans. It murders, kidnaps, and tortures civilian populations. It sells women into slavery. It has the stated purpose of attacking America and its allies. It poses a threat, and the President is right that it calls for appropriate action by the international community.

I support and congratulate the President on the selective military strikes that have been done at the request of the Iraqi Government against ISIL's advances, which have held them back, and being able to regain territory that was held by ISIL, protecting civilian populations. I strongly support the President's commitment that there will be no combat ground troops interjected into this combat, and I think the President has done a good job in engaging the international community to work with us so that this is truly an international effort.

Let me comment for a moment, if I might, about military action and that it needs to be restricted. I oppose authorizing military use of force that is open-ended, that could result in the use of ground troops or where we could be asked to carry through or have our military do what the countries where these terrorist groups are located should be doing with their own military. In Iraq, it should be the Iraqi security forces that take on the ground responsibilities.

Let me remind my colleagues, when we went into Iraq—and it was done without my support. I voted against the authorization to go into Iraq. We were told that was going to be a short campaign, that the might of the military of the United States would make that a very quick operation. As we see years later, it took a long time and we are still in Iraq. It must be done with the help of the international community, particularly the countries that are in the region.

I think we have a strong responsibility as Members of the Senate and Members of Congress to revisit the 2001 authorization that was passed by Congress shortly after the attack on our country on September 11, and the 2002

authorization that was used for Americans going into Iraq. I don't think either one of those resolutions is relevant for additional military action today in either Syria or Iraq.

Let me read into the RECORD the appropriate language that was included in the 2001 authorization:

The President is authorized to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed or aided the terrorist attack that occurred on Sept. 11, 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons . . .

It is a real stretch to say that authority applies to actions against ISIL today. Therefore, I think it is incumbent. I think we have a constitutional responsibility to act, and I think we must act and make it very clear that there will be no ground combat troops authorized in any action taken by Congress.

In regard to Iraq, the Iraq resolution was passed at a time when the information supplied to Congress was not accurate. It is certainly not relevant to the fact that now there is an independent Iraqi Government. That authorization also needs to be revisited.

Let me remind you, if this administration can use the authority of 2001 and 2002 for using aircraft and military operations by air, what is to say that the next administration—because we know this is going to take a long time—couldn't use that authorization for introducing ground troops in these countries?

So I think it is important that we revisit these authorizations, eliminate the previous authorizations, and make it relevant to the current need. It has to be limited to strategic air missions requested by the Iraqi Government, targeted at protecting civilian populations.

In regard to Syria, I have serious doubt about authorizing military operations. I think we need to have clarification from the administration as to the clear objectives they are seeking to accomplish in Syria. We have to be very careful about the authorization of the use of our military in a country where we are not invited.

Now let me talk 1 minute about timing. The President has article II powers. I don't deny that. So if something were to happen, he has the right to defend our country and use our military to defend our country. He can do that for a period of 60 days. Sixty days from now we will soon be returning for a lameduck session of Congress, so I don't think there is any immediate rush for us to try to get an authorization bill done. But I think we should be working on an authorization bill so we can take it up when Congress reconvenes, and if something happens in the interim, we are certainly available and we can come back in and be ready to act.

America is always stronger when Congress and the administration work together on these issues, and I would

hope we could come together with the appropriate authorization, making clear we will not allow authorization for combat ground troops and that we are very restricted on the use of our air power.

Let me lastly comment about the continuing resolution we will be voting on tomorrow, as I understand it, that gives title 10 power for the arming and equipping of the Syrian opposition. Clearly in that authorization there is no authorization for use of U.S. military force. It is consistent with the action taken by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on which I serve and the resolution I supported that talked about arming and training the vetted Syrian opposition. We did that over a year ago. It was for a different mission; it was for dealing with Assad. This in a way is comparable to dealing with ISIL but also deals with the capacities against Assad. It is limited, to expire on December 11, and I think it is consistent with our mission to deal with our policies in Syria.

As I said earlier, I voted against the Iraq authorization in 2002. I see that we have to be very careful that we do not allow authorization to exist that could be used for a long and costly involvement of the United States.

It is also clear to me that we cannot win the campaign against ISIL by military action alone. We have to have diplomatic support. We have to deal with cutting off the financial aid. We have to deal with cutting off the political support in Iraq. In Iraq we have a representative government. The seeds have been planted. That is what we need to do. That cuts off the support ISIL will need for long-term survival. The international community needs to stay resolved and the United States needs to stay in leadership.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Texas is recognized.

SENATE PROCEDURE

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, it has been more than a decade since I first came to this Chamber of the United States Senate. It has become unrecognizable—what has traditionally been a forum for thoughtful debate, amendments, and discussion based frequently on different perspectives that we come to based on our experience or the parts of the country we represent. Unfortunately this Chamber has devolved into one where not much gets done, and when there are votes, they are frequently show votes with the election clearly in mind.

Look no farther than our September agenda. Amid high unemployment, stagnant wages, widespread frustration over the consequences of ObamaCare, and genuine humanitarian and security crises abroad and here at home, our colleagues who control the agenda in the Chamber decided the most urgent order of business was to amend the Bill of Rights to the U.S. Constitution and gut the First Amendment.

As I said at the time, when I went home during the August recess to talk

to my constituents, not one of them said: I want you to go back to Congress and I want you to gut the First Amendment guarantee to freedom of speech. This clearly is not at the top of the American people's agenda.

Despite all the challenges facing our country, the majority leader, who controls the agenda on the Senate floor, continues to prioritize election year votes—show votes—over serious legislation.

Back in March, when our Democratic friends decided to promote their so-called “fair shot” agenda, the New York Times noted that the exercise was completely political in nature. The New York Times—hardly hostile to our Democratic friends and their policy agenda—put it:

Democrats can see that making new laws is really not the point. Rather they are trying to force Republicans to vote against them.

Meanwhile, the majority leader has prevented millions and millions of Americans from having a real voice in this Chamber. Since he became the majority leader, he has blocked legislation more than twice as often as the majority leaders Bill Frist, Tom Daschle, Trent Lott, Bob Dole, George Mitchell, and I should add Robert Byrd, combined. But he hasn't just blocked Republican amendments, not just those in the minority; he has blocked amendments from the majority party—his own party.

Since July of last year we have had rollcall votes on only 14 Republican amendments and only 8 Democratic amendments. I have to tell you that if my party was in the majority and we ended up getting less votes than the party in the minority, I would be pretty hot about it, and I would have some explaining to do to my constituents. Indeed, the majority leader has allowed so few amendments that one of his fellow Senate Democrats, the junior Senator from Connecticut, recently told Politico: I got more substance on the floor of the House of Representatives in the minority than I have as a Member of the Senate majority.

Our colleagues in the House have sent over scores and scores of bills relating to job creation, taxes, health care, immigration, and other issues only to have Senator REID declare them dead on arrival. No wonder Congress has a 14-percent approval rating. When people see the dysfunction here—primarily in the Senate, since the House is passing legislation and then it dies here because the majority leader refuses to take it up—it is understandable why they are frustrated, just as we are frustrated.

I know it is not just those of us in the minority. Many Democratic colleagues privately expressed their own frustrations about the Senate becoming so dysfunctional. If the majority leader was serious about solving the problems that confront our country, they would not need to look far beyond positive progrowth ideas to address our

Nation's most pressing challenges. They would see that Senate Republicans have joined our House colleagues in offering a bevy of thoughtful proposals.

First and foremost we have long stressed the need to pass a progrowth fiscally responsible budget. The Senate—under Democratic control—has not passed a budget since 2009. That is malpractice. We should leave the next generation with more economic opportunity, not more debt. Somebody is going to have to pay that money back. Maybe the young folks who are sitting in the front row—the young pages and their children will have to pay the money back. Americans and small businesses across the country budget responsibly every month and so should their government.

In addition, we pushed sensible progrowth energy policies that enjoy bipartisan support, such as approving the Keystone XL Pipeline and boosting the U.S. exports of liquefied natural gas. We need energy policies that enhance our energy security, reduce prices, encourage investment, and create jobs at home. We also need a regulatory system that fosters economic growth and prosperity, not one that furthers Washington's overreach. Republicans believe we must continue aggressive oversight of the Obama administration's out-of-control regulatory agenda, which is hitting hard-working Americans and their wages while empowering Federal bureaucrats.

Senate Republicans also believe the President's health care law was absolutely the wrong way to expand affordable, accessible, quality health care to more Americans. We believe families and patients should be free to purchase whatever kind of insurance they prefer without having to worry about the government meddling.

We believe future reform should guarantee that health care decisions will be made by patients and their doctors, not by Washington. We believe those reforms should make quality health insurance and quality care more accessible for more people. Here is the greatest irony of ObamaCare—instead of making health care more affordable, it made it more expensive, thus limiting access to care.

On tax reform, we believe our overriding goal should be to lower tax rates for all taxpayers, broaden the base, and simplify the entire system in order to restore America's global competitiveness. We also favor ending “too big to fail,” thereby, ending the implicit government backstop and subsidy currently enjoyed by America's largest banks. There are a number of ways to achieve that goal, but we all agree Dodd-Frank did not solve that problem.

Immigration continues to be among the most pressing issues we face, especially given this year's record surge of unaccompanied children coming from Central America and pouring across our southwest border. We understand

that one of America's top priorities is to make sure our laws are being enforced and our border is secure. We share that priority and we will keep advocating the necessary reforms, along with other reforms, to fix our broken immigration system.

We believe there are a lot of good ideas, and they are not the purview of either political party. In fact, we have been sent by our constituents to work in a bipartisan way to try and solve some of America's most pressing challenges, and we view our intellectual diversity as a sign of strength, but we remain united on the core principles and ideas that define our party.

We have had an experiment in big government over the last 6 years and, you know what, it hasn't worked very well. Unemployment rates remain high, the labor participation rate is at a 30-year low, and people have simply given up. The economy should be bounding back rather than knocking along the bottom. We remain committed to tackling our Nation's biggest challenges of promoting greater prosperity for all Americans, and we do that by growing the economy and creating jobs and letting people work hard, as they always have in America, and pursuing their dreams.

Proposals such as the ones I mentioned, many of which enjoy bipartisan support—they certainly have in the House of Representatives—will never see the light of day here as long as the majority leader continues to operate this Chamber like an incumbent protection program.

The American people sent us to take tough votes and solve problems. Indeed, I don't know anyone who would want to be a Senator if we are not allowed to vote and solve problems. The American people certainly deserve a Senate that operates that way.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Connecticut.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, recently the Nation has been shocked and horrified by a video showing Ray Rice, a professional football player, knocking out his then fiancée who is now his wife, Janay Rice, and dragging her like a sack of potatoes out of an elevator as it almost closed on her. The Nation was shocked by the callous indifference and disregard for the issue of domestic violence not only by Ray Rice but by the NFL itself, which has fumbled and failed in its reaction from the very beginning.

Indeed, I wrote to the NFL asking for stronger measures after it suspended Ray Rice for a mere two games. Since then it has received the now infamous and notorious video, and he has been suspended indefinitely.

Ray Rice is only 1 of 85 players since the year 2000 who has been charged or cited for domestic violence, and many more were arrested for sexual assault, drunk driving, and other crimes.

This poster shows how the league could field an entire lineup of players

who have been arrested for domestic violence and who remain active in the NFL. There are others who are not shown here. Ray Rice is on the field, though he may be suspended indefinitely.

These incidents, and literally thousands of others, are the ugly, brutal, bloody face of domestic violence in this Nation. Not only is it bigger and broader and more painful and serious than Ray and Janay Rice, it affects our entire society. Its victims are throughout the country, and what they need most desperately are more services to bolster their courage and strength to come forward and break the cycle.

I know domestic violence is an issue in Connecticut because I worked to fight child abuse and neglect and related kinds of domestic violence when I served as attorney general. Not only have I worked in courts but also in schools to speak to young men and women.

I have worked with shelters such as Interval House, the largest shelter in Connecticut, which helped to form an organization called Men Make a Difference, Men Against Domestic Violence, which is composed of men as role models. Coaches, former athletes, successful businesspeople, law enforcement types, and broadcasters provide role models and take a stand and speak out against this scourge.

I know the brutal and terrible toll taken by domestic violence in Connecticut and in this country. The economic consequences run into the billions and the searing pain, savage emotional harm, and physical wounds are incalculable. The tentacles of domestic violence reach into every aspect of American life—homes, workplaces, hospitals, and athletic fields.

In Connecticut, the demand for victim support services has steadily increased over the years, and in Connecticut and around the country the need for services has spiked as a result of the Ray Rice video because more women and men have gained the courage and strength to come forward as a result of the national conversation that video has spurred.

As I have continued my work in Congress as a Member of the Senate, I have been deeply troubled, in fact, outraged on occasion, that we authorized barely a pittance of what is necessary to deal with that problem and support those services that are so vital to providing counseling, support, and advocacy.

Just in the past couple of days, I have learned that 30 percent of calls to the National Domestic Violence Hotline go unanswered. Congress bears a majority of the responsibility for this lack of resources.

There are heroes in this fight against domestic violence. Some of the advocates, service providers, and people such as Karen Jarmoc, CEO of the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and Kim Gandy, president and CEO of the National Network to End Domestic Violence, and most im-

portant, the survivors and victims who have come forward and are telling their stories and speaking truth to the power and brutality they faced and confronted and conquered.

In fact, one of the challenges on this issue has always been the secrecy that surrounds it. The video of Ray Rice assaulting and knocking out his wife is the exception that proves the rule. It is the exception because most instances of domestic violence occur behind closed doors in secrecy and often at night and they go unrecorded because in most instances of domestic violence, women are disbelieved, embarrassed, shamed, and stigmatized when they come forward.

The Ray Rice video is the exception that proves the rule. It is the exception of this brutality being shown, but it is the rule that the response is almost always slow and inadequate. Even after Ray Rice was indicted for third-degree assault, Janay virtually apologized for her role in a stage-managed press conference orchestrated by the team—the Ravens—for whom Ray Rice played.

Only after the second video was circulated did the league even approach real action. The prosecutor in this instance said he would not treat Ray Rice more leniently or harshly simply because of his celebrity, which is understandable.

The routine in most courts in America is failure to treat domestic violence as seriously and severely as the crime it is and provide the punishment it deserves. The Ray Rice case was routine and it was done routinely, but that doesn't make it right. So the courts bear a measure of responsibility, along with the Congress.

The NFL is not alone here, but the NFL has a special position of trust. It is one of the most massively influential organizations in America. It employs players who have a massive impact on the attitudes and feelings of young men and women—in fact, Americans of all ages.

The NFL has a position of public trust because of its prominence and power, but it also has a position of public trust because of the special benefits it is accorded under the law. And it is like the NBA, the MLB, and the NHL, which all receive tremendous assistance in putting their brands and their messages before the American people. So it is our responsibility to call on these leagues to ensure that their messages which they can spread so widely because of the benefits they are accorded under our law—to ensure and require them to keep faith with their public trust and public obligation.

The public assistance these leagues receive take a number of very exceptional forms: tax benefits, public subsidies, and local assistance. But chief among them is the antitrust exemption enjoyed by the four major sports leagues. Although large corporations and similar organizations that have the potential to dominate a particular marketplace are generally prevented

from coordinating their activities under our antitrust laws, Congress permits this kind of coordination by professional sports teams, particularly in the area of pooling their broadcast rights and television contracts—the very means that enable them to spread their message and create that public image.

Teams in smaller media markets are able to remain competitive with their larger counterparts because of those benefits and the fact that the governing national leagues can evenly distribute resources—again, through coordination, agreements, combinations that would violate the law for any other corporation.

This exemption was the product of significant debate and analysis in Congress and around the country when it was granted. It was first established in 1961, and the Judiciary Committee noted even then that it was not intended to be absolute and that it was not to be used for unfair competition and that there was a public trust and obligation.

In 1976 the House of Representatives convened what it called a “Select Committee on Professional Sports” which prepared detailed reports on “the large number of off-the-field problems that affected all four of the professional sports,” including “both violence that involves participants in the sports as well as violence involving spectators of the sports.” We know the problems in these leagues include not only domestic violence but also the failure to address injuries such as concussions, drug abuse, and other problems that have been reported.

If anything, in the more than 50 years since the exemption was first granted, the prominence of the four professional sporting leagues in the American media landscape has only increased. The leagues have a tremendous effect, again, reaching into every aspect of American life, on programming, pricing, advertising, and more.

A lot has changed over the past 50 years, not least of which is our understanding of the harms of domestic violence and the importance of workplace policies that protect women, minorities, and other members of society. Yet the NFL’s response to the Ray Rice incident came right out of the 1960s—right out of an episode of “Mad Men.”

Our laws and our practices and our culture must change. Most leagues, most athletes, most managers, and most teams play by the rules on and off the field. But, unfortunately, these deep-seated problems are not new. This special status can no longer be a blank check. It can no longer be granted permanently. It must be reviewable and the teams and the league held accountable. The era of the blank check for sports teams must end. The special benefits must be dependent on the leagues’ fulfilling their positions of trust and special responsibility.

I will be proposing legislation to sunset the leagues’ special antitrust treat-

ment, ending the blanket antitrust exemption and making it renewable every 5 years. The exemption should depend on the leagues’ acting consistently with their public trust and complying with ethical and legal standards that both protect and oversee players and that keep the teams accountable to their fans. Their fans deserve better.

To ensure that Congress has accurate information, my legislation will establish a commission, like many that have existed in the past, to monitor the leagues’ record of corporate citizenship. The commission would include representatives with special knowledge of issues that were proven to be a problem for the leagues, such as the heads of the Department of Justice’s Office of Violence Against Women, the Federal Communications Commission, and the Surgeon General, and the commission would be responsible for submitting a report to Congress in advance of the vote to reauthorize and renew the antitrust exemption.

Other groups would have an opportunity to be heard and to submit their views, and there would be hearings, meetings, and other exchanges that would give all an opportunity to be heard on this vital topic. I hope the Congress will have hearings as soon as possible on this issue.

I believe the professional sports leagues, and in particular the NFL, have an obligation to adopt policies that train players on domestic violence—more than lip service, more than check-the-box orientation settings—and, most important, to punish acts of abuse and promote awareness of this terrible crime. They have an obligation to act in accordance with due process and establish rules that treat more stringently and strictly this crime of domestic violence, in accordance with standards that give the players the right and opportunity to be heard.

But maybe more importantly than all else, these leagues should be accountable to help the survivors and victims, to provide funds out of the tens of billions in their profits to support these services that are more necessary than ever. They should support the survivors—most of them women—who come forward and have the incredible courage, bravery, and strength to break with a situation of domestic violence. It is at that point of maximum danger and turmoil in their lives that they most need to reach someone and have someone reach them to provide the counseling and advocacy they need and deserve at that moment of turmoil and pain.

Congress, the courts, all of us, have a responsibility to do more and to do better and to demand of professional sports leagues that they do more and do better.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Utah.

CONTINUING RESOLUTION

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, at some point today or tomorrow the Senate will hastily consider, and likely pass, a massive, hodgepodge spending bill to fund every last Department and program within our Federal Government—even those programs and those Departments we know don’t work, even those programs and those Departments where we know there is a lot of abuse and misuse of sacred Federal funds. The alternative, if we can call it even an alternative at all—and the only alternative—is to deny funding for every last Department and every last program within the Federal Government—even those programs and those Departments we know are absolutely essential.

All or nothing—those are our only options, the only options we are given. We have no other choice made available to us. This is government on autopilot or, alternatively, government without an engine.

The problem is that by funding the Federal Government with a massive patchwork spending bill, we force the American people to choose between two equally bad, two equally unacceptable options: Pay for everything in government or pay for nothing at all; either fund the entire Federal Government tomorrow at exactly the same level we are funding it today or fund nothing within the Federal Government, not even to pay our soldiers, our sailors, our airmen, our marines, our judges, or not even to provide care for our veterans or support for the most vulnerable among us.

This kind of all-or-nothing proposition is dysfunctional, it is antidemocratic, and it prevents Congress from doing its job, which, I remind my colleagues, is to represent the American people and to be faithful stewards of their money—of the taxpayers’ money—with which they have entrusted their Congress.

During the month of August, I held a long series of townhall meetings across my State, the great State of Utah. Whether I was in Cache County in the northern end of the State or in Washington County in the opposite direction or somewhere in between, the people of Utah, Democrats and Republicans alike, were clear about what they wanted. They were clear about the fact that they were demanding action. They wanted action in Washington. Their concerns weren’t always the same. Some worried most about the public lands. Others were anxious about the economy. Many, of course, were troubled by the growing crisis along our southern border.

They were all looking for answers. They were all looking for solutions from someone. Everywhere I went they asked me: What are you going to do? What are you going to do to get our economy back on track? What are you going to do to deal with many of the problems within our Federal Government that seem to go unaddressed for