

efficiency through both Houses and enacted into law, how are we ever going to get to the really thorny, difficult issues?

I have been working with my colleagues on the appropriating side of energy and water, the Senator from California and Senator ALEXANDER from Tennessee working with us on the authorizing side. First it was me and Senator WYDEN, and then it was me and Senator LANDRIEU, and in January it will be Senator CANTWELL.

We will be trying to figure out how we are going to deal with the issues surrounding nuclear waste disposal. These are tough issues. These are contentious. We have got some issues that will face us in the new Congress relating to the export of our energy resources. These are also going to be contentious. How are we ever going to get to the tough ones if—on the easy ones, what we describe around here as the low-hanging fruit—we cannot get through this process?

So I have to say, it is late—it is not the 11th hour; it is beyond the 11th hour because we have just taken the last vote, the last vote of the 113th Congress. We are done, and what we are leaving people with is uncertainty. When we are talking about those ways that we as a Congress can help right some of the problems in this country—how we can get our economy on a better track, how we can move towards more jobs and job creation—the best thing we can do is offer a level of certainty.

Well, right now you have these manufacturers of these water heaters that are saying: We don't know whether we are going to have any kind of a reprieve from this regulation or not. So we are not only not going to be making these water heaters, but that means we don't have the workers, those in the manufacturing companies who are going to be there or the people that are selling them. Think about what we have done with this one hurdle that we just couldn't get around. Yet we couldn't get a straight answer as to what the opposition—what the pushback—was.

Something is wrong with this process when we cannot advance measures such as the energy efficiency bill, a measure that has been worked on for years—diligently and in good faith—in a very, very open and bipartisan way. So I am hopeful that the 114th Congress is going to bring with it not only some fresh air—fresh perspective—but a willingness and a commitment to move through a process. If there is an objection, it should be stated, and we can work it out. But to continue to block and block when we have the level of support on a measure that we have, that is just not right. There has to be a better way. So I have pledged to my colleagues, the sponsors of this bill and all of those who have been working hard on it, that we are taking this back up again in the new year. We are going to work to make sure this has, yet

again, the committee process, now for the third time, and we will work to advance it to the floor. It is my hope that if someone has problems with it, they have a solution to fix it, and they then come down and offer their amendments, we will debate them, and we will move on. But we have to be in a better place than where we have ended this evening.

So it is with regret that I say we will take it up again next year. But my hope is that we will do right by our energy policy, by focusing not only on the production side, not only the renewable side, but our efficiency measures that we have included in this bill. We are going to do right for a lot of the right reasons.

With that, I yield the floor.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the quorum call be rescinded.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

ACHIEVING BETTER LIFE EXPERIENCE ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I want to thank my Senate colleagues for joining me in supporting and passing the Achieving Better Life Experience Act. I especially want to acknowledge Senator ROBERT CASEY, who has been a champion for all people with disabilities and the ABLE Act for years.

Earlier this year, Senator CASEY introduced us to Sara Wolff—a 31-year-old law clerk at O'Malley and Langdon in Scranton, PA. Since 2007, Sara has been an advocate for the National Down Syndrome Society. She also happens to have Down syndrome. Currently, Sara cannot have more than \$2,000 in assets before her government aid is cut off. Every month, she works with her employer so that she doesn't earn more than \$700. This enables Sara to maintain her much needed government benefits.

Over a year ago, Sara lost her mother to a sudden illness. It was a tremendous loss—her mother was her No. 1 advocate. Before her mother passed, Sara promised her that she would fight to get the ABLE Act passed. Sara has her whole life ahead of her and she needs a savings account to plan for her future, and she is not alone. Thousands of people with disabilities are outliving their parents. Parents need the peace of

mind that their children will be taken care of.

Everywhere I go in Illinois, I meet people whose lives have been affected by disabilities. Take Gene and Lynn Bensinger—from the north side of Chicago. Gene and Lynn are the parents of two adult sons. Their oldest son, Nate, is 21 years old and has autism spectrum disorder. Nate is about to “age out” of services offered through Chicago Public Schools and will no longer be eligible for special education services that he relies on. Nate's parents, along with thousands of Illinois families, experience many sleepless nights worrying about their responsibility to financially support their adult children today, in the future, and long after they are gone. Without this important legislation, it is almost impossible for those with disabilities—like Nate and Sara—to save enough so that they can be financially independent.

The ABLE Act will encourage and assist individuals and families to invest in private savings accounts, which can then be used to support activities that allow those with disabilities to maintain a healthy, independent life. Here's how it will work. The ABLE Act establishes tax-exempt accounts to assist parents of children with a disability to help provide for their long-term care. The accounts can be used to pay for medical care, dental care, education, housing, transportation and other community-based supports for individuals with disabilities. The money earned in an ABLE account would supplement but not replace Medicaid, Social Security, or other benefits. This would enable people, like Sara, to earn a livable wage and save for the future without worrying about losing coverage for critical health services.

I thank Senators ROBERT CASEY, RICHARD BURR, and 77 of my colleagues for cosponsoring this legislation. This is a true bipartisan effort. By passing this bipartisan bill today, Sara gets to keep her promise to her mother—and thousands of people with disabilities—like Nate—will finally be able to save for the bright futures they deserve.

SENATOR PAUL SIMON WATER FOR THE WORLD ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today we celebrate the passage of a bill I have been working on for 6 years—the Senator Paul Simon Water for the World Act.

The bill is aptly named after my predecessor from Illinois in the Senate—Paul Simon. Paul Simon was ahead of his time on so many issues—including on the importance of clean water and sanitation for the world's poor.

He understood if you wanted to avoid conflict between some nations, you had to look at the issue of water. He understood if you wanted to keep a girl in school or reduce infant mortality, you had to provide adequate sanitation and clean water. He understood that without clean water and sanitation, efforts

to improve health and economic opportunities will never be fully realized.

In fact, a dollar spent on clean water and sanitation returns between \$4 and \$8 in economic, health, and other benefits. Paul understood all this.

In 1998, he wrote the book, *Tapped Out*. It was prescient in its wisdom and policy proposals. Despite my recommendations, the book never became a bestseller. Though Senator Simon's wife, Patti Simon, has become a champion on water in her own right.

In 2005, the Congress passed the Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act, which made providing access to clean water and sanitation for the world's poor a key priority in U.S. development assistance.

When we passed this bill, it was the first time our Nation had written into law our commitment to any of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

Since then, we have succeeded in increasing funding for these important goals. USAID established an Office of Water and a Senior Water Coordinator for Water, and last year, it launched its first-ever Global Water and Development Strategy to significantly increase clean water and sanitation programs.

These efforts and the original legislation have made real differences in the lives of the world's poor. I have seen the simple wells providing water for thousands in Haiti.

For the first time, water and toilets have been provided to slum communities in Indonesia, where USAID's program has helped the local water utility reach thousands upon thousands of poor people who never had access to clean water and sanitation.

In fact, in 2012, the world achieved the Millennium Development Goal of reducing by half the proportion of people in the world without access to clean drinking water and basic sanitation. At that time, it was the only Millennium Development Goal to have been achieved.

So for the last several years, we have tried to pass the Simon Water for the World Act—and in 2009 it passed the full Senate, only to stall in the House. Again last Congress, it passed out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Today's version does not include everything from the original bill—I wish it would have included more. But such is the nature of compromise.

Today, with passage of the Senator Paul Simon Water for the World Act, we are going to make more progress.

It would not have happened without my partner in this effort, Senator CORKER, and strong support from Senators COONS, FLAKE, and MURRAY here in the Senate. I also need to acknowledge the leadership of Representatives BLUMENAUER and POE and the great help of Representative ROYCE in the House.

This bill will lock in many of the leadership, program, and strategic changes that have occurred around

USAID water and sanitation programs in recent years. It will establish the diplomatic and conflict mitigation priorities around water at the Department of State. It will refine and establish key criteria to ensure our scarce foreign assistance dollars for water and sanitation are truly reaching the world's most impoverished populations.

We have made progress. But there are still almost 1 billion people around the world who lack access to clean water, and at least 2.5 billion more people lack access to adequate sanitation.

Every day in the developing world, 5,000 children die from water-borne diseases. Millions of poor children miss school every day because they have to walk for hours to find water for their families, or they are sick from drinking dirty water. Girls and women suffer most when this happens because they are the water-carriers of the world.

Experts in the Pentagon and elsewhere have called the world water shortage a real and growing threat to America's own security.

New York Times columnist Tom Friedman published a devastating piece about how drought and water mismanagement contributed to Syria's bloody civil war that makes that clear.

We also know that every dollar we invest in clean water and basic sanitation yields many times that amount in benefits: people are healthier; kids stay in school; food is safer; AIDS drugs and other critical health treatments are able to work.

So I thank my colleagues, my key cosponsors in the Senate and House, Patti Simon, and the many organizations for supporting this important legislation. It will help save lives.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for the vote on the motion to proceed to executive session to consider the confirmation of the nomination of Sarah R. Saldana, to be an Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security, which occurred on Saturday, December 13, 2014. Had I been present, I would have voted in favor of the motion.

ARMY PUBLIC SCHOOL MURDERS

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I wish to offer my heartbroken condolences to the people of Pakistan and to the friends and family, the parents and loved ones, of those murdered yesterday at the Army Public School in Peshawar.

As the Pakistan military continues its assault on the Pakistani Taliban in North Waziristan, the terrorist group responded yesterday with an act of murder and barbarity that simply has no parallel, as nine gunmen murdered more than 140 students and teachers who together were simply gathered to ensure a brighter future for their country.

This is a crime that simply passes comprehension. As the father of three,

I can only imagine in my worst nightmares the reality that those parents are now living.

Unfortunately, as a nation, Americans have in our not so distant past also felt the grief that now envelops Pakistan.

Two years ago this past weekend, a gunman stormed the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT and murdered 26 of our sons and daughters, our brothers and sisters. Two years later we remain in mourning, for the lives taken from us and for the futures that were so quickly extinguished.

My prayers are with all Pakistanis who mourn today and with the loved ones of the victims of Newtown who remain in mourning. May we pray for the safety of those who are most precious and sacred to us, and may we remain undeterred in the face of such evil.

TRIBUTES TO DEPARTING SENATORS

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, before this Congress ends, I wanted to pay tribute to several of my colleagues who will not be here when we convene next year. Some chose not to run again, and others unfortunately lost their reelection campaigns, but we will miss them all next year. I begin in order of seniority.

TIM JOHNSON

Mr. President, I wish to begin with Senator TIM JOHNSON. After several years of service in South Dakota, where he received the Outstanding Citizen Award and the Billie Sutton Award for Legislative Achievement, TIM was elected to the House of Representatives in 1986. He served there for 10 years, earning many distinctions, among them, one for passing more legislation than the other 50 first-term Members. In 1996 he was elected to the Senate, where he has served three terms. In recent years Senator JOHNSON has served as chairman of the banking committee, of which he has been a member since 1997. Over the years he has advocated for community banks in South Dakota, worked to pass the Safe and Fair Deposit Insurance Act of 2005, which updated the Federal deposit insurance system, and pushed to deal with the special needs of consumers in rural areas. TIM has also shown immense courage in dealing with health issues and has been an exemplary public servant. We will miss him next year and wish him and Barbara well.

MARY LANDRIEU

Mr. President, Senator MARY LANDRIEU started a career of public service in the Louisiana State Legislature and then as State treasurer. She was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1996 becoming her State's first female Senator. Senator LANDRIEU has always fought for her State, a fact never more apparent than in the aftermath of Hurricanes