

the clear command of that law is being ignored far too often.

Agencies partially comply or refuse to turn over materials after a lengthy review and screening process by lawyers for the agency. That is a step not included in the IG law. The examples range from the Environmental Protection Agency to the FBI, and can you believe it, even to the Peace Corps.

The excuses vary, but the pattern is very clear. For example, the Department of Justice Office of Inspector General is reviewing the Department's use of the material witness statute. That statute authorizes detaining certain witnesses for testimony before a grand jury.

The inspector general was looking into allegations that the civil rights and the civil liberties of certain material witnesses may have been abused. This is just the kind of issue that Congress relies on inspectors general to investigate. If the problems are found, the inspector general helps our government identify the problem and helps Department leadership fix these problems.

Naturally, the inspector general needed to review the grand jury testimony to decide if the value of that testimony was reasonable, given the burden imposed on the witnesses. Three U.S. attorneys offices and the Department's National Security Division provided the inspector general with the grand jury information concerning material witnesses, but the FBI refused to cooperate. The FBI claimed the grand jury testimony could not be shared with the inspector general.

This FBI decision to withhold information was a brandnew practice, beginning sometime in 2010. The law was not changed in 2010 so the FBI could do it. The FBI claimed it had the right to refuse to provide the inspector general information in over a dozen other categories as well.

Remember, the law says the inspector general shall have access to all—not some—records, documents, and other materials that they deem necessary to conduct their investigations. Yet the FBI says its attorneys will review material first and then decide what it would and would not release to the inspector general.

It even gets worse. The FBI claimed it needed the approval of the Attorney General or the Deputy Attorney General to provide the information to the inspector general. This is exactly upside down. Under the law, an inspector general must be independent. Agencies cannot be trusted to investigate themselves. If an inspector general had to ask for permission from senior leadership, he would not be truly independent.

The Inspector General Act of 1978 does allow the Attorney General, not the FBI, to prohibit the inspector general from carrying out or completing an investigation but only in certain limited circumstances.

When that extraordinary step is taken, it must be done in writing to

the inspector general, and the inspector general must forward that written notice to the Congress. The FBI would have us believe that instead of written notice being required to block an IG investigation, it needs written permission to comply with an investigation. This is simply not how the law is designed to work.

After this controversy took place, Congress took action. We essentially bolded and underlined the provision in the Inspector General Act that ensures access to documents. We didn't literally do that, but this year's Justice Department appropriation declares that no funds shall be used to deny the inspector general timely access to all records.

The new law also directed the inspector general to report to Congress within 5 days whenever there was a failure to comply with this requirement. Since February of this year, we have already received four of those reports that the FBI is still refusing to comply, regardless of the actions Congress took on the appropriations bill last year.

One notice said the FBI was withholding evidence in two whistleblower cases. I have written to the FBI twice about these notices and just received a reply from the FBI Wednesday. Unfortunately, the FBI ignores most of the questions I asked and simply reasserts their original position.

That tells me the FBI thinks they are above the law. It has an obligation to comply not only with the Inspector General Act but also with restrictions Congress placed on its appropriations. That means FBI employees cannot legally be spending their time withholding and reviewing documents before providing those same documents to the inspector general. We must stay vigilant and we must insist all government agencies, including the FBI, work with the inspectors general, not against them.

I applaud my colleagues on the Appropriations Committee for standing up for inspectors general. I also urge them to follow through and help make sure the funding restrictions they put in place are obeyed.

As I noted earlier, the problem is not confined to the FBI or to the Department of Justice, similar attempts to limit the work of an inspector general have occurred at the EPA and the Peace Corps. Just last year, 47 inspectors general signed a letter to the Congress warning of these problems across government. We all lose when inspectors general are delayed or prevented in doing their work. In every agency where IG's work, they help agency management become aware of problems and opportunities to improve government service. We must support the work of inspectors general and remind government agencies that blocking their investigations is not acceptable.

COMPREHENSIVE JUSTICE AND MENTAL HEALTH ACT

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, I am proud to be an original cosponsor of legislation offered by Senators CORNYN and FRANKEN, the Comprehensive Justice and Mental Health Act. This critical piece of bipartisan legislation would promote alternatives to incarceration by helping identify and treat Americans suffering from mental illness. For far too long our criminal justice system has been a substitute for a mental health system. That practice is costly, wastes limited resources, and is contrary to evidence-based practices proven to make our communities safer. I thank Senators CORNYN and FRANKEN for their hard work on this important criminal justice reform bill.

Today, law enforcement is ill-equipped and not properly trained to deal with individuals suffering from severe mental disorders whose conditions can cause them to commit crimes. The mentally ill are too often treated as common criminals and are not given access to the critical treatment they need.

The Comprehensive Justice and Mental Health Act would save taxpayers' money and effectively use limited resources by ensuring our prisons contain violent offenders as opposed to those who suffer from mental illnesses. When more than four of five inmates with a mental illness are not treated in jail, we waste resources by incarcerating them. This bill would make the public safer and save taxpayers' money by ensuring that we continue to support vital programs, such as mental health courts, veterans' courts, and crisis intervention teams.

The bill would also improve public safety. Persons with complicated psychiatric problems that are thrown in jail can have their mental state deteriorate even further. If incarcerated without treatment, some mental illnesses can lead people to be a danger to the public once released. But with proper treatment, they can lead ordinary, law-abiding lives even absent incarceration.

The bill would help to reduce jail overcrowding caused by warehousing people for low-level crimes, which often includes the mentally ill. For example, from 2009 to 2013 in New York City, about 400 people were sent to jail on at least 18 occasions each. That amounts to more than 10,000 jail admissions and 300,000 days in jail. In Chicago, from 2007 to 2011, 21 percent of the people sent to jails accounted for 50 percent of jail admissions. Because a significant number of people in jail are mentally ill, reducing recidivism for this population is critical. By supporting state and local efforts to identify and direct them to the appropriate mental health services, this bill would reduce recidivism and, in turn, help reduce jail over-crowding.

The bill would also encourage the development of curricula on mental health conditions for police academies

and orientations. Finally, the legislation would include new grant accountability measures and emphasize the implantation of evidence-based practices.

It is time we address mental illness in our country through treatment, not incarceration. Passing this common-sense bill would reduce recidivism, save taxpayer money, and make our communities safer. That is why I support this bill and I urge its speedy passage.

REMEMBERING ROBERT GRIFFIN

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, today I pay tribute to a towering figure from Michigan's political past: former Senator Robert Griffin, who died Friday at the age of 91.

Senator Griffin was born in Detroit and was educated in the Wayne County Public Schools. By the time he graduated high school, the United States was embroiled in World War II. And in 1943—a year when so many American families came to fully comprehend the horrors of modern warfare—young Bob Griffin enlisted in the U.S. Army, joining the 71st Infantry Division.

For 3 years, Bob Griffin served our country in a time of war unmatched in its intensity, including 14 months fighting Nazis in Europe. After returning from war, like so many of our surviving soldiers, he turned his attention to his education, attending Central Michigan University, then getting his law degree at the University of Michigan.

Bob Griffin decided to begin his legal career in Traverse City.

After practicing law for several years, Bob Griffin felt compelled to practice public service, so in 1956 he ran and won office to the U.S. House of Representatives. He distinguished himself in Congress over the next decade, and following the death of Michigan Senator Patrick McNamara, then-Governor George Romney appointed Bob Griffin to finish the 7 months remaining in McNamara's term.

It did not take Senator Griffin long to earn the support of Michigan voters: They elected him to a full 6-year term that fall of 1966. Senator Griffin served the people of Michigan loyally for the next 12 years.

He authored major pieces of legislation during his career in this Chamber, and he was a member of the Republican leadership from 1969 to 1977. But he is being remembered most for the role he played in helping our Nation overcome the shock of the Watergate scandal.

In August 1974, as that scandal worsened, it became clear that President Nixon was in danger of being impeached. The impeachment process would be an embarrassing spectacle, not just for President Nixon, but for the institution of the President and for our Nation's political system.

Senator Griffin was a close friend of President Nixon, but it was the Senator's devotion to the country that led

him to write a letter strongly suggesting that the President resign and spare the Nation from having to endure impeachment. That letter is said to have played a major role in Nixon's decision to finally step aside.

At a time when our Nation's political system was teetering, it was Senator Griffin who helped it to recover its balance by doing what was best for the country.

That is the mark of true leadership. Even those who disagreed with Senator Griffin's policies never found fault with his integrity or his character.

Although Senator Griffin left office in 1979, he still had a desire to serve the people of Michigan, and for 8 years he applied his wisdom and judgment on Michigan's Supreme Court, retiring in 1994. Today the Grand Traverse County courthouse bears his name.

Senator Griffin's devotion to our State was rivaled only by the devotion he had for his wife, Marjorie, with whom he spent nearly 68 years, and their four children: Paul, Richard, James, and Jill. The couple has 13 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren.

Senator Griffin's loss will be felt not only by his loving family, but in his home of Traverse City and in every corner of the State he served during his career. Senator Griffin will be remembered for his leadership, his fierce integrity, and his unwavering allegiance to the State of Michigan and the United States of America.

RECOGNIZING MICHAEL G. VICKERS

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I wish to recognize the tremendous contributions of Dr. Michael G. Vickers, the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence. Secretary Vickers is retiring this month from the Federal Government having served with distinction in two critical leadership positions in the Department of Defense: Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict and Interdependent Capabilities, ASD SO/LIC&IC, from 2007 to 2011, and Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, USD(I), since 2011. His dedicated service has spanned the administrations of both President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama. Moreover, he has helped shape national security for three decades.

Secretary Vickers is the Department's longest serving USD(I). During his tenure he has led a comprehensive, mission-focused transformation of defense intelligence, and has provided policy and operational oversight for numerous sensitive intelligence and counterterrorism operations. He played a critical policy and planning role in the operation that brought justice to Osama bin Laden. Of note, we are only days away from the fourth anniversary of that successful operation, which occurred on May 2, 2011.

As ASD SO/LIC&IC, Secretary Vickers served as the "Service" Secretary

for all Special Operations Forces, and as the senior civilian advisor to the Secretary of Defense on all counterterrorism, irregular warfare, and special activities. He played a central role in shaping U.S. strategy for the war with Al Qaeda and the war in Afghanistan, and conceived of and led the largest expansion of SOF capabilities and capacity in history.

From 1973 to 1986, Secretary Vickers served as an Army Special Forces non-commissioned officer, Special Forces officer, and Central Intelligence Agency operations officer. He had operational and combat experience in Central America and the Caribbean, the Middle East, and Central and South Asia. His operational experience spans covert action and espionage, unconventional warfare, counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, and foreign internal defense. During the mid-1980s, Secretary Vickers was the principal strategist for the largest covert action program in the CIA's history: the paramilitary operation that drove the Soviet Army out of Afghanistan.

Because of Dr. Vickers' selfless service, hard work and tireless dedication, our Nation is a safer place. I want to thank him for his service and wish him and his family all the best as he begins his next adventure.

REMEMBERING BETH THOMASSON

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, I wish to recognize the life and achievements of Beth Thomasson following her passing last month. Beth was a dear friend and a tireless advocate of housing and homeownership in her position as executive officer at the Home Builders Association of West Virginia. Beth's commitment to her work, her community, and her family embodied the values that we as West Virginians hold dear.

A graduate of Texas A&M, Beth was a "Kelly Girl" when she started at the Home Builders Association in 1978. In just ten years, Beth became executive officer and during this time the organization experienced a period of exceptional growth. A prodigious advocate for her cause, Beth also advanced initiatives of the Home Builders Association at the statehouse on issues relating to business development, homeownership, and consumer education. Her strong work ethic was recognized numerous times when she received the HBA Eastern Panhandle's Appreciation Award, the HBAWV Meritorious Service Award, and the HBAWV Presidential Award.

In addition to her role at the Homebuilders Association, Beth also served in various capacities at the West Virginia Business & Industry Council, the West Virginia Chamber of Commerce, the West Virginia Housing Policy Framework, and the West Virginia Housing Trust. Above all, Beth was a devoted wife and mother of 4 daughters, as well as a grandmother of 10.

Beth was relentless in her dedication to serving her community and her