execution are as important as vision. If this agreement is approved, that is day 1 of the critical implementation and execution period. There is a real risk, I believe, that as time wears on, the attention of the international community on this issue will diminish. It will be vital to the United States, across successive Presidents, to maintain focus on implementing and enforcing the terms of the agreement.

Congress also will have a crucial role to play, both in oversight of the deal's implementation and in making certain that the IAEA and our intelligence agencies have the resources they need to monitor and assure compliance, and more broadly to ensure that all of our options to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon—whenever they may decide to take that step—remain viable if the agreement collapses.

I have negotiated lots of contracts over the years, and one side or the other rarely wins in a negotiation. The idea is that all sides get something they want or need, and, in the end, I believe that is what happened here. If this deal is implemented properly, I believe it will accomplish our national security objectives, while preserving or improving all of our existing options to ensure that Iran never develops a nuclear weapon.

There is no certainty when it comes to this question. As I said at the beginning, I believe this is the most difficult decision I have ever had to make. There are risks in either direction, and there are credible arguments on both sides. But, in the end, I have concluded that the terms of this agreement are preferable to the alternatives—and that is the crucial analysis; what are the alternatives—and that it would be in the best interests of the United States to join our partners in approving it.

I intend to remain deeply engaged in this issue in the weeks and months ahead because the process does not end the day of our vote. If this agreement moves forward, it will fall to future Presidents and future Congresses to oversee it and make it work. We owe the American people our best judgment, and it is my belief that this agreement, if implemented effectively and in conjunction with the other measures we must take to ensure its ongoing vitality, will serve our Nation, the region, and the world.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, I wish to say a few words about the deal negotiated between the P5+1 and Iran to deny Iran's access to a nuclear weapon.

First, I commend the administration and others involved in the negotiations for seeking a diplomatic solution. There always needs to be a credible threat of military force to deny Iran a nuclear weapon, but it is incumbent upon us to test every avenue for a peaceful solution before resorting to such force.

I am mindful that—like any agreement involving multiple parties that are friendly, belligerent, and somewhere in between—this agreement can't be used against the ideal. It has to be judged against the alternative. On the whole, this agreement measured against the ideal doesn't look all that good. Against the alternative, it is a much closer call.

I must say that I am not as sanguine as some of my colleagues about the ability to reassemble the multilateral sanctions regime that has brought Iran to the negotiating table.

On the nuclear side, Iran's ability to amass sufficient fissile material to assemble a nuclear weapon would be severely curtailed for up to 15 years. The inspections regime to ensure compliance, at least as it pertains to known nuclear facilities, is fairly detailed. That is no small achievement. Much credit is due to the scientists and others who assisted with the negotiations.

On the other hand, I have grave concerns regarding our ability—and if not our ability, our willingness—to respond to nefarious nonnuclear activities that Iran may be involved with in the region.

We are assured by the administration that under the JCPOA, Congress retains all tools, including the imposition of sanctions, should Iran involve itself in terrorist activity in the region. However, the plain text of the JCPOA does not seem to indicate this. In fact, it seems to indicate otherwise. Iran has made it clear that it believes that the imposition of sanctions similar to or approximating those currently in place would violate the JCPOA.

My concern is that the administration would be reluctant to punish or deter the unacceptable nonnuclear behavior by Iran in the region if it would give Iran the pretext not to comply with the agreement as it stands. I don't believe this is an idle concern. The degree to which the administration has resisted even the suggestion that Congress reauthorize the Iran Sanctions Act, for example, which expires next year, just so that we might have sanctions to snap back, makes us question our willingness to confront Iran when it really matters down the road.

Now, if this were a treaty, that could be dealt with with what are called RUDs—or reservations, understandings and declarations—where we could clarify some of these misunderstandings. But since this was presented to Congress as an Executive agreement, we don't have that option.

We have had numerous hearings and briefings in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I commend Senator CORKER, the chairman of the committee, and the minority ranking member, Senator CARDIN, for the manner in which they have engaged in these hearings and briefings.

We have had a lot of questions raised. Some have been answered; some have not. These hearings will continue. I will leave from this Chamber to go to another briefing that we are having. I expect to hear more in the coming weeks and will seek to answer questions that I still have about the agreement. The bottom line is I can only support an agreement that I feel can endure—not just be signed but that can endure—and that will serve our national interests and the interests of our allies.

Again, I commend those who have been involved in this process. I commend those involved in ensuring that Congress had a say here. I will continue to evaluate this agreement based, as I said, not on the ideal but the alternative. There are many questions I wish to have answered.

I encourage the administration to work with Congress in the coming weeks on legislation that would clarify some of these misunderstandings. It would take the place of so-called RUDs if this were a treaty.

I have mentioned before that this kind of legislation is going to come. It will come prior to implementation day, and I think it behooves the administration and the Congress to begin now to work together on items that we can agree on that clarify this, assuming that this agreement will go into effect. It ought to be clarified now and not down the road. That would make it far more likely to be an enduring document rather than one that is simply signed and forgotten later.

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 senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The Senator from Utah.

RECESS

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess until 6:15 p.m.

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

Thereupon, the Senate, at 5:05 p.m., recessed until 6:15 p.m., and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. TILLIS).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

DRINKING WATER PROTECTION ACT

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I come to the floor once again to make an attempt at passing a very important, commonsense piece of legislation that is bipartisan. It helps to ensure that the drinking water supplies in northern Ohio, Lake Erie, and throughout our State, the freshwater reservoirs and other lakes that are providing water—and also around the

country—to make sure that will be something the U.S. Federal Government is helping with as much as possible through new legislation to get the EPA more involved.

I bring this legislation to the floor for the third time in the last several days to try to pass it. I do so with the hopes that we can get this done tonight.

I thank my colleague from Ohio, SHERROD BROWN, who has been cosponsoring and supporting this effort. I thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for working with us. We have been working for several weeks to get this cleared. Most recently, we had an issue with regard to legislation the Democrats wanted to add to it. I think we have now resolved those issues. I thank Robert Duncan of the floor staff for working so closely with us on this. I thank my colleague from Rhode Island, Senator WHITEHOUSE, for working with us. This is legislation which is both important and urgent.

This week marks the 1-year anniversary since the water supplies in Toledo, OH, had to be cut off because there were toxic algal blooms in the lake that were going into the water intake system. There were 500,000 people who were told they couldn't drink the water. It was a crisis. I was there. I was given bottled water along with others.

Unfortunately, this year we are seeing toxic algal blooms growing again. We are seeing it not just near the water intake valve for the city of Toledo but also near other water intake valves where 3 million Ohioans get their drinking water, from Lake Erie. By the way, about 8 million people from other States get water from Lake Erie, including Michigan and other States represented here in this Chamber.

I am also very concerned by the fact that we have other reservoirs in Ohio that are seeing increased levels of toxic algal blooms. This includes Grand Lakes St. Marys, Buckeye Lake, and it includes the reservoirs in Columbus.

It is time to ensure that we are doing everything we possibly can at the local, State, and Federal level to ensure that we can deal with this issue and that it can be resolved.

Finally, I will say this is not just about drinking water; it is also about the recreational value of these waterways, including Lake Erie, which is an incredibly important economic asset for the State of Ohio, our No. 1 destination for tourism. Having been on the lake a couple of weeks ago fishing, I will tell you that toxic algal blooms make a huge difference and create a real problem for the recreational value of fishing but also people being able to use the beaches, people being concerned about having their pets in the water, and people being concerned that their kids may not be safe even being close to these bodies of water.

We passed legislation previously to help get the Federal Government more involved. About a year ago, we passed legislation to get EPA but also NOAA—the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration—USGS, and other Federal entities more involved and engaged and working together better.

We also passed legislation to try to help with regard to getting EPA to give us what the standards ought to be in terms of the drinking water.

Now it is time to pass this legislation that requires the EPA to put out a report on how to mitigate the problem and how to encourage the local community and incentivize the local community to do more in terms of ensuring that the intake valves are in the right place, ensuring that the treatment is done properly, and provide the good science and the best practices that only the EPA can provide to be able to help with regard to the very serious problem we face on Lake Erie and throughout the State of Ohio.

With that, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to H.R. 212, which is at the desk, and that the bill be read a third time and the Senate vote on passage of the bill with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 212) to amend the Safe Drinking Water Act to provide for the assessment and management of the risk of algal toxins in drinking water, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

The bill was ordered to a third reading, and was read the third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate, the bill having been read the third time, the question is, shall the bill pass?

The bill (H.R. 212) was passed.

Mr. PORTMAN. I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The Senator from Rhode Island.

AMENDING THE FEDERAL WATER POLLUTION CONTROL ACT TO REAUTHORIZE THE NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Environment Public Works Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. 1523, the National Estuary Program, and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1523) to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to reauthorize the National Estuary Program, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I further ask unanimous consent that the Whitehouse amendment, which is at the desk, be agreed to; the bill, as amended, be read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 2639) was agreed to, as follows:

(Purpose: To modify the authorization of appropriations)

On page 3, line 17, strike ''$27,000,000'' and insert ''$26,000,000''.

The bill (S. 1523), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 1523

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM REAUTHORIZATION; COMPETITIVE AWARDS.

Section 320 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1330) is amended—

(1) in subsection (g), by adding at the end the following:

''(4) COMPETITIVE AWARDS.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—Using the amounts made available under subsection (i)(2)(B), the Administrator shall make competitive awards under this paragraph.

''(B) APPLICATION FOR AWARDS.—The Administrator shall solicit applications for awards under this paragraph from State, interstate, and regional water pollution control agencies and entities, State coastal zone management agencies, interstate agencies, other public or nonprofit private agencies, institutions, organizations, and individuals.

''(C) SELECTION OF RECIPIENTS.—The Administrator shall select award recipients under this paragraph that, as determined by the Administrator, are best able to address urgent and challenging issues that threaten the ecological and economic well-being of coastal areas, including—

''(i) extensive seagrass habitat losses resulting in significant impacts on fisheries and water quality;

''(ii) recurring harmful algae blooms;

''(iii) unusual marine mammal mortalities;

''(iv) invasive exotic species that may threaten wastewater systems and cause other damage;

''(v) jellyfish proliferation limiting community access to water during peak tourism seasons;

''(vi) flooding that may be related to sea level rise or wetland degradation or loss; and

''(vii) low dissolved oxygen conditions in estuarine waters and related nutrient management.''; and

(2) by striking subsection (i) and inserting the following:

''(i) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Administrator $26,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2016 through 2020 for—

''(A) making grants and awards under subsection (g); and

''(B) expenses relating to the administration of grants or awards by the Administrator under this section, including the award and oversight of grants and awards, subject to the condition that such expenses may not exceed 5 percent of the amount appropriated under this subsection for a fiscal year.