

My hope is that we can ultimately get this bill into conference and send it to the President closer to its current form because the challenges posed by cyber attacks are real and they are growing. A cyber attack can be a deeply invasive attack on personal privacy. The voluntary information sharing provisions in the bill we passed are key to defeating cyber attacks and protecting the personal information of the people we represent.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

CYBER SECURITY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, my friend the Republican leader talked about the old forces of gridlock when he talked about cyber security. He and his caucus were those old forces of gridlock. We tried for 5 years to pass a cyber security bill; it was filibustered every time. The bills, quite frankly, that were filibustered were very strong, good, in-depth bills. We passed a cyber security bill—better than nothing, but that is about it. It was not really a resoundingly good effort to go after the problems we are having with cyber security, but we finally got it done because the problems on the Republican side disappeared.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, my friend the Republican leader has an obsession with the Affordable Care Act, ObamaCare. He cannot give up on this obsession. The share of Americans without insurance is at the lowest point in history. And one need look no further than renowned Republican—Republican—columnist of the New York Times, David Brooks. Here is what he wrote. I am sorry to take so much time reading something that was written by this man who is a Republican columnist for the New York Times. Here is what he said. Regardless of what the Republican leader may claim, the Affordable Care Act continues to work. It is increasing quality health care coverage and improving care, and there is no question about that. Brooks noted that health care costs are rising at the lowest rate in years. He said:

The good news is that recently health care inflation has been at historic lows. As Jason Furman, the chairman of President Obama's Council of Economic Advisers, put it in a speech to the Hamilton Project last month, "Health care prices have grown at an annual rate of 1.6 percent since the Affordable Care Act was enacted in March 2010, the slowest rate for such a period in five decades—

Fifty years—

and those prices have grown at an even slower 1.1 percent rate over the 12 months ending in August 2015."

As a result of the slowdown in health care inflation, the Congressional Budget Office

keeps reducing its projections of the future cost of federal health programs like Medicare. As of October, projections for federal health care spending in the year 2020 were \$175 billion lower than projections made in August 2010. That would be a huge budget improvement.

"Historic lows" and hundreds of billions of dollars saved by the Federal Government tell me that ObamaCare is working.

Enough of this haranguing about ObamaCare from my Republican friend. One need only go home and people come up to you and say: You know, ObamaCare is so good.

My daughter, who could never get health insurance because she was a diabetic—now she can get it. No one with a preexisting disability can be denied insurance. Young men and women struggling to finish their college education can stay on their parents' health insurance until age 26. That is important. That is part of ObamaCare. Community health centers around this country are booming. Why? Because of the Affordable Care Act, we put \$11 billion in there to provide for those essential community health centers.

I will have more to say about this because I am sure the Republican leader is going to come and talk about what a great victory it was on this reconciliation, which is an anomaly that we face every year. They are passing something that is just to satisfy the haranguing about ObamaCare. It means nothing substantively. It will pass and go to the President. He will veto it in about 10 seconds, and, of course, the veto will certainly be sustained.

Even in Kentucky—here is what one article said in Kentucky:

In a state of 4.4 million people, 500,000 people gained coverage because of [ObamaCare in that State]—4 in 5 through Medicaid. The effects were particularly dramatic in one Appalachian county, where many coal jobs have vanished and the poverty rate is 23 percent. From 2013 to 2014, the proportion of residents lacking health coverage plummeted by half—from 13 percent to 6.6 percent.

Half a million Kentuckians are using the Affordable Care Act. That is more than 10 percent of the State's population.

There are all kinds of personal accounts of how this has literally saved people's lives. One account is of an uninsured mother and daughter. This is from a news article:

Amid the coal fields of eastern Kentucky, a small clinic that is part of the Big Sandy Health Care network furnishes daily proof of this state's full embrace of the Affordable Care Act.

It was here that Mindy Fleming handed a wad of tissues to Tiffany Coleman when she arrived, sleepless and frantic, with no health insurance and a daughter suffering a 103-fever and mysterious pain. "It will be all right," Fleming assured her, and it was. An hour later, Coleman had a WellCare card that paid for hospital tests, which found that 4-year-old Alexis had an unusual bladder problem.

Quoting another Washington Post story:

[Dennis Blackburn] has a hereditary liver disorder, numbness in his hands and legs, back pain from folding his 6-foot-1-inch frame into 29-inch mine shafts as a young man, plus an abnormal heart rhythm—the likely vestige of having been struck by lightning 15 years ago in his tin-roofed farmhouse.

Blackburn was making small payments on an MRI he'd gotten at Pikeville Medical Center, the only hospital in a 150-mile radius, when he heard about Big Sandy's Shelby Valley Clinic. There he met Fleming, who helped him sign up for one of the managed-care Medicaid plans available in Kentucky.

So the facts never seem to get in the way of my Republican friend when it comes to ObamaCare—anything he could do to denigrate this system that is helping 17 million people.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, one need only watch the news to see how our Nation is facing threats abroad. We are doing the best we can, but as the world grows more dangerous, Senate Republicans continue to block and obstruct the President's national security. They are blocking the very people who could help us respond to these threats.

Take, for instance—for week after week after week—Azita Raji, who has been nominated to be our Ambassador to Sweden. Nearly 300 Swedish citizens have left to fight in Syria or Iraq, making this nation the second largest country of origin per capita for foreign fighters in Europe. The Swedish Government is on heightened alert for an attack. Yet the United States doesn't have a Senate-confirmed Ambassador to represent us in Stockholm.

Similar to Sweden, Norway is also dealing with the growing threat of terror, and some of their citizens have joined the radical ranks of foreign fighters, but due to Republican obstruction, our Nation does not have a confirmed Ambassador in Norway.

Sam Heins, a Minnesota attorney nominated by President Obama, has been pending on the floor since July. We are now in December. So I personally applaud the Presiding Officer today for finally removing the holds on these two good people. I appreciate it very much. He and others have held up these nominees, and it is unfortunate. It is gone. I am pleased. In the wake of the Paris attacks and threats across the continent, it is imperative that we have Ambassadors working with European governments at the highest levels.

Perhaps the most egregious example of Republican obstruction is the nomination of Adam Szubin. This man would lead—if he were approved in the Senate—a team within the Department of State that disrupts terrorist financing networks, cutting off money for terrorists so they cannot finance their attacks. Hand in hand, they work with the Treasury Department. You would think that such an important nominee would be quickly confirmed, but Mr. Szubin's nomination has been pending

for more than 200 days. Remember what he does—remember what he would like to do, I should say. He would lead a team that disrupts terrorist financing networks, cutting off money for terrorists so they can't finance their own evil deeds.

The chairman of the banking committee, the senior Senator from Alabama, has previously called this position “a vital position in the effort to combat terrorist financing,” but in spite of this, the committee on banking continues to block Szubin, despite his qualifications. I am sorely disappointed so many Republican Senators have decided that scoring political points is more important than confirming these national security nominations.

Two weeks ago, I asked the senior Senator from Iowa to put an end to his partisan investigation of Secretary Clinton. For months, the senior Senator blocked more than 20 Foreign Service promotions. In fact, for a day it was some 600 nominations, just simply people who were in the Foreign Service who were entitled by law to a promotion. Well, he blocked these people for a long time, talking about how he wanted more documents from the State Department. I told the senior Senator that I thought it was a mistake to target career promotions, so I was surprised, happily so, when he appeared to change course and allow these good public servants to get the promotions they earned and deserved.

Unfortunately, though, just as he took one step forward, he immediately took another step back. Although he allowed the list of 20 Foreign Service promotions to proceed, he doubled down on his obstruction by placing a hold on Tom Shannon, President Obama's nominee to serve as Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, an extremely important position that is not filled now. Ambassador Shannon is a career member of the Foreign Service, with more than 30 years of experience. He served as our Nation's Ambassador to Brazil, he worked on the National Security Council in the last Bush administration, and his experience will help the State Department strategy in combatting ISIS, but he can't do that because we were not able to approve him because of the holds.

The Senator from Iowa continues to block other important nominees, such as David Robinson to be Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization. He is a 30-year veteran of the Foreign Service. This is a man who has served the Nation in Afghanistan, Bosnia, and many other places around the world.

Brian Egan has been nominated to be the State Department Legal Advisor, their lawyer. He has been a senior member of the legal team in the State Department, Treasury, and the National Security Council at the White House, but he has been held up since June without a vote, all because of Republican obstructionism.

Remember, it would be nice if the State Department had a lawyer, but as the senior Senator from Iowa will tell you, he has nothing against Tom Shannon, David Robinson or Brian Egan. Senator GRASSLEY has expressed no substantive objections to these nominees or questions about their capabilities. Senator GRASSLEY is blocking these important nominations for the sake of his committee's political crusade against former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton—who as we all know is running for President. This good woman scares Republicans because she will likely win. It is all part of the disturbing trend of the Judiciary Committee to politicize the oversight process.

It appears the constitutional duties of the Senate are taking a backseat to a political hit job on a Democratic candidate for President. Just look at what he and his committee are doing; that is, the chairman and his committee. They are requesting transcribed interviews from the Clinton staff. They have asked for timesheets. The committee investigation has gone so far as to ask for the maternity leave records of one of Secretary Clinton's closest aides, Huma Abedin. It appears that until the senior Senator from Iowa gets the maternity leave records he has requested and everything else he has requested, he is going to continue to block State Department nominees. I am disappointed my friend from Iowa refuses to do what I believe is the right thing. He should drop these unwarranted holds. I am disappointed he continues—under the guise of oversight—his anti-Hillary Clinton crusade, which is hurting American security. Each day this investigation continues, we can see what a waste of taxpayer resources this has become.

Last month, when given the opportunity, my friend from Iowa refused to address the significant amount of resources his committee is spending to investigate Secretary Clinton. Why? If he is so confident of the work his committee is doing, why not readily acknowledge the amount of taxpayer resources that are being used? But aside from the wasting of taxpayer dollars, I am troubled by the way his committee staff is operating. The press reports have suggested the Republican Judiciary Committee staffers are selectively leaking confidential information. For example, in September, the State Department gave the committee information that Senator GRASSLEY requested, with specific instructions that the documents remain confidential. That is because the information shared with the Judiciary Committee contains sensitive information or other personal information from State Department employees. Included in the State Department's response to Senator GRASSLEY was a big warning in bold capital letters across the page—in very large bold letters: “US DEPARTMENT OF STATE PRODUCTION TO THE SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE ONLY;

NOT AUTHORIZED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE.”

The email reproductions from the State Department also contained a watermark in red capital letters saying the emails were not for public release. It was across the entirety of that document. It had the watermark and the large bold letters.

Within 24 hours, that information was public and reporters began calling with questions. Within 48 hours, stories were published based on the emails given to the Judiciary Committee that falsely created the appearance of impropriety by Ms. Abedin—and I mean false. A reporter forwarded the watermark emails meant only for the Judiciary Committee to her and to her legal team for comment. How did the reporter get documents that were solely in the possession of the Judiciary Committee staff?

As I have said before, Ms. Abedin is an American success story. She has reached the highest levels of politics, as an aide to Secretary Clinton for decades, through her hard work and loyalty. Senator JOHN MCCAIN said that Ms. Abedin is “an honorable woman, a dedicated American, and a loyal public servant.” She doesn't deserve the treatment that has come from the Judiciary Committee. Republican investigators on that committee cannot stop their fixation on Ms. Abedin, even going so far to request her maternity leave records. As a result, her personal information, including Social Security number and payroll records, has been given to the press.

Violating the privacy of hard-working staff members—and in particular a staff member—to score political points against Secretary Clinton is unbecoming of the world's greatest deliberative body. The Senate has been through difficult times in the past when confidential information has been leaked. Senator GRASSLEY and I were both here in the 1990s when then-Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell came to the floor to address this disturbing trend. He said:

The unilateral decision by a Member or employee to release confidential committee information is inconsistent with the Senate's practice of making such decisions openly and collaboratively. Arrogation of this responsibility by individuals can destroy mutual trust among Members and be harmful to this institution.

That is an understatement. Senator Mitchell's quote gets to the heart of the matter. Leaking information undermines the institution of the Senate and the trust between its Members. In the Republican fervor to target Secretary Clinton over Benghazi, we should not lose sight of the rules that govern our behavior in the Senate. The Benghazi report on her is now over \$5 million. It is wrong to target a former Clinton aide with invasive requests about her maternity leave and pass her personal information on to members of the press.

It is wrong to politicize the legitimate oversight role of Congress ahead

of the 2016 Presidential election. Sadly, the improper disclosure of sensitive materials related to Secretary Clinton's aides only demonstrates the underlying political position of the Judiciary Committee's oversight. Going forward, I hope my Republican colleagues will exercise greater restraint in the relentless pursuit of Secretary Clinton, but, more importantly, I hope Senate Republicans take their constitutional responsibility more seriously to offer their advice and consent on the Presidential nominees. I hope they take them very seriously. It is shameful that the Republicans are blocking critical, national security nominees for political purposes. I would ask them to please change course because the American people are watching.

ROSA PARKS AND MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT ANNIVERSARY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, 60 years ago today Rosa Parks boarded a city bus in Montgomery, AL. She had worked hard all day. She was riding a bus. She was asked to give up her seat by the busdriver, who was a White man. She was sick of having to give up her seat and she was tired, but she refused to give up her seat, so she was arrested.

On that day at that moment of courage, Rosa Parks sparked a movement that would end the legal segregation of public transportation, the Montgomery Bus Boycott. That boycott lasted from December 5, 1955, to December 20, 1956—almost 1 year, becoming the first large-scale demonstration against segregation in our country's history. The Supreme Court ultimately ordered Montgomery to integrate its public bus transportation system.

Rosa Parks went on to become a pillar of the civil rights movement, a lifelong freedom fighter who changed the course of history.

In 2013, a bronze statue of Ms. Parks was unveiled in Statuary Hall in the Capitol. In the decades since Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on that bus, our Nation has made tremendous progress in the defense of civil rights for all Americans, but we have much more to do. Today, 60 years after Rosa Parks took a stand for equality, the fight for equal justice rages on. Just like Rosa Parks, many Americans across this country are very upset with the status quo, and they are taking a stand against injustice and discrimination.

As we remember the valiant actions of Rosa Parks, may we be inspired by her character and her determination. May we follow her example and continue the work of the civil rights movement.

Mr. President, what do we have the rest of the day?

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 12:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Georgia.

RECOGNIZING THOMAS G. COUSINS

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, last Thursday was Thanksgiving in America. Like every Member of the Senate and every American, I paused to give thanks for the many blessings we have in the country, the blessings I have as a father and grandfather, and the blessings we enjoy from all those who serve in harm's way around the world who keep us safe and in peace.

I also took a second to participate in some charitable activities for those less fortunate and, in doing so, stopped to pause and give thanks for those people who on the day of Thanksgiving were giving of their time and their money to make the lives of those less fortunate better.

One of the people in my State I want to talk about who has done exactly that for five decades is a man by the name of Thomas G. Cousins, a real estate developer greatly renowned in Atlanta and, really, around the world, and who amassed millions and millions of dollars in the Cousins Foundation and invested that money in trying to solve the problems of poverty, crime, unemployment, and health care.

Thomas G. Cousins founded the Cousins Foundation to see to it that Atlanta, GA, and the State of Georgia were a better State. But he became frustrated. He recognized that of the 72 million children in the United States of America, 40 percent of them lived in poverty. He became frustrated because he found that isolated neighborhoods of concentrated poverty created unemployment, poor performance by students, and greater crime rates in the city of Atlanta. Worst of all, he found that the entrepreneurial gifts of charity trying to alleviate these problems often got consumed but never made a fundamental change. He thought it was time for his charitable money to become entrepreneurial, not just a giveaway. So in the decade of 1990, Tom Cousins decided to do something about making the Cousins Foundation investment make a meaningful difference in the lives of Americans around the country. He did exactly that.

He heard Dr. Todd Clear, a professor at Rutgers University, give a speech in New York City, where he had done research on the prison population of the State of New York and researched where they came from to find, amazingly, that three out of every four prisoners in the New York State prison system came out of eight neighborhoods in New York City. Concentrated poverty created concentrated crime and concentrated criminals. There was

a never-ending cycle of crime, poverty, and poor educational performance in those neighborhoods.

So Tom Cousins decided that, instead of giving his money away in small, incremental bits to make a minor difference, he would become a charitable entrepreneur. He would go to a neighborhood of concentrated crime and poverty and try to make a meaningful difference. He found a neighborhood called East Lake Meadows in the 1990s in Atlanta, GA. It was the home of Bobby Jones and Charlie Yates, famous golfers of the 1920s, but had gone to seed, was dilapidated, and became a neighborhood of crime. In fact, it had become known as the Little Vietnam of Georgia. Police would not enter the area because of the crime rate. Drew Elementary School was the worst performing elementary school in the State of Georgia.

Tom Cousins came to the State board of education—and I know this because I was the chairman—and asked us to go to the city of Atlanta to get them to issue a charter for Drew Elementary School and a 99-year lease to the Cousins Foundation. Tom Cousins went in and built a new Drew Elementary School, hired Georgia State University to bring in a professor to be the principal there and manage the education of those children. Drew Elementary School went from being one of the worst performing schools in the State of Georgia to one of the best.

But he didn't stop with the school. He improved the neighborhood. He improved the facilities. He built a YMCA. He took a holistic approach to East Lake Meadows and turned it into a shining city once again in the State of Georgia. But he didn't do it just because he gave money. He did it because he invested his money in the lives of these people.

I will give some idea of the changes made in East Lake Meadows and Drew Elementary School. Drew Elementary went from 5 percent of its fifth graders reading and performing in math levels where they should, to where 90 percent of the fifth graders exceeded the math standards of the State of Georgia. Where the median income of the families in East Lake Meadows was \$4,536 when Tom Cousins went in, 15 years later it was \$17,260. There was a 90-percent reduction in the crime rate, to the point where it was 50 percent lower than the city's overall crime rate. He transformed the neighborhood because he invested his money entrepreneurially in trying to solve the problems and the poverty of these people.

He went to Warren Buffett, a leading entrepreneur of America, and formed a new organization called Purpose Built Communities, which is based on three fundamental discoveries they made at East Lake Meadows. No. 1, it can be done. How many times have people walked by declining neighborhoods of poverty, crime, and failing schools, and said: There is nothing we can do; we