

do a great deal of damage to American jobs and the American economy. That should be and is a big concern to the American people. Parts of the agreement can do damage to our jobs and our economy. At the same time, important parts are not binding on other countries. The American people are right to wonder if the White House has signed yet another terrible deal just to try to shore up the President's legacy.

Earlier this year, President Obama was so anxious, so desperate to get a deal with Iran over its nuclear program that the President signed a terrible deal. Since then, the International Atomic Energy Agency said that Iran has "seriously undermined" the agency's ability to verify what Iran has done. Here we are again. It is another bad deal, and other countries that signed it are already ignoring it.

India is the world's third largest emitter of carbon. The agreement was on Saturday. This agreement tied plans to meet their emissions targets to getting U.S. taxpayer dollars. Then on Monday—just yesterday—India said it has plans to double its coal output by 2020. Is that what President Obama calls, in his mind, a success?

A Gallup poll came out yesterday that showed that the American people's biggest concern is not climate change; it is terrorism. Only 3 percent of all Americans said that pollution or the environment was the most important problem facing America today.

President Obama says climate change is our biggest threat. President Obama continues to put a priority on things that he expects to help his legacy, not on the issues the American public actually are concerned about. As elected representatives, we should not allow the President to buy a legacy for himself using American taxpayer dollars. I am willing to sit down with any Democrat who wants to work on a realistic, responsible, and achievable plan to make American energy as clean as we can, as fast as we can, without raising costs on American families. That should be our goal: coming together to find a real solution, real-world solutions, things that work, not just signing a symbolic agreement that does not solve anything, something that may make the President feel good but doesn't actually do good.

Democrats and Republicans in the Senate can do it. Just look at all we have accomplished this year working together. It has been a very productive year in the Senate. I am not the only one saying it. Last Wednesday, U.S. News & World Report said: "There's reason for optimism on Capitol Hill ahead of a looming deadline to pass a trillion-dollar omnibus funding measure." The magazine asked: "What is behind it?" Well, they said: "After years of partisan gridlock, Congress has seemingly regained its ability to get things done."

After years of partisan gridlock, Congress has seemingly regained its ability to get things done. The bipartisan pol-

icy committee said the same thing recently. They pointed out that the House and Senate have both made important progress this year. They said: "Both chambers have reinvigorated a robust committee process."

Getting committees back to work is essential to getting Congress back to work, and that is what Republicans have done this year. So far this year, the total number of days worked is up from last year by almost an additional 3 weeks of work on the Senate floor. This is in comparison to when HARRY REID was in charge. We have been considering a lot more amendments this year as well. For all of last year, there were only 15 up-and-down votes on amendments—15 for the entire year. So far this year, we have voted on over 200 amendments. These are amendments both by Democrats and Republicans. These are opportunities for individual Senators to stand up, offer their ideas, and be heard—ideas that they think will make America better, make legislation better, not just what the leader of the party wants, Senator REID, who blocked so many amendments—not just what Senator REID might think is best for the President, no; what the American people think is important.

So when you look into the substance of what we have done, the news is even better for the American people. So far this year we passed major legislation that has been helping Americans all across the country. We passed an important law on Medicare to make much needed reforms and to reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program. We passed the first multiyear highway bill since 2005. We passed the longest reauthorization of the highway trust fund in almost a decade.

These aren't just short-term patches for a few months or a year. That is what happened when the Democrats were in charge. These are long-term fixes that create the certainty and the stability our economy needs. This year the Senate passed the most significant education reform since 2002. We passed an important human trafficking law. We passed a budget. Can you imagine that? There hasn't been a budget passed in both Houses of Congress since 2009. We passed one this year.

As chairman of the Indian Affairs Committee, I can tell you that we have made a lot of progress this year on legislation to improve the lives of people across Indian Country. We passed a measure that will help make crucial and long overdue improvements on roads on tribal lands. Last week we passed legislation that helps give tribes more economic opportunities. It gives them more control over developing their natural resources.

Republicans are eager to work with Democrats and to produce legislation the President will sign. We are proud of the accomplishments of this year. At the same time, we are not afraid to challenge President Obama's most misguided and dangerous policies. That is why the Senate passed legislation re-

pealing ObamaCare to ease Americans' pain under this law. We passed a measure on the Keystone XL Pipeline to create jobs, energy security, and economic growth, and we put that bill on the President's desk to force him to finally make a decision.

We challenged President Obama's job-crushing energy regulations by voting to block his power plan and his devastating rules on waters of the United States. I wish to point out, looking at a headline from yesterday's New York Times, that EPA broke the law with regard to pushing their water rule. The EPA broke the law, which is this issue of this whole waters of the United States. The EPA must be held accountable—accountable for breaking the law, accountable for misuse of government funds. We will hold this administration accountable.

Of course we also oppose the President's nuclear deal with Iran. We have shown the American people we can get things done, and there is a viable alternative to the reckless policies coming out of the White House.

Looking back on what we have been able to do this year, I think there is real reason for optimism. The Senate doesn't need to be the place of gridlock that it had become under HARRY REID. In 2016 the Senate will be taking more votes on important legislation and on amendments. There will be more debates, more consideration of ideas from both sides of the aisle. That is what the American people have sent us to do. That is what they expect from us. The American people have seen it is possible to govern and that not everything in Washington is broken. It takes leaders who are committed to getting things done and committed to looking out for the best interests of the American people.

This is the end of the year, but it is not the end of this Congress. It is not the end of what the Senate can do to make the lives of the American people better. We have done a lot. There is still a lot of work to be done over the next month and the next year. We will continue to work to relieve the burden and the expense of excess government regulations, to reduce the power of unelected, unaccountable Washington bureaucrats, and to return to the States and to the people more of the control that belongs to them. The goal is to give people at home the power to make their own decisions about what is best for them, their communities, and their families.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROUNDS). The Senator from New Mexico.

NOMINATION OF ROBERTA JACOBSON

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, I rise to urge consideration of the President's nominee for Ambassador to Mexico. I do so for two simple reasons: One, this is a critical position, vacant since

July, and, two, Roberta Jacobson is highly qualified for this position. Her nomination deserves our attention. I do so as a Senator from a border State and as a Senator who believes we have a constitutional duty to advise and consent.

We have a distinguished candidate ready to serve. We have strong support for her on both sides of the aisle. What we need is an up-or-down vote. The L.A. Times has called Roberta Jacobson “among the most qualified people ever to be tapped to represent the U.S. in Mexico.”

She has impressive experience, including important work on the Merida Initiative, fighting drug trafficking and organized crime in Mexico. She has served ably as State Department Assistant Secretary for the Western Hemisphere, working to improve relations in our hemisphere and to engage Cuba—opening opportunities for Americans after over 50 years of a failed U.S. policy.

She was approved by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee with bipartisan support. Yet the weeks go by and still we wait.

Our relations with Mexico are critical—affecting our economy, affecting our security. Mexico is working with us to stop those who cross our southern border illegally. Mexico is our third largest trading partner. One million American citizens live in Mexico. It is our top tourist destination, with millions of U.S. visitors every year. My State shares a border with our neighbor to the south. We also share a cultural heritage. The trade that grows every year—hundreds of millions of dollars in goods and services—move between our Nations. Over 36,000 jobs in my State depend on United States-Mexico trade. This increased trade is an engine of economic growth. Exports from New Mexico to Mexico have soared from over \$70 million a year to now \$1.5 billion 15 years later.

In New Mexico we know how important this partnership is. We need a strong ambassador in Mexico City—working on trade, on border security, and on cultural ties between our Nations. We need an ambassador to work with Mexico and other Central American countries to address immigration issues, to help resolve the migrant crisis, to crack down on border violence and drug trafficking. This is clear to both sides of the aisle, especially to those of us from border States. As someone who has worked with Roberta on multiple issues, I know she is the right person for this job.

I especially want to thank my Republican colleague, Senator JEFF FLAKE, for his efforts. He is concerned, as I am, that this cannot wait. As Senator FLAKE said recently:

It's crunch time now. Once you get into next year, it's easier to just put them on hold until the next president assumes office in 2017.

I hope that will not happen. I hope we will listen to Senator FLAKE be-

cause it is crunch time and because we do need to get this done.

What is holding up her nomination? It isn't her qualifications. It isn't concerns about how she would be able to carry out her duties as Ambassador. The problem is rooted in something else—something that should have no bearing on whether she is confirmed: Presidential politics and policy differences with the administration over her work on Cuba.

This year, the world celebrated the reopening of diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba. As the Assistant Secretary for the Western Hemisphere, Roberta helped negotiate this shift. We have begun a 21st century relationship with Cuba—one I am convinced will bring freedom and openness. I congratulate the President for leading this historic change.

A few Senators disagree with his Cuba policy, and so they are blocking Roberta Jacobson's confirmation to serve as Ambassador to Mexico.

Unfortunately, this is just one example of how the rules are being twisted and misused. She is one of the many qualified nominees whose confirmations are on hold. Many of them wait because one or two Senators want to make a political point or extract political pain. Not happy with the President? Block his nominee. Not OK with a policy? Keep the seat vacant.

The real aim is the administration. No matter how qualified, the nominee is just an easy target.

Meanwhile, the backlog grows: 19 judges, half a dozen ambassadors, even a top official at the Treasury Department whose job is to go after the finances of terrorists. That position is vacant as well.

We are on track for the lowest number of confirmations in three decades. We now have 30 judicial districts with emergency levels of backlogs. At the beginning of the year, we had 12. Thousands of people are waiting for their day in court because there is no judge to hear the case. Important work for the American people is left undone.

When we fail to do our job, when we fail to give these nominees a vote up or down, our government fails too.

This is not just the President's team. It is our team. It is America's team—working on trade and security, moving our economy forward, seeing that justice is done.

These vital posts should not go unfilled.

I urge my colleagues to allow us to move these nominations forward now.

I do not believe the Constitution gives me the right to block a qualified nominee, no matter who is in the White House. I say that today, and I have said it many times before.

A Republican President may have nominees I disagree with. That is most likely so. But the people elect a President. They give him or her the right to select a team to govern.

Today—right now—the majority leader can call a vote to confirm these

nominees, yet he chooses not to. We changed the Senate rules to allow a majority vote, but that does no good if they remain blocked. That is what is happening in this Congress. The line gets longer and longer of perfectly qualified nominees who are denied a vote and are unable to serve.

So I am not sure who wins here, but I know who loses. The losers are the American people. The losers are the men and women who cannot get a day in court, because there is no judge to hear their case.

The losers are American citizens, businesses, and workers who rely on our embassies and other public servants. The room is empty, and the work is not done—all because one Senator says no, and the majority leader says OK.

Nominees should be judged on their merits, not on feelings about a President someone may not like or a policy someone may not approve. They are public servants in the executive branch, on our courts. They serve the people of this country.

Too often now that service goes begging because one Senator wants to make a point and will gum up the works to do it. That is not governing; it is a temper tantrum.

So I say to my colleagues: Let's get serious. Let's stop these games. Give nominees the consideration they deserve. Give the American people a government that works.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

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

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

RECESS

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess until 2:15 p.m.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 12:19 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PORTMAN).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

SENATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, last year we made a promise to the American people. If we were elected to the majority, we would get Washington working again for American families. Republicans in the Senate have been focused on putting our country on not just another course but a better course. This will allow us to begin rebuilding the trust of hard-working taxpayers who have seen their government become less effective and less accountable.

Over the course of this year, as the Senate got back to work, the American