

with these individuals—nothing, not one thing. These are qualified people. They are being held up for reasons unrelated to their important responsibilities to our country.

Thomas Shannon, a career person, to the position of Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs. This is the point person who negotiates globally.

Brian Egan to the position of State Department Legal Adviser. We all have questions on a lot of the legal issues on foreign policy, and yet we won't confirm a career person who has given his career to public service.

David Robinson to the positions of Assistant Secretary of State for Conflict and Stabilization Operations and Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization. This is a person who we need to deal with a lot of the human rights issues.

John Estrada to the post of U.S. Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago. Drug trafficking—we need a confirmed ambassador. For months and months and months they have been on the calendar and no action.

Azita Raji to be Ambassador to Sweden and Samuel Heins to be Ambassador to Norway, our Scandinavian friends.

I was at the State Department this week for the holiday reception with the heads of missions that are stationed in Washington. Ambassadors from other countries came up to me and said: Will we get a confirmed ambassador? It is affecting America's security and reputation, and we need to have confirmed ambassadors. Norway has gone 2 years without a confirmed ambassador. We have a person who is eminently qualified. There is no objection to Samuel Heins being confirmed. Yet we can't get a vet on the floor of the Senate because an individual Senator is objecting. That is wrong. We have a responsibility to act.

David McKean to be Ambassador of Luxembourg, Cassandra Butts to be Ambassador to the Bahamas—that is eight of the total number who are being held that I mentioned. As I said, I intended to make the unanimous consent requests. Senator CRUZ has already come to the floor to object. I regret that.

I urge my colleagues to work out their problems, but do it in a timely way and don't hold America hostage, because that is what you are doing by not confirming these appointments. You are not holding the Obama administration hostage; you are holding America hostage. Who is hurt by not having a confirmed ambassador in Norway? There are Americans who get hurt who depend upon our relationship with Norway. There is a diaspora in the United States that is affected by not having a confirmed ambassador to Norway or to Sweden or to the other countries that we have not been able to get a confirmed ambassador.

I urge my colleagues who have problems to enjoy the holiday, get some rest, and come back here ready to vote

because I think that is what we were elected to do. I urge my colleagues to allow us, when we come back in January, to have votes on these very qualified people who are serving our country and are prepared to serve our country in a more significant way.

Mr. President, I wish all my colleagues a very happy holiday season.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

TRIBUTE TO RAY PFEIFER

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I want to speak for a moment about a great man and a wonderful friend of mine. His name is Ray Pfeifer, and he is an incredible leader and an inspiration to many, myself included.

Ray was a New York City firefighter for 27 years and 220 days, by his count. He called it the best job in the world, and he said he was proud to put on the uniform. But Ray had to retire last September—years before he wanted to—because he has cancer. His cancer has spread throughout his body—to his ribs, his leg, and now to his brain.

We know that cancer can strike randomly, sometimes with nothing to blame, but there is nothing random about Ray Pfeifer's cancer. Ray now has cancer because he was a first responder at Ground Zero, because he was one of thousands who rushed to help after we were attacked on 9/11. He served in Engine 40, Ladder 35, in the 9th Battalion, and most of the members of his battalion were killed on 9/11. Ray spent months on the pile searching for his friends. He wouldn't leave. He spent months digging for bodies in the rubble. He spent months there, breathing in horrible, toxic air that hung over Ground Zero like a deadly mist.

Many Members of the Senate would actually recognize Ray because he has been down here so many times—dozens of times—working the Halls of Congress, asking Senators to do the right thing and support the 9/11 bill. He was a strong, smiling man in uniform, traveling in his wheelchair from office to office, with contagious optimism and unmatched grace. Ray Pfeifer has never wavered. He has never been deterred. He has never even given up his efforts to pass the 9/11 health program. But you must know, Ray was never doing this for himself; he was doing it so other first responders didn't have to.

Ray wanted to be here today to see this bill passed because he had worked so long and so hard, but last week Ray had to go back to the hospital because his cancer had spread to his brain. Ray is physically in New York right now, but Ray's indomitable spirit is with us in the Capitol. His strength is with us. His unmistakable grace is with us.

Ray, I know you are listening. We never ever could have gotten this done without you. You did it. But I must tell you, Ray, this speech isn't for you; this speech is for your wife Caryn and your son Terrance and your daughter Taylor.

Terrance was actually sworn in as a New York City firefighter earlier this year, just like his dad. This speech is for them because they shared you with all of us. This speech is for all the responders who fought for all these years so that our 9/11 heroes could have the health care for the rest of their lives.

The city of New York and the United States of America owe Ray and his family a debt of gratitude that can never truly be paid. Ray is the embodiment of everything we strive to be as Americans: selfless, kind, brave, optimistic, someone who fights for what is right and never gives in.

Ray, I know you are a fighter, and I know you will get through this. You have the prayers of more people than you know, and may God bless you and your family. I look forward to celebrating this hard-fought victory in person with you soon.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

FRANK R. LAUTENBERG CHEMICAL SAFETY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY ACT

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, last night was a historic moment in the Senate. After years and years of negotiations and collaboration, after working with stakeholders across the country, we made tremendous progress toward historic, bipartisan environmental reform. The Frank R. Lautenberg Chemical Safety for the 21st Century Act passed the Senate on a unanimous voice vote, with 60 bipartisan cosponsors and with overwhelming support. This is a great milestone.

First, I want to thank Senator VITTER. Senator VITTER and I introduced this legislation for one basic reason: to fix our Nation's broken chemical safety law. I remember that over 2 years ago we had a very quiet dinner, and we walked away from that dinner saying: We are going to form a team, and we are going to get this done. It was after Frank Lautenberg had passed away, and Senator VITTER is a man of his word. We stuck to it, and we are making significant historic progress. I thank him for that.

There were times when the bill was stalled from even getting introduced, and Senators like TOM CARPER stepped in and helped us get back on track. I thank Senator CARPER for that. His early leadership as an original cosponsor of this bill got us off on the much needed right foot. Other moderates joined in, and we had some momentum building up.

This has been a long road to get here today. I thank Chairman INHOFE for his calm, steady leadership, and Senator MERKLEY, Senator BOOKER, Senator WHITEHOUSE, Senator MARKEY, Senator COONS, Senator DURBIN, and many others. They all helped move this forward and all helped make this a better bill.

I also thank Bonnie Lautenberg. Senator Lautenberg fought hard for TSCA

reform. I was proud to take up that fight, and I am grateful to Bonnie, who has helped us every step of the way. She has been an incredible advocate in terms of interacting with Senators and their staff to push the crucial message forward on TSCA reform, and it was the message her husband Frank Lautenberg would repeat every day when I saw him in committee. He said: Are we doing the right thing for our children and our grandchildren? He really believed TSCA reform would save more lives than anything he had ever done in his life. He had a very rich life and lived to be almost 90 years old.

I wish to also recognize the great advocates for reform. A lot of this was grassroots people standing up and saying that we haven't done what we need to do for the American people, for our families, and for our children on chemical safety. There are too many to mention all of them, but the Bipartisan Policy Center stood up and helped out; the Environmental Defense Fund—Fred Krupp, their leader, played a crucial role; the National Wildlife Federation; March of Dimes; North America's Building Trades Unions; the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers; Moms Clean Air Force; the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine; the Humane Society, and so many others. All of these groups taken together represent over 30 million Americans. They all support the Lautenberg act. They pushed Congress to act, and they kept pushing until we did that.

Many thousands of Americans have worked for chemical safety reform over the last four decades.

Thank you for not giving up.

They understand that we need a national solution to our broken chemical safety law.

The Toxic Substances Control Act was enacted in 1976—nearly 40 years ago. It was supposed to protect American families, but it doesn't. Over four decades, the EPA has been able to restrict just five chemicals and it has prevented only four chemicals from going to market. That is out of tens of thousands of chemicals.

Everyday Americans go to the grocery store or the hardware store, and they believe the chemicals in the products they buy have been tested and are safe, but that is not true because TSCA is broken. This is about health and safety. This is about our children and grandchildren. This is about people like Dominique Browning, who works with Moms Clean Air Force and worries about her kids and the toys and products they use every day. She herself survived kidney cancer. When she asked her doctor what caused her kidney cancer, he said: "It's one of those environmental ones. Who knows? We're full of chemicals." That was her doctor talking to her when she got kidney cancer. This is about people like Lisa Huguenin. Lisa is a Ph.D. scientist and has done work on chemical exposure at Princeton and Rutgers and at the State

and Federal levels. She is a mother first. Her 13-year-old son Harrison was born with autism and autoimmune deficiencies. Five years ago, Lisa testified before Senator Lautenberg's subcommittee on the need for reform. She is eager to see TSCA reform signed into law.

That is why we are here—to fix this broken system. Now we are close to the finish line for the first time in almost 40 years.

In 2009 the Obama administration laid out six essential principles for TSCA reform. The bill we passed last night meets all six of those principles, and I will go through each one individually.

Principle No. 1, chemicals should be reviewed against safety standards that are based on sound science and reflect risk-based criteria protective of human health and the environment.

Our bill requires the EPA to assess chemicals based only on the health and safety information, not on the cost. That was a significant change we made, and many of the Senators I talked about earlier helped us to get that done.

Principle No. 2, manufacturers should provide EPA with the necessary information to conclude that new and existing chemicals are safe and do not endanger public health or the environment.

Our bill gives EPA new authorities to develop testing data and requires a finding of safety before new chemicals—as many as 1,500 a year—enter the market. The finding on safety needs to be done not like it is done today but before they enter the marketplace.

Principle No. 3, risk management decisions should take into account sensitive subpopulations, cost, availability of substitutes, and other relevant considerations.

Our bill specifically requires the protection of vulnerable populations and lists examples of vulnerable populations, such as infants, the elderly, pregnant women, workers, and others.

Principle No. 4, manufacturers and EPA should assess and act on priority chemicals, both existing and new, in a timely manner.

Our bill requires the EPA to systematically review all the chemicals in commerce, prioritizing the chemicals of most concern first, and it sets aggressive, judicially enforceable deadlines for EPA decisions.

Principle No. 5, green chemistry should be encouraged and provisions assuring transparency and public access to information should be strengthened.

Our bill includes a section on sustainable chemistry and also makes more information about chemicals available by limiting industry's ability to claim information as confidential, and it gives States and health professionals access to confidential information to protect the public.

Principle No. 6, EPA should be given a sustained source of funding for implementation.

Our bill gives EPA sustained sources of funding and ensures that the EPA's priorities are not overwhelmed by private interests to ensure that the program we implement is a risk-based system. Additionally, the bill allows EPA to develop cost-effective final regulations but without the high procedural hurdles in the underlying statute, strikes an appropriate balance between Federal and State action, gives States the right to enforce Federal standards. This will give a State's attorney general the ability to move when the Federal Government may not be moving, and it leaves State civil actions alone and gives no special advantage to either side in litigation.

We are on the verge of historic reform, decades in the making and decades overdue. TSCA is the last of the environmental laws from the 1960s and 1970s left to be updated. Some days you might not think we could pass a major environmental law in Congress, but we have proven that wrong and we have a very strong bill.

Our bill finally gives the EPA the authority it needs to set clear guidance for the EPA to evaluate new and existing chemicals and to protect the American people. That is why support for this bill was so strong and continued to build—from environmental, conservation, good government, industry, and health and labor groups.

We will be working to reconcile the bill with the House legislation. This is historic reform. The old TSCA will be obsolete. We will have a cop on the beat and will finally be able to protect our kids from toxic chemicals.

I wish to again thank Senator VITTER. I am proud to work with him on this bill. We may have disagreed many times on other issues, and the negotiations were sometimes difficult, but we stayed at the table, listened to all sides, and looked for solutions instead of roadblocks, and I thank Senator VITTER for that.

I also want to again thank the many colleagues who worked with us to ensure that we have the best possible bill. At every step of the way, we had Senators from both sides of the aisle step forward, make suggestions, join the bill, cosponsor, and helped to move us forward.

It wouldn't be right to finish this afternoon without mentioning the staff. The staff in the Senate do an incredible job in terms of getting focused on the issues, learning about them in depth, working with each other, and many times moving roadblocks out of the way.

We had a number of staff members who worked on this legislation. Dimitri Karakitsos worked for Senator VITTER when Senator VITTER was chairman and he now works for Chairman INHOFE. Dimitri has been amazing in terms of his staff ability and his understanding. We really appreciate all of his help.

I wish to also thank Chairman INHOFE's staff director, Ryan Jackson;

Zak Baig, with Senator VITTER; Colin Peppard, with Senator CARPER; Adrian Deveny, with Senator MERKLEY; Emily Enderle, with Senator WHITEHOUSE; Adam Zipkin, with Senator CORY BOOKER; Michal Freedhoff, with Senator MARKEY; Jasmine Hunt, with Senator DURBIN; and Lisa Hummon-Jones, with Senator COONS.

I have mentioned the great work that Jonathan Black, a member of my staff, has done, but we have also had incredible work by my legislative director, Andrew Wallace, and all of my staff at various points. This legislation has been a heavy burden, and my staff worked hard to get this legislation completed. I truly appreciate the hard work they have done, including my chief of staff and everybody in the office.

We also had the opportunity to consult with and ask for help from the Senate legislative counsel. They worked to turn around text quickly at crucial points, and that makes all the difference in the world—to have text, get it looked at, get the changes made, and get back to the individuals who are involved.

Michelle Johnson-Weider played a key role, as did Deanna Edwards. I am sure there were others over there who also helped us out. This is not a definitive list. There were also many others.

I wish to conclude by thanking, again, our bipartisan partners. Senator VITTER and I have been working on this for years. We took it up after Senator Lautenberg passed away. Senator VITTER was on the committee as the ranking member and the chairman—and back and forth—and then Senator INHOFE took over.

I remember when we had a meeting with Senator INHOFE, and he took a real interest in this legislation. He has incredible calm, steady judgment in terms of pulling together what needs to happen to get a bill done in this sometimes hyperpartisan atmosphere. As chairman, he was always willing to listen to the people on the committee, off the committee, and pull people together to help them find common ground on this bill.

With that, we look forward to working with our House colleagues. Many of us served in the House. We served with House Members FRED UPTON, FRANK PALLONE, JOHN SHIMKUS, and Representative TONKO. These are some of the key people who will be working on this in the House, and we look forward to working with them and their staff and each other to reconcile these bills.

The House has some very good ideas in its bill. We have been a little more expansive and covered more areas, and I hope they will work with us on that. We look forward to working with them and putting the two bills together and then getting this passed early next year.

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

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

OMNIBUS LEGISLATION

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I want to say just a few words this afternoon on the vote that was taken on the Senate floor this morning. I will certainly admit that this was a difficult vote for me. This 2,200-page, \$1.8 trillion spending and tax reform bill certainly does contain provisions that I have advocated for and will continue to press for to benefit different Alaskan groups, small businesses, the energy sector, and others. However, voting in favor of such a massive and consequential piece of legislation without having the opportunity to fully understand or fully vet both its positive and negative implications for Alaska and our Nation or to offer amendments is something I could not do in good conscience.

Leader MCCONNELL, majority whip Senator CORNYN, and so many other leaders in the Senate have worked hard in terms of this process over the past year. You heard a number of Senators come to the floor to talk about what clearly has been a very productive Senate under their leadership, and I want to commend them for their leadership. I appreciate their leadership. I know that in terms of the budget they tried to get this body to the right place, meaning we actually passed a budget for the first time in many years. We passed 12 appropriations bills—again, for appropriations, the first time in many years—but as the bills came to the Senate floor, they were halted, unfortunately, blocked, filibustered. I remember debating not once, not twice, but three times when the other side filibustered the Defense appropriations bill. This Senator still does not understand what was behind all of that, still is not 100 percent sure why the appropriations and funding process was halted in this body. Then we saw the smash-up the last week when everything came together at the end of the year.

I am not sure what the motivation was to do this, but I do know this: The way in which we fund our Federal Government—in this case, 72 hours to read a 2,200-page, \$1.8 trillion, “take it or leave it” bill, negotiated by just a few Members of Congress and the White House—is a broken process, and it is not worthy of our great Nation, nor the people we represent. I also believe it is a principal reason why we have seen an explosion of trillions of dollars in debt that imperils our Nation’s fiscal stability and certainly imperils our children’s future.

Back home in Alaska, we are currently debating through a transparent, open, and contentious process how to best address our State’s significant fiscal challenges. We have big fiscal challenges just like this government does.

In my view, the Federal Government should be doing the same. The bill we voted on today and the process that produced it demonstrates that we are not.

Going forward, I certainly want to continue to work with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle and the leadership on both sides of the aisle to continue to work to improve this process because the people we represent deserve much better than what just transpired.

Obviously there has been a lot of talk about the omnibus bill in the last couple days on the floor, but I just wanted to say a few words. Sometimes it takes a reminder from home, a reminder from what is going on back home to ground us and to remind us of what is really important in our lives, like family and friends and life itself.

SEARCH FOR CASEY GRAHAM

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I would like to talk briefly about an effort that is going on in Alaska right now to try to recover one of our own, Casey Graham—an Alaskan Native, a patriot, 24 years old, the son of Steven and Lucy Graham.

He is 24 years old, the son of Steven and Lucy Graham and brother of Cheryl, Michelle, Megan, and Pauline. He is a veteran who served in the Marines and was deployed to serve his country in Afghanistan. He is a young man in the prime of his life.

Casey has been described as smart, hard-working, extremely intelligent, and a shining light for his community, his State, and his country. He lived in Anchorage but was from McGrath, AK. That is about 200 miles from Anchorage on the Upper Kuskokwim River.

About a week ago he was visiting family when he decided to do what most Alaskans do in the winter—go out on a snow machine ride. It is thought that he was on the ice on the river and hit open water. His snow machine and his helmet have been found, but not Casey.

As I speak, the community of McGrath is banding together for the recovery effort. It is a small town—only about 350 people live there—but it is a town with a huge heart. The community has dropped everything. Every day, dozens—as many as 50 Alaskans have gone out to where they think Casey was on the ice to bring him home. Remember, in Alaska it is cold right now. From December 10 when the search began until now, temperatures have ranged from about 22 degrees below zero to a high of about 16 above zero. There is a heated tent on the ice where volunteers go to warm up and eat lunch before they go back out searching. They eat moose stew mostly and, of course, a lot of salmon. The community is emptying their freezers and making sure all the volunteers are fed.

In the true spirit of Alaska, in the true spirit of Christmas, so many companies and individuals across the great