

need to look any further than this example to know that sometimes the priorities are just plain wrong.

I urge all of my colleagues to become aware of this problem, to become invested in this problem, and to work with us to solve this problem. The first and most significant and important step we can take is to urge the Department of Treasury to reject the current plan and take this back to the drawing board.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

#### ACCOUNTABILITY OF CONGRESS

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, of the words the American people frequently use to describe Congress today—at least one of the words that is appropriate to repeat on the Senate floor—one of the most common and accurate is “unaccountable.”

Year after year, hard-working men and women across this great country bristle under dysfunctional, costly, and burdensome laws made right here in Washington, DC, and day after day, many of them do what Americans have always done when faced with an out-of-touch government. They contact their elected lawmakers to voice their concerns about those laws and to push for change of those laws and the process by which they are made.

Ask anyone who has ever called, written, or emailed their Member of Congress what happens next. It is consistent. It is predictable. Blame is shifted; fingers are pointed; scapegoats of every variety imaginable are brought forth to defend those who are charged with making the laws from the consequences of their own handiwork. This is the very definition of unaccountability, and it pervades the culture of Washington, DC, because Congress has allowed it to infect our laws and our institutions—the very institutions by which those laws are made.

Many Americans assume that they are being lied to when their elected lawmakers blame someone else for the laws that are raising the cost of living, eating away at their paychecks, and generally making it harder for individual Americans and families to realize the American dream. But the truth is actually even more troubling than that. Most of the items on the Federal Government's interminable list of do's and don'ts governing nearly every activity of human life are not in fact written, debated, discussed, and passed by Congress; rather, they are imposed unilaterally by unelected bureaucrats in one of the executive branch's administrative agencies. This is true even for what are called major rules, which are regulations that cost the American people more than \$100 million each year in compliance costs.

For instance, look at the Department of Energy, whose appropriations we are currently considering. In a single year,

2015, the costs of the regulations issued by the Department of Energy exceeded \$15 billion—\$15 billion. In 1 year, it cost the American people \$15 billion to comply with the regulations issued by this single bureaucratic agency—by this single Federal Department, the U.S. Department of Energy.

Even if we were to agree with every cent of that very onerous regulatory burden, we should all be able to recognize the danger of allowing one group of people, consisting of individuals who never have had to stand for election, to squeeze \$15 billion out of the pocketbooks of the American people. That is why I have submitted this amendment, No. 3856, which would restrict the Department of Energy from spending any funds to implement or enforce regulations whose compliance costs exceed \$100 million, unless specifically approved by Congress.

Unfortunately, regrettably, tragically, this amendment was blocked from consideration by one of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle for reasons that appear to be completely unrelated to the merits of this amendment.

Nevertheless, I would like to take a moment to explain how my amendment works. This amendment would have provided immediate, much needed financial relief to the budgets of hard-working families and businesses all across the country. It would protect them from the costs of two major rules recently proposed by the Department of Energy—rules that impose new energy-efficiency standards on ceiling fans and commercial packaged boilers.

Just like the Department of Energy's ban on incandescent light bulbs, under these rules, Americans would no longer be able to buy ceiling fans or commercial boilers that do not adhere to the government's strict new standards. Proponents of the rules think this is a good thing. As former Energy Secretary Steven Chu said about the light bulb ban back in 2011, “We are taking away a choice that continues to let people waste their own money.”

This government-knows-best approach to regulation is not only arrogant—it is not only off-puttingly paternalistic—it is detached from the economic realities of American life today. Most Americans may buy less energy-efficient ceiling fans than most Washington bureaucrats, not because they are less intelligent or less concerned about saving energy or less concerned about protecting the environment but because it is what they can afford. The additional costs of these energy-efficiency standards are not insignificant. In fact, it is estimated that these two rules would cost American families and businesses more than \$3 billion.

Today, the Department of Energy has the power to impose these rules on the public, and there is very little Congress can do about it. But under my amendment, the two rules would not go into effect unless and until Congress voted to approve them—unless and until Con-

gress affirmatively enacted them into law and allowed them to be signed into law by the President. This simple, commonsense reform is modeled on the REINS Act, a bill that requires congressional approval for all major rules issued by all executive agencies across the entire Federal Government.

Last July, the House of Representatives passed the REINS Act by a strong vote of 243 to 165, and it currently has 37 cosponsors in the Senate. Support for the legislation is growing because it is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore the moral and material problems of hiding the regulatory process in the nameless, faceless bureaucracy. Everyone here knows the regulatory burden in America has become untenable. Every single day, each of us hears from our constituents about how stifling government regulations have become.

The data tell the same story. Just today we saw that the first quarter of 2016 was the third in a row in which private domestic investment has shrunk. This is disappointing, but it is not surprising.

According to a recent study by the Mercatus Center, in 2012, “the economy was \$4 trillion smaller than it would have been in the absence of regulatory growth since 1980.” That works out to about \$13,000 of lost earnings for every man, woman, and child in America.

Some of my colleagues may think the costs of our regulatory system are defensible. I certainly don't. But I know there are different opinions out there, and that is exactly the point of the REINS Act. That is exactly the point of this amendment—this amendment which has been improperly blocked.

Under the broken status quo, Members of Congress can claim innocence—and they regularly do—when an executive agency imposes a costly and controversial regulations on the country. In fact, many Members of Congress not only claim innocence, but they claim almost victim status. They behave almost as if we were a victim, as if we were someone being acted upon. We don't even have to debate it. It just kicks into law by itself. It is self-executing. This may be convenient for those of us in Washington, but it is fundamentally and unacceptably unfair to the American people. We don't make the law this way in this country, but that is now how our system is set up. It is time that we change it.

If Congress is ever going to win back the trust of the American people, we must prove that we are in fact trustworthy—trustworthy to do what we are supposed to do and trustworthy to make law—because that is why we exist as a part of our government. The best way to do that is to make ourselves once again accountable for making the laws, passing the laws, and standing accountable for the laws of this country. This amendment would be a significant step toward making Congress accountable again.

I regret—I deeply regret—that it was blocked, but I look forward to advancing similar reforms in the future because the idea of making Congress accountable isn't just a good idea; it is burned deeply, indelibly within our constitutional system.

It is no accident that the very first clause of the first section of the first article of the Constitution says, "All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives." All legislative powers—that means all Federal law in this system is vested in a Congress of the United States. We are not supposed to delegate that to someone else.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

#### GENOCIDE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION MONTH

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, in many places around the world, April is a month where we celebrate rebirth and renewal. But April has too often been, in T. S. Eliot's words, "the cruelest month," a month where some of the world's darkest moments have cast shadows over our humanity.

It was in April 1915 when the Ottoman government began rounding up and murdering leading Armenian politicians, businessmen, and intellectuals, a step that led to the extermination of more than 1 million Armenians.

It was April 1933 that the Nazis issued a decree paving a way for the "final solution," the annihilation of 6 million Jews of Europe.

It was April 1975 that the Khmer Rouge entered Cambodia's capital city, launching a 4-year wave of violence, killing 2 million people.

In April 1992, the siege of Sarajevo began in Bosnia, the longest siege in modern history, where more than 10,000 people perished, including 1,500 children.

It was in April 1994 that the plane carrying the President of Rwanda crashed, triggering the beginning of a genocide that killed more than 800,000 people in 100 days. When we talk about what happened in Rwanda, it is easy to begin to think of genocide as a single, undifferentiated act of barbarism. In reality, it was made of many individual atrocities that took place over 100 days.

In April 2003, innocent civilians in Sudan's Darfur region were attacked, killing more than 400,000 and displacing 2.5 million in a conflict that continues to this day.

This past month, the State Department announced that the United States has determined that ISIS's action against the Yazidis, Shiite Muslims, and Christians in Iraq and Syria constitutes genocide. Specifically, Sec-

retary Kerry noted that in 2014, ISIS trapped Yazidis, killed them, enslaved thousands of Yazidi women and girls, "selling them at auction, raping them at will and destroying the communities for which they lived for countless generations."

I rise here today, in April, not only to commemorate International Genocide Awareness and Prevention Month and pay respect to the innocents who were slaughtered but also to speak about what the United States can and must do to prevent atrocities and genocide.

The commitment to prevent acts of genocide and mass atrocities has been a centerpiece of policy by consecutive administrations of the U.S. Government. The United States was the first country in the world to sign the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, signed in Paris on December 9, 1948, and President Ronald Reagan signed implementing legislation, allowing the United States to become a party to the convention on November 25, 1988.

In the 2006 "National Security Strategy," President George W. Bush highlighted the "moral imperative that states take against to prevent and punish genocide."

I firmly believe that U.S. leadership can make a difference in preventing future genocides and mass atrocities. U.S. leadership can save lives by bringing the power and resources of the United States to bear on atrocity prevention, accountability, and justice.

On April 10, 2014, I introduced the Syrian War Crimes Accountability Act in this Chamber. Three days earlier, the world had marked the 20th anniversary of the genocide of Rwanda, one of the most horrific events in modern history, which unfolded as the world stood back and watched.

At that time, I noted:

Unfortunately, we have not learned the lessons of the past. We must do better to not only see that sort of atrocities never again occur under our watch.

That statement was not only a reflection of my beliefs but a promise to keep the issue of atrocity prevention in front of the Senate and the American people.

So today, under the heavy cloud of atrocities occurring in Syria, South Sudan, and elsewhere, I come to address this body again. I am here today not to look backward about actions not taken. I am here today to stress that our job, our responsibility, is to make sure the United States has the tools—diplomatic, political, economic, and legal—to take effective action before atrocities occur. Essential to this is authorizing the Atrocities Prevention Board and ensuring that the U.S. Government has structures in place and the mechanisms at hand to better prevent and respond to potential atrocities.

President Obama, when he established the Atrocities Prevention Board in 2012, said that "preventing genocide

[is] an 'achievable goal' but one that require[s] a degree of governmental organization that matches the kind of methodical organization that accomplish mass killings."

Earlier this year, I introduced the Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act of 2016 to ensure that we do just that. I am joined in this effort by Senators TILLIS, MURPHY, MENENDEZ, SHAHEEN, BROWN, GILLIBRAND, BLUMENTHAL, COONS, MIKULSKI, MARKEY, MERKLEY, BOXER, CASEY, WARREN, WHITEHOUSE, MURKOWSKI, BURR, and BENNET. This bill authorizes the Board, which is a transparent, accountable, high-level, interagency board that includes representatives at the assistant secretary level or higher from departments and agencies across U.S. Government.

The board will meet monthly to oversee the development and implementation of atrocity prevention and response policy, and, additionally, address over the horizon potential atrocities through the use of a wide variety of tools so that we can take effective action to prevent atrocities from occurring.

This bill gives our Foreign Service officers the training they need to recognize patterns of escalation and early warning signs of potential atrocities and conflict. With this training, we will, over time, build atrocity prevention into the core skill set of our people on the ground. They will be equipped to see the warning signs, analyze the events, and engage early.

The bill also codifies the Complex Crises Fund, which has been a critical tool in our ability to quickly respond to an emerging crises overseas, including potential mass atrocities and conflict. We used the Complex Crises Fund in Tunisia during the Arab Spring and in Sri Lanka after its civil war. We have used it to respond quickly in Kenya and in other countries, where we helped save lives. Importantly, this bill builds greater transparency and accountability into the structure of the Atrocities Prevention Board. Civil society will have a say, and Congress will have a greater oversight role to make sure we are getting this done right.

This is a good bill. It does good things and places the United States on a solid moral ground. But the moral argument alone is not enough. We must also remember that America's security and that of our allies is affected when civilians are slaughtered. Our security is impacted when desperate refugees stream across borders. Our security is affected when perpetrators of extraordinary violence wreak havoc on regional stability, destroying communities, families, and livelihoods.

We have seen groups such as ISIS systematically targeting communities on the basis of their ethnicity or religious beliefs and practices. After 60 years, we still do not have a comprehensive framework to prevent and respond to mass atrocities in genocide.

Let this bill act as a framework and also as our call to action so that when