

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2017—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASIDY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMENDING THE JUNIOR SENATOR FROM SOUTH CAROLINA

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, let me start today by commending the remarks by the junior Senator from South Carolina. Throughout this week and several—I guess it is now three times this week—his words and his passion have both inspired us and informed us, but I think he has also challenged all of us to do more for our country. I am grateful that I was here for his remarks today. I commend him for those words and for what he talked about on the floor today.

STORM ACT

Mr. President, 3 months ago I spoke on the floor to highlight the need to expand our arsenal of financial measures against the terrorist group ISIS, which we know is also known as ISIL and known by other names or acronyms. I will use the acronym “ISIS.” I said at that time that these agents of hate, violence, and chaos could be significantly diminished by attacks on their finances.

Not long after that, the President signed into law the bipartisan Protect and Preserve International Cultural Property Act, which I sponsored here in the Senate, which will undermine ISIS’s ability and efforts to pillage antiquities in Iraq and Syria for profit. But we need to keep up the pressure on this issue on ISIS.

All terrorist organizations, of course, need resources to survive, and this is a vulnerability we must fully exploit. Dismantling the financial networks that support terrorism is a critical part of our mission to protect the United States of America. ISIS is the best example of how pressing the need is today.

Militarily, ISIS continues to destabilize Iraq and Syria at the expense of millions of civilians who are caught in the crossfire. It continues to cultivate affiliates in northern and western Africa, central Asia, and other parts of the Middle East. It continues to sow the seeds of terror in neighboring countries such as Turkey and Saudi Arabia and further afield—in Europe, Africa, and, of course, here in the United States. Many thousands of innocent lives have been tragically and unjustly lost in these attacks.

Financially, ISIS relies on a variety of revenue streams. We must attack all of them.

U.S. and coalition airpower is disabling oil refineries and stopping smuggling convoys in their tracks. U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Peter

Gersten, deputy commander of the Combined Joint Air Task Force—Operation Inherent Resolve, reported on April 26 of this year that “ISIS’s ability to finance their war through oil refineries has been destroyed.” That is good news, but we have a lot more to do. As a result, ISIS is cutting fighters’ salaries and it is plundering everything and anything it can reach. It is looting banks, kidnapping for ransom, and extorting money directly from the 8 million people caught in its territory. According to the Center for Analysis of Terrorism, such extortion now accounts for more than one-third of the income of ISIS.

Tough sanctions have helped curtail ISIS’s ability to access the international banking system, but ISIS is using informal channels to receive and spend money off the grid. Nonmonetary transfer systems and informal exchange houses operating across multiple countries have been less vulnerable to traditional sanctions.

As ISIS adapts, so must the United States. The Department of the Treasury has been relentless in identifying and blacklisting individuals and entities that finance terror. I applaud them for this work. Yet, because terrorist groups exploit financial jurisdictions to channel their ill-gotten gains, the United States cannot effectively stop terrorist financiers by itself; our coalition partners must join this fight. We cannot afford weak links in this chain.

In February of this year, I visited Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Qatar to conduct oversight of our terrorism finance strategy. I found that the events of the last 2 years have brought this issue of terrorism financing into sharper focus for the countries in the region.

While many of our coalition partners are taking steps in the right direction, much more work needs to be done to stem this tide. We need to see more investigations turn into arrests, more prosecutions, and more sentencing that take terrorist financiers off the streets. As with nuclear nonproliferation, we need to build and reinforce the international architecture that governs international cooperation to stop terrorist financiers.

Last week, Senator ISAKSON and I introduced the STORM Act, the Stop Terrorist Operational Resources and Money Act. This act authorizes a new designation called “jurisdiction of terrorism financing concern” if a country is not doing enough to stop terrorist financiers. Once designated by the United States of America—in fact, once designated by the President of the United States of America—that country would face significant penalties that include the cessation of aid and the suspension of arms sales. To avoid the penalty, the country can enter into a technical assistance agreement with the United States to remediate the problem that led to its designation.

The STORM Act also sanctions foreign financial institutions that make deals on behalf of ISIS or launder

money for ISIS. Like this Chamber’s recent action to sanction foreign banks that deal with Hezbollah, we must ensure that no part of the international banking system is left open to ISIS. We expect overseas banks to join with us by using all of the tools at their disposal to make certain they are not unwittingly or negligently acting for ISIS. Banks that fail to do so have no right to do business with the United States of America.

The STORM Act will be a powerful tool in the President’s arsenal and future Presidents’ arsenals to starve terrorist groups of the resources they need to survive. I thank Senator ISAKSON for his original cosponsorship of this important legislation.

It is essential that we send it through the Foreign Relations Committee, through Congress—both House and Senate—and to the President’s desk for signature as soon as possible.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

A CONVERSATION ABOUT RACE

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, 2 days ago, five police officers were shot and killed and others were very seriously wounded in the middle of a rally trying to bring people together, trying to allow Americans to be able to have what many call our “conversation on race.”

As several have mentioned on this floor before about my friend the junior Senator from South Carolina, TIM SCOTT—Senator SCOTT commented on race all this week, as have several others on this floor who have talked about it. I hear many people in my own State and in the conversations I have had around my State speak about issues of race, and I keep hearing this ongoing statement: We need to have a greater conversation about race.

Somewhat, I think, we as a nation are confused about how this actually gets resolved in some ways. So I wanted to make a quick comment and a challenge to my fellow Senators and others who may be around. The challenge is very straightforward and simple. We talk about a conversation on race as if it is something that can happen nationally at a rally, at a protest, in the media, among leaders. It is not really how America solves issues and problems. We solve it around dinner tables. That has always been the place that we have resolved issues as a nation. It is our families who sit down together and get a chance to talk it out.

Over the past week, I have had this reoccurring conversation with people—just a simple question: Have you ever had a family of another race sit down with your family for dinner at your home? Have you ever invited another family of another race to your home for dinner?

That doesn’t seem like a challenging question, but I have been amazed at the number of people I have posed that question to who have looked at me, who have hesitated, and said: Of course, I have.

Then I said: When?

They had to hesitate and think and said: No, I don't think, really, that has ever happened. I have people I work with, people I interact with, play sports with, go to school with, and live in my neighborhood, but I don't think I have ever had a family of a different race than mine over for dinner.

Here is my simple challenge to us. If we are going to have a conversation about race, maybe the conversation should start with each of our families at our dinner tables. It is what Senator SCOTT mentioned earlier. I have laid out a challenge, just a simple statement, what I call Solution Sundays. If you are going to be part of this solution in America, maybe on a Sunday for lunch or for dinner, invite another family over of another race just to sit and have conversation. Everybody can put their feet under the same table and develop a friendship and a relationship.

Every person can do that. Every person can be a part of the solution. Every person in our country can start to move that conversation a little farther. It is part of who we are.

We don't solve things based on a vote in America, we solve things around our dinner table.

I would challenge every American to invite someone from another race to their home, just sit and have Sunday lunch together and watch and begin to see what happens in our Nation.

IRAN

Mr. President, today is also an anniversary day. Today is happy birthday to the JCPOA, what is commonly known as the Iran nuclear deal. Happy birthday, you are 1-year old today.

In many ways we have seen some progress in some areas. Iran does have fewer centrifuges now than what they had a year ago. Iran has allowed the inspectors to come into some locations. That is a positive thing. Iran has allowed engagement in some of their purchasing of some of their nuclear materials. That is a positive thing, and I am grateful for the progress.

I hope that progress continues, but at this point it is just a hope. Quite frankly, today, for me, recognizing the 1-year birthday of the Iran nuclear deal is a reminder to the administration that America and the Congress have not forgotten that this is a deal that has to be implemented with great strength, because the issues that we face in relationship with Iran are a multitude.

Let me just highlight a few things just to be able to talk through some of the issues that I have seen and things that are still coming, things that have happened in the past year and things that are still to come.

For instance, in the past year the international community has released around \$100 billion to Iran. So \$100 billion has flown back to them. What has happened in that time period? Well, they have recapitalized their banks. They have recapitalized in several areas they have needed in their econ-

omy, but they have also increased their military defense spending by 90 percent in the past year. That flood of money has accelerated the Iranian military buildup. We have actually contributed to that as Americans.

About a month or so after and shortly connected to the Iran nuclear deal being announced and going through the process, Iran released several folks who were considered hostages by the Americans—Americans jailed in Iran. They released those individuals and shortly thereafter the administration released \$1.7 billion to Iran from the Judgment Fund, saying this was part of the return from some of the money that was required from Iran from 1979 in the fall of the Shah—\$1.7 billion.

Interestingly enough, months later, Iran, in its movement, increased its military spending exactly \$1.7 billion, and the Iranians announced those two were connected. American tax dollars directly funded \$1.7 billion of Iranian military buildup.

I wish I could even stop there. Just months ago, the administration announced that we were going to start purchasing heavy water from Iran.

You see, we don't produce our own heavy water. Heavy water is used in development of nuclear materials for a nuclear weapon, but it is also used in research. The United States doesn't produce our own heavy water. We purchase it from Canada mostly.

But instead, this time we purchased nuclear water for over \$8 million from Iran. So we didn't purchase from our ally, but we purchased from Iran.

I wish I could tell you that is all it is, but this is what Secretary Moniz announced with this statement upon the purchase of that heavy water from Iran:

The idea is: OK, we tested it, it's perfectly good heavy water. It meets spec. We'll buy a little of this.

He said:

That will be a statement to the world: "You want to buy heavy water from Iran, you can buy heavy water from Iran. It's been done. Even the United States did it."

In the past year we have moved from sanctions on Iran to being Iran's salesman, to helping them sell heavy water to the world, telling them: Don't buy from our allies in Canada anymore. We tested the Iranian water, and we like it. You should buy that.

That is a pretty big shift in the last year, to move from "we have sanctions on you as a terrorist nation" to "we are your salesmen." People of the world should start buying their heavy nuclear water from Iran.

That is all just in the past year. I wish I could stop, but many people have noticed, if they are watching the media at all, that Iran has launched multiple test missiles in the past several months. On October 10, they launched a missile with an 800-mile range. On November 21, they launched another long-range missile. On March 8 and March 9, they launched other missiles as test missiles.

All of these are in violation of the missile test treaty ban that has been in place for years on Iran. What has been done so far to be able to sanction back down sanctions? Nada.

They are recapitalizing their military. They are testing new missiles that are capable of carrying nuclear armaments. They are continuing to pursue nuclear materials in opposition to the direct agreement.

Just days ago, Germany released a long report from their domestic intelligence agency, which is their equivalent of our FBI. They released a statement saying the findings by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution—that is their FBI—in a 317-page report said they had found that Iran had a clandestine effort to seek illicit nuclear technology and equipment from German companies at what is even, by international standards, a quantitatively and actively high level.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel underscored the findings in a statement to Parliament saying: Iran violated the U.N. Security Council's anti-missile development regulations, seeking nuclear materials in a quantitatively high level from German companies in a clandestine way. Angela Merkel is saying they are continuing to press on the missile side of things. They are continuing to advance.

At the same time, out in plain sight, Iran has purchased the S-300 missile defense system from Russia. They continue to have a tremendous number of religious- and human-rights-documented prisoners in Iran. There are an estimated 821 individuals right now. By the way, some of those also are Americans who are currently imprisoned in Iran right now—some of them just for the practice of a minority faith.

Just weeks ago, I asked DNI Clapper, the President's Director of National Intelligence: What has changed in Iran's being the largest state sponsor of terrorism in the world in the last year?

His response to me was this: Nothing. They are still advancing against Bahrain to have a coup. They are still funding the civil war and coup that is happening in Yemen. They are still funding Hezbollah. They are still proping up Assad. In fact, I have increased their funding levels there.

All of those things still continue to advance, just with more money and with more supplies now than what they had in the past.

It is the 1-year birthday of the Iran nuclear deal. Iran is a rising power in the region and continues to advance toward nuclear technology. So what are we going to do about it?

One is that we need to continue to remind everyone who is out there that this is a very serious threat. Iran with a nuclear weapon is completely unacceptable in this world. The largest state sponsor of terrorism in the world should not have nuclear weapons. The world community should at least agree on that.

I have pushed on several areas. I authored a deal dealing with its resolution, in fact, detailing when the administration should do snapbacks. The administration has been very vague about when they will actually snap back sanctions. So we took their deal, which they had, went through it in great detail, put it in technical language, and put it in a resolution to clearly state: Here are the boundaries of this resolution so it has no fuzzy gray areas.

Through an appropriations amendment, we have also demanded that we get greater detail of the \$1.7 billion in transfer money from the Judgment Fund that was transferred to Iran. Currently, we have almost no detail on that other than that we know Iran used it for its military development because they announced that and put that out.

Third, I have worked with Senator FISCHER from Nebraska creating a Judgment Fund transparency piece so that we will never again transfer American dollars to any state sponsor of terrorism around the world. Couldn't we have that as minimum criteria—that we will not spend the hard-earned tax dollars of Americans to help supply the military requirements of a larger state sponsor of terrorism?

I cosponsored a bill with Senator RUBIO which prohibits giving Ex-Im financing to any company in Iran or to Iran in general to make sure that Iran is not coming, again, to the American taxpayer to be able to get some sort of subsidies to be able to do that.

And as I have mentioned before, we will continue to remind the administration that no one is forgetting because we do not have the option of losing track of a nuclear Iran.

Happy birthday to the Iran nuclear deal. I hope that in the years ahead, we can say that we have a non-nuclear power Iran, but I will tell you that based on what has happened in the past year, I remain incredibly skeptical of that.

I yield back the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the need to pass the Water Resources Development Act of 2016, also known as WRDA. Despite strong, bipartisan support, the Senate has yet to take a vote on a commonsense, necessary piece of legislation.

Frankly, I am extremely disappointed. WRDA will help communities across the Nation who need to repair, expand, or modernize their water infrastructure. The bill invests in the Nation's ports and inland waterways to improve commerce, and it moves us toward major upgrades to locks and dams in places such as the Upper Mississippi River System.

WRDA will improve flood protection in order to better safeguard communities from damage and will restore ecosystems and promote public access for recreation.

This legislation empowers local partners in water resource project implementation and improves the approval process for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers projects.

WRDA promotes innovative technologies to address water resource challenges, including additional support to drought-stricken communities.

This bill also makes essential investments in drinking water and wastewater infrastructure, including emergency assistance to communities facing water contamination, such as Flint, MI.

Earlier this week, I had the opportunity to again meet with families from Flint.

The devastating water crisis continues to have an unimaginable impact on the children and families there. I was heartbroken to hear more about some of their daily struggles, but I was also inspired by their resiliency.

The provisions included in the WRDA bill will help ensure that Flint residents will have the resources and support necessary to address this ongoing and catastrophic tragedy. WRDA will help Flint residents, but it will also help communities all across our country with drinking water and infrastructure challenges. It will modernize the State Revolving Loan Fund Programs and capitalize the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act Program—also known as WIFIA—a new, low-interest financing mechanism to fund large-dollar-value infrastructure projects all across our Nation.

The many benefits of the WRDA bill—from drinking water protections to waterway improvements, to water body restoration—is why it enjoys broad, diverse support. Over 100 stakeholder organizations have called on the Senate to bring WRDA to the floor. These groups include: the American Society of Civil Engineers, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Nature Conservancy, United Steelworkers, National Association of Counties, the National League of Cities, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, and the National Association of Clean Water Agencies.

Our dedicated partners across the aisle are also ready to move on this important bipartisan piece of legislation. Senator INHOFE recently joined 28—28 of his Republican colleagues on a letter to the Senate Republican leadership calling for a vote. The Environmental and Public Works Committee passed the Water Resources Development Act with strong, overwhelming bipartisan support—a vote of 19 to 1.

This commonsense bill is ready for a vote in the Senate. Communities across our country—including the families of Flint—are ready and waiting for us to act. I truly hope the WRDA bill can be prioritized for action on the floor when we return in September. We simply must act, and we must act as quickly as possible.

STARTUP COMPANIES

Mr. President, when we think about fast-growing startup companies, we

might think about Silicon Valley, Boston, or Boulder. While these cities certainly have very vibrant startup ecosystems, innovative startups and small businesses are being founded and are growing across the United States, including my home State of Michigan. In each of our States, there are hard-working entrepreneurs who have established job-creating startups. These dynamic companies act as entrepreneurial leaders, innovators, and job creators within our communities. Industries, including retail, health care, entertainment, transportation, and education are being revolutionized and reshaped by entrepreneurs in our local communities. They are reimagining the future by using technology to solve problems and create innovative products and services.

According to the Kauffman Foundation, startups are a major force for job creation in the United States. Startups under 1 year old create about 2 million jobs per year, accounting for 20 percent of gross job creation, though they only represent 8 percent of the firms in this country.

Despite the fact that new startups are vital to our country's economic and job growth, many members of our community may not know these innovative companies exist, and many startup companies may not know where to access the resources to help their companies succeed.

In 2013, I joined a bipartisan group of colleagues—including Congressmen POLIS and ISSA—to create the first annual Startup Day Across America to bring attention to startups throughout Michigan and across the United States. That year, I had the opportunity to visit Start Garden—a combined venture capital fund and shared startup workspace in Grand Rapids—with Congressmen HUIZENGA and AMASH, where we heard firsthand about the exciting new businesses being funded in Western Michigan.

In 2014, I met with a group of entrepreneurs at the Madison Building in Detroit, home to startups backed by Detroit Venture Partners. I spoke with Paul Glomski, the CEO of Detroit Labs.

Founded in 2011 with just four employees, Detroit Labs now has upward of 100 people working for them, building cutting-edge technology in downtown Detroit. They dream up, design, and build mobile apps and have made them for General Motors, Domino's Pizza, Kimberly-Clark, DTE Energy, and many others. They also provide a paid apprenticeship program that teaches hard-working Michiganders how to code and connects them to jobs upon completion of the program.

Startups are not just about apps and tech, though. I also visited Ponyride, a coworking space in Corktown, where I met Eric Yelsma, founder of Detroit Denim. He and his team are making high-quality jeans in Detroit and shipping them across the country.

In 2015, I visited startups in Traverse City, where I heard about the growing

startup and venture capital ecosystems in Northern Michigan that are pulling in talent from across the Midwest, including Cherry Capital Foods, a young company that works with Michigan farmers to help them find new customers.

This year, I have teamed up with Senators WARNER, DAINES, and SCOTT to encourage our colleagues to visit a startup anywhere in their home State during the week of August 4. Like me, they know startups are taking root across the Nation—in Richmond, VA, Bozeman, MT, Charleston, SC, Kalamazoo, MI, and other communities.

In fact, Michigan is one of the fastest growing venture capital communities in the Nation, a critical asset that will help us become the startup capital of the Midwest. We have world-class colleges and universities, more engineers than any part of the country, and an infrastructure to export not just nationally but all across the globe.

While I am focused on connecting talented Michigan entrepreneurs to the capital they need to grow and succeed, I will also continue working with my colleagues on Federal policies that will support these important startups and small businesses. That means strong science, technology, engineering, arts, and math, or STEAM, education, along with expanding efforts to encourage our Nation's students to learn how to code. Even basic programming skills are incredibly marketable, not just among tech startups but throughout the entire economy.

We also need to make sure startups are able to compete on a level playing field on the Internet and have access to fast, affordable broadband no matter where you live. Additionally, we must work together to help entrepreneurs master challenges and impediments that stand in their way as they seek to establish their firms and to create jobs. Startups play a key role in economic growth, and we have to do more to help them.

A recent report from the Economic Innovation Group found that since the end of the recent recession, new firms have increased by only 2.3 percent and are concentrated in only 25 percent of U.S. counties, especially in dense, higher population areas. We have to ensure that every American community has the opportunity to experience the economic benefits new business establishments bring. We have to ensure that every American community has the requisite tools to support entrepreneurs as they turn their ideas into action, transforming their neighborhoods and the economic trajectories of their neighborhoods in the process.

Ultimately, success for any company comes down to matching talent with capital. Small businesses and startups now have a variety of sources of capital to expand and create jobs: traditional bank loans, for example, SBA loans including the 7(a) Loan Program I have championed in the past, State-backed loans through the Michigan Economic

Development Corporation, facilitated by the State Small Business Credit Initiative, venture capital, friends or family, and now even crowdfunding.

Just as there are a number of factors that contribute to a vibrant startup ecosystem, there will be a wide array of stakeholders, decisions, and industries that will contribute to shaping Michigan's future economy. I am committed to ensuring that our growing startup community will be a fixture of creativity, innovation, and job creation for decades to come.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

REMEMBERING CAPTAIN JEFF KUSS AND
RECOGNIZING THE BLUE ANGELS

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, with all that has occurred in our country over the past few weeks, I wanted to take a moment to bring everyone's attention to something that had a profound impact in my home State of Florida and something all Americans should reflect on.

This weekend, the Navy's Flight Demonstration Squadron—most famously known as the Blue Angels—will take to the skies over Pensacola for the Pensacola Beach Air Show. It will be their first air show appearance in Florida since that fateful day of June 2, when they lost Capt. Jeff Kuss, a U.S. Marine Corps Aviator, and the No. 6 airplane in the Blue Angels lineup.

Captain Kuss, simply put, was an American hero. Like all Blue Angels pilots and the men and women who support the Blue Angels mission, Captain Kuss was the very best of what our military and our Nation has to offer. He was a war hero. He served our country proudly over hostile skies in Afghanistan. He was a decorated aviator who earned the Strike Flight Air Medal and the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal during his time with the Corps. I commend the Marine Corps for training such a skilled aviator, as well as Naval Air Station Pensacola, where he first started flying in 2007.

Captain Kuss was a hometown hero, a local boy from Durango, CO, who graduated from Durango High School and attended Fort Lewis College. He fulfilled a lifelong dream by performing a flyover with his teammates over Super Bowl 50 and then watched his Denver Broncos win their third Super Bowl championship.

Captain Kuss was a hero in his own home. A loving son to his parents Janet and Michael, a devoted husband to his wife Christina, and loving father to his two young children, Calvin and Sloane.

The same attributes that Captain Kuss demonstrated throughout his life—service, sacrifice, loyalty, faith, devotion—they were all present in his final moments as well. He could have ejected, but instead he stayed with his plane and steered it away from a more populated area to spare any additional loss of life.

I know that in our country today there is ample reason for pessimism. We hear plenty from various voices about what is wrong with our country, but let's take a moment to reflect on the life of Capt. Jeff Kuss and the Blue Angels because they are everything that is right about our country. The love they share for one another, the sacrifices they make in service to our Nation, and the devotion they have to their calling represents the very best of the American spirit.

The rumble of those engines over the skies of Pensacola this weekend will not just be a resumption of their duties as aviators and military professionals; it will be a tribute—a tribute to Captain Kuss and the life he spent doing what he loved.

To the people of Pensacola, the "Cradle of Naval Aviation" and the place the Blue Angels call home, the Blues are their team. Think about whatever major sports team you have in your hometown and the love the community gives those professional or college athletes who compete on national television. It pales in comparison to the bond the people of Pensacola have to their home team, the Blue Angels.

Our State and the community in Pensacola took the loss of Captain Kuss very hard. To the people who saw him around town, he was Jeff, a friend, a neighbor, and someone to be proud of. And true to the spirit of Pensacola, the community has rallied to provide comfort to Captain Kuss's teammates and to his family.

I am so proud my home State is home to the Blues. I am proud Pensacola continues to embrace the Blues and to make every member of the Blue Angels family a part of the Pensacola family. I am proud the Blues will return to the Pensacola Beach Air Show this weekend, and I am proud the United States has a military made up of extraordinary Americans like Capt. Jeff Kuss.

So I ask all Americans to keep Captain Kuss and his family in your prayers. Thank God for him, for our military men and women and families who sacrifice alongside them, and for the freedom they risk their lives to preserve. I ask that God bless Captain Kuss and his family and God bless the Blue Angels as they fly this weekend and in the weeks, months, and years to come.

CENTRAL EVERGLADES PLANNING PROJECT

Mr. President, I recently addressed the Senate and our Nation about truly a disaster that is wreaking havoc on my home State of Florida. It is a thick and putrid algal bloom known as the blue-green algae that has appeared along large stretches of the St. Lucie River and the Indian River Lagoon.

This is happening because nutrient-rich water—basically, water that has things in it like fertilizer—is running into Lake Okeechobee from north of that lake, which is the lake in the center of our State. Historically, that water sat in Lake Okeechobee but

would run southward through the Everglades, but with development and canal systems and so forth, that all stopped.

So now that water sits in the lake, and it is held back by the Herbert Hoover Dike, which was put in place to prevent flooding and the loss of lives of those who live around Lake Okeechobee. When the water rises to levels that threaten the integrity of that dike, it needs to be released. And instead of being released in a clean form to the south the way it once historically was, it is now released to the east and to the west.

These waters, rich in nutrients, are released into estuaries and canals that also have nutrients in them because of storm water runoff or because of seepage from faulty or old septic tanks. When that flow reaches the ocean, the estuaries, the lagoon, the lake, or the river and is under the hot sun—as it is during the summer—the conditions become ripe for an algae bloom. That is what we are seeing now.

Although the bacteria is always present in the waters, it needs the present circumstances to form, and, unfortunately, the conditions we have now have been a perfect storm. This winter and spring provided numerous storms and produced so much rain that the Army Corps of Engineers began discharging water in January, and it hasn't stopped since.

I recently requested the Army Corps to stop these harmful discharges. They agreed to slow the discharges but not to stop them entirely. With the State of Florida's emergency declaration, more water is able to be held north of the lake, which allows for less water to be discharged east and west out of the lake.

I was there a couple of weeks ago, and it is a disgusting sight to see and to smell and to breathe. The algae has forced the closure of several beaches, killing fish and oysters, hurting tourism, harming local businesses, and sinking property values. People are canceling their vacations, and all of this is hurting the local economy in the Treasure Coast in enormous ways.

So far, we have done a number of things to help address this problem. For example, I supported our Governor's request that President Obama declare this a Federal disaster so that resources can be made available to the impacted communities. I asked that the President approve this request promptly so that the much needed resources can be deployed.

My office has also been working for months with the Small Business Administration on the harmful impacts of the discharges. In April we were able to get the SBA to ensure disaster loans were made available to businesses suffering from these discharges. We were recently able to confirm with the SBA that the disaster loans will apply to those affected by the current algal blooms.

We have been in touch with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention about making sure the concerns many have about the health impacts of the algae are properly looked at and addressed. I was pleased to learn this week in a meeting that the CDC has

been working with the State of Florida, and I have asked them to stand ready, should the State require more assistance.

Perhaps the single most important long-term solution we can put in place is the need for the Senate and for the House to pass and for the President to sign the authorization for the Central Everglades Planning Project, which will divert these harmful discharges away from the coastlines and send more water south through the Everglades. We cannot lose our focus when it comes to these projects.

As you heard a moment ago, the Senator from Michigan mentioned the water bill. Along with 29 other Senators, I sent a letter to Senate leadership, asking that the Water Resources Development Act receive floor consideration. I have also urged the leaders of the Senate to take this action, specifically because of the merits of the Central Everglades Planning Project included in that bill and because of its importance to Florida.

I want to focus the rest of my time here on a new problem that emerged just last Friday. It deals with the discharges from Lake Okeechobee. As I mentioned, these discharges—the water being released—have been ongoing since January of this year, and what the discharges do is lower the salinity levels and cause the algae to bloom.

Just when you think you have had enough problems to deal with on this, the Federal Government came out of nowhere last Friday and threw in another wrench. The Obama administration, through the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, "recommended" that the South Florida Water Management District force more water from the north into that lake that is already releasing too much water, and they did so in order to protect 10 snail kite bird nests—10 bird nests.

If the local water district does not comply with this "recommendation," the Federal Government has threatened to sue them. As I have just covered, the Lake Okeechobee discharges are part of the problem. Yet here come Federal regulators from a completely different department asking for more discharges. And why? To protect 10 bird nests.

In Florida, we love our wildlife. We love our Florida panthers. We love our dolphins. We love our manatees. If you drive across the State, I can't tell you how many animals you will see on people's license plates because Florida's Department of Motor Vehicles provides many options for people to show just how much they love and support the different animals, the flora and fauna that our State has. In fact, I am one of those people with one of those plates. I have an alligator on mine, although it is the University of Florida Gator.

We love our wildlife in Florida, but when you have situations and conflicts like this one, you are essentially trying to figure out whose side to be on: 10 bird nests of a species with numbers on the rise or millions of Treasure Coast residents and the marine life that inhabits those waters? The answer should be clear. Stop the discharges and side with the millions of people on the

Treasure Coast. But the Federal Government is clearly not on their side.

What the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is demanding is truly beyond comprehension, and it is an example of a Federal bureaucracy run amok. If the local water district does as the Federal Government demands and releases held water into Lake Okeechobee, the Army Corps of Engineers is going to be forced to increase discharges into the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries.

These regulatory decisions are having a real impact on Floridians, on our ecology, on our economy, and on our very way of life up and down the Treasure Coast. I asked the Director of Fish & Wildlife, as well as the Secretary of the Interior, to immediately reverse this harmful, tone-deaf instruction that, if they implement it, will only prolong the ecological crisis along the Florida waterways.

Just admit that this makes no sense—no sense at all. Reverse this order, and let's focus on everything else we need to be doing on this algae issue and that we were focused on before the Federal Government decided to create yet another problem to deal with.

TRIBUTE TO EMILY BOUCK

Mr. President, on a third and final topic, today I would like to acknowledge a valued and long-term member of my Senate office who recently left our office. Emily Bouck has been on our team for nearly 7 years. She started as an intern on my 2010 Senate campaign and then came here to the Senate, proving herself, taking on every challenge asked of her, and ultimately helping me develop higher education and health care policies.

Among the many issues that Emily handled for us, she worked tirelessly on the Zika issue and finding a way to help those afflicted with it. Everyone in my office has come to trust Emily's expertise. That is why she will be missed. We thank her for her service to our office and to the people of Florida, and we truly wish her the very best.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

WASTEFUL SPENDING

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, it is time once again for the waste of the week. This is "Waste of the Week" No. 48. For 48 weeks I have been coming to the Senate floor during this Senate session, a 2-year session, talking about the waste, fraud, and abuse of taxpayer money. The ever-growing need to tackle our soaring debt has been brought to our attention once again this week by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office.

On Tuesday, the budget office released its long-term Federal budget update, and it is not pretty. Once again, CBO bluntly told Congress that we need to reduce the Federal debt as soon as possible. How many times do they have to send a report here saying: Look, the house is on fire; you have to do something about it. I say, once again—but I can say once again, once again, once again, once again, once again—the Congressional Budget Office is nonpartisan. It is not Republican; it is not Democrat; it is not liberal; it is not conservative. These guys deal with numbers, and the numbers don't lie.

You don't have to be a math genius to figure out that we are spending far more than we take in, and we have to borrow against that.

Just under this administration, we have nearly doubled from \$10.7 trillion of national debt to almost \$20 trillion of national debt. This is the legacy the President wants to carry? You never hear him talk about this. You never hear this mentioned.

Oh, ObamaCare is the best thing that has ever happened in the world. If you have been listening to the disaster that is rolling out under ObamaCare and the premiums that have doubled and the copays that have tripled and the exemptions that have been lost and all kinds of things happening to people in America here today under this flawed Federal program, you would understand this. We are talking about a budget out of control, spending out of control.

I have been a part of efforts to deal with this on a macro basis. All of those have failed, and they failed because the President of the United States has refused to come to a conclusion in working with us. Oh, he made some attempts to do it. He made some nice statements, but in the end it was always: Can't go there.

I decided I would at least try to point out documented issues of waste, fraud, and abuse. The very least we can do is stop this kind of spending. We have totaled up a pretty good total here. We are approaching \$250 billion of documented waste, fraud, and abuse.

CBO projects that the combined Social Security trust funds will be exhausted by 2029—5 years earlier than the Social Security trustees estimated a little bit ago—forcing automatic benefit cuts on seniors and people with disabilities. Let me repeat that: forcing automatic cuts to seniors and those with disabilities.

Do you hear Senators talking about the fact that we are going to have to do this? No, I don't hear this on the floor. Do you hear the President talking about this? No, let's pass this on—2029, I mean, that is way in the distance. Why do we need to worry about that now?

That is what they were saying when the debt was \$10.7 trillion. That is what they were saying when the debt was \$5 trillion: We can do this later. Well, the clock is ticking. Is anybody out there listening? Hello, hello. We are on the road to insolvency, and your elected representatives and your President aren't doing anything about it.

As you can tell, I get pretty worked up about this. I am down to some of the small stuff, pointing out: Can't we at least do this? Can't we at least come together as a Senate and as a House of Representatives, and can't we at least eliminate the waste, the documented fraud, the abuse of programs?

I am now on week No. 48. I have a card here that details all of the issues we have done. It keeps adding up and adding up, and I am only scratching

the surface. I can be down here every day, maybe every hour of every day the Senate is in session, talking about a waste of the week.

What the CBO puts out, what the Government Accountability Office puts out, what independent agencies put out—we can do 24-hour filibusters and just rack one up after another. This is your Federal Government in action. The tragedy is these are the tax dollars that you work hard for every week and that you send to Washington, and you want them responsibly used.

Yes, of course, we have to fund the military. Yes, we want to take care of the veterans. We want to take care of our national security. We are a threat now from ISIS; we are a threat from terrorists around the world, some of them domestic. We want police forces, we want intelligence, and we want all those entities that are involved in keeping us safe. We need to fund those agencies.

What about medical research? What about disease control? We are talking about Ebola. We are talking about Zika. We are talking about a number of things that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention deals with in Atlanta.

How about education? How about roads? How about sewers? How about waterlines? How about the raft of things that require spending in order to keep our Nation healthy, in order to keep our Nation functioning, in order to make us competitive in the world?

All of that is at risk. All of that is at risk because our entitlements keep growing out of control. No one is saying there is a fire on the way. It is growing, not diminishing, and you are not calling the fire department out to deal with this issue.

Let me get to the essence of this recent issue here. Remember the Lifeline program? That is the program that provides people of lower means, perhaps some in rural areas, a lifeline so that they can call 911. There has been some documentation that some people can't afford this. The President came along, and they call it the Obama Phone program now. It is advertised—I think it is a private advertisement, but it is a government-sponsored legislative program, and it is contracted out. Free cell phone—the government pays for your wireless service—free phone, free minutes, free enrollment, no payment ever.

This well-intended program was to provide people a lifeline in case of an emergency—the ability to dial 9-1-1. This lifeline is important to low-income earners who couldn't afford a phone. That program has some benefits and is something that maybe we ought to do, but we ought to put controls on it to make sure the program is not abused.

Initially, this program helped low-income families pay for landline phone service, but landline, as you know, is out of date. I doubt if any of these pages even know what a landline is

since they have grown up in the cell phone era. It happened just a few years after I came to the Senate. This program—like almost every other program the government sponsors—is well-intended but runs amok because of mismanagement, misuse of the law, misinterpretation, abuse, waste, and people taking advantage of it.

Under the Obama administration, the cost and number of beneficiaries in this program have skyrocketed, and with this increase came a number of issues.

The inspector general for the Federal Communications Commission, which is called the FCC, which administers this program that they contract out, did a study. They noted that prior to 2012, it was, as they said, "well known" that some individuals were receiving duplicative benefits or receiving benefits despite their eligibility for those benefits." For instance, there was supposed to be one phone made available per home, one per family, if they couldn't afford one. They found home addresses with dozens of phones and handing them out. There were posters like this that said: Get your free phone. People were grabbing them up as fast as they could. Word got out on the street that you can get a free phone line and the government will pay for it—yet another program the government is going to take care of. Well intended, yes, but there was a public outcry when stuff like this came out here. People said: What is the deal? I thought the phone was for emergency purposes. I thought we needed one per household to give them the opportunity to call 9-1-1 when needed, or if it was a single person—or a couple who needed a phone, maybe they should share it.

The inspector general said that the one-per-household rule wasn't working very well, and so the FCC apparently implemented a policy that basically said subscribers could override the eligibility for this because maybe these people need more than one cell phone.

The IG has learned that abuse within this program is more widespread than anybody previously believed.

First, the IG learned that, as I said, the FCC instructed employees to override the computer system that prohibits more than one applicant per household.

Second, the FCC—on the form that you have to send in—basically said: All the subscribers need to do is provide a check in the box that says the applicant is eligible. But multiple applications came in from the same address, and no one asked, as the law required, applicants to provide any supporting documentation. The IG found that this override option was also enabling subscribers to use fake names and fake Social Security numbers to avoid detection. How many times have I been down here talking about fake names, stolen IDs, and stolen Social Security numbers that were used to obtain Federal benefits with no oversight?

The IG noted that between October 2014 and April 2016, nearly 4.3 million

people enrolled in the Lifeline Program by overriding the internal eligibility controls. That is more than 35 percent of all subscribers and accounts, and that rivals the population of the entire State of Oregon. These aren't people who needed phones; these are people who overrode it so they he could get as many phones as they wanted.

Obviously our Washington bureaucrats have not been good stewards of our taxpayer dollars. Sadly, this is not the end of the story. It is important to note that the IG is still in the process of reviewing these egregious actions to determine just how widespread the problem is.

In the meantime, what I am calling for here on the Senate floor is that the FCC stop allowing people to enroll in the Lifeline Program through the override process and to verify every single beneficiary so that we can weed out the bad actors. Whether you are in private business or the government, is that what you would expect? If you are selling or distributing a product—and in this case, distributing a product based on taxpayer dollars—don't you think you would want to, No. 1, adhere to the law, and No. 2, adhere to the regulations and not have some kind of arbitrary override, especially when you have stuff like this on the street and people are gobbling up free service on cell phones by the millions? What is the total? The total we can project for unverified Obama Phone beneficiaries is \$4.76 billion over the course of unverified Obama phone applicants.

I am not here to say this program should be abolished. I understand why people need to have a phone in their household for an emergency purpose. If they qualify under the eligibility criteria, I am OK with that, but if they are abusing the program, I am not OK with that at all, and I guarantee that the American taxpayer is not willing to accept that. They did not send us here to stand by, as responsible U.S. Senators, and watch this kind of abuse go on and on and on, and this Senator has barely scratched the surface in an effort to document waste, fraud, and abuse.

We now have \$239-plus billion of documented fraud, waste, and abuse by accountable government agencies, and it is totally unacceptable.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

IRAN

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, as we leave Washington for our summer recess, we are also marking the 1-year anniversary of the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, JCPOA, by the P5+1. A number of my colleagues have come to the floor to mark this occasion, led by our friend and colleague, Senator COONS of Delaware. This nuclear agreement provides profoundly important time to hold Iran accountable—time that is supremely valuable but only if we use it wisely. That lesson should animate the con-

versation around the country, as well as in this Chamber, that time must be used wisely, energetically, and aggressively to make sure that we prevent a nuclear-armed Iran and also stop its funding and support for terrorist extremism.

We must use the time provided for us by this agreement to confront Iran's malign activities beyond its nuclear program, to fortify the security of the United States and Israel, our major strategic partner in the region, and to ensure that we are working in close coordination with this all-important ally. We must make sure that our positions are aligned when they need to be, that there is no space, no daylight between Israel and the United States where we must and should be working together.

We need to enhance strong enforcement of the JCPOA, our nuclear agreement, with the P5+1 to ensure that Iran is never able to break across the enrichment threshold to obtain a nuclear weapon.

The simple, stark fact is that we are at war with ISIS—whatever it is called; ISIL or by any other name—and we are in that war to win. We must win it. The fact is that we are succeeding, but ISIS is also enhancing its activity as it metastasizes with extremist violence sponsored, supported, and inspired around the world—in Europe, as well as in this country in San Bernardino and Orlando—where massacres are stated to be in alignment with and supported and inspired by ISIS, and where ISIS itself is claiming credit for those activities.

In the Middle East, Iran continues to be a leading state sponsor of terrorism. Irrespective of the nuclear agreement, we must work together to find new ways to push back on Iran's financing of terrorism. Just recently, the international financial action task force made the alarming decision to suspend countermeasures against Iran for 12 months concerning its money-laundering and terrorist-finding activities. This action is truly appalling, as I have made clear in a letter that I wrote and led to our Treasury Secretary, Jack Lew, with seven of my Senate colleagues urging him to address this dangerous decision to prevent any further attempts to reintegrate Iran into the international banking system as Iran has not eliminated its entrenched practice of financing terrorism.

Again, time is only as valuable as we make it. We must use the time we have under this agreement to separate Iran from its terror proxies, such as Hezbollah and the Assad regime. That is why I also support the Senate moving to extend the Iran Sanctions Act.

Now is the time to call Iran to account for and identify and target the specific individuals and entities engaged in terrorist financing, human rights violations, and fueling the tragic Syrian conflict that has killed so many innocent people and separated so many from their homes, particularly children whom I have seen in one of the refugee camps in Jordan.

Each year, as part of the current tenure or memorandum of understanding on the U.S. military assistance with Israel, we provide Israel with more than \$3 billion in aid. As a member of the Armed Services Committee, I have been fighting to ensure that this year's Defense bill will fund Israel's missile defense programs and will continue to do so as we enter the conference with the House on the NDAA, which we will do shortly. Our goal has to be to reach the \$601 million that has been authorized. I am hopeful we will do so. I will fight to make sure that the conference committee report includes that number.

While I know these annual increases for missile programs are vital to our defense cooperation, we really need a long-term agreement to defend Israel against threats in an uncertain regional environment and to ensure its qualitative military edge over Iran or any other adversary.

We need to use this time to renew a robust, decade-long memorandum of understanding on U.S. military assistance, or MOU, with Israel as soon as possible. I am hopeful that the MOU will be concluded as quickly as possible. Indeed, last November Senator BENNET and I co-led a letter to the President concerning the need to renew this MOU, and I followed up in April with another letter by Senators COONS and GRAHAM, a bipartisan effort on the same issue.

The MOU needs a historic increase in military aid. And one other point. I know that much of that assistance is used in the United States to make equipment, like the Joint Strike Fighter, whose engines are manufactured in Connecticut, but Israel should also retain some flexibility to use these funds to develop its own unique capabilities. The current MOU allows Israel to harness 26.3 percent of our security assistance to purchase domestic Israeli equipment, and I urge the administration to work to maintain this goal in the next MOU. We must rely on American manufacturing and American jobs where there is value added and whenever possible, but Israel has the same interest in its production capacity and its defense industrial base, and both must be strong and aligned.

As I look forward to the year coming and to the enforcement of the nuclear agreement, I believe we must, very frankly, do a better job of enforcement, as I am positive that Iran will test us and seek any advantage it can find. That is the stark, simple truth about that agreement.

This administration and any President who follows must harness the tools provided in the nuclear agreement to know what Iran is doing and bring transparency that will push back Iran's breakout time and deter any failure of compliance. The IAEA must be fully funded, and we must have more inspectors on the ground to keep an eye on Iran's facilities. The best agreement in the world is meaningless if it

is unenforced. I know that from my own background as a law enforcer for most of my professional career. The law is dead letter if it is not enforced effectively and aggressively, with the credibility that deters violation.

As we move past the 1-year mark, the United States must strengthen enforcement actions against Iran. We must do everything possible to hold Iran accountable, and that action must include passing the Iran Policy Oversight Act—legislation led by my distinguished colleague Senator CARDIN, the ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee, and I am an original cosponsor of it and helped to draft and lead it. It will strengthen and improve the nuclear agreement—in no way contradicting or undermining it—by providing vital oversight and vigorous enforcement to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran.

It addresses three preeminent priorities—steps that are well within Congress's power, its proper authority, and its control. First, it enshrines in our law that our policy on deterrence remains in effect and that all options, including military options, remain on the table. Second, this bill reaffirms our dedication to countering Iranian terrorism, as well as Iranian human rights violations and its regional influence that may perniciously undermine the stability of the area by providing a regional strategy and strong sanctions. Third, the bill empowers our allies—especially Israel, our key strategic partner in the Middle East—to counter Iran and its terror proxies by authorizing the President to provide Israel with additional military aid, intelligence cooperation, and missile defense codevelopment.

This nuclear agreement, the JCPOA, provides us time. It is valuable time if we use it to stop a nuclear Iran, but it is only as valuable as we make it. That fact bears repeating, as I have repeated it again and again. The time must be used to support Israel with a historic increase of military aid and push for strong enforcement of this agreement to set back the clock on Iran's apparently ceaseless nuclear ambition.

I look forward to working with my Senate colleagues and the administration on these issues in the time to come. My hope is that this effort will continue to be, as it has been very earnestly, a bipartisan effort. We can never allow partisan differences to come between us on this issue. There should be no space between us across the aisle, and there should be none between Israel and the United States in seeking to stop a nuclear-armed Iran, seeking to halt its sponsorship of terrorism that endangers us both as nations seeking to advance common interests where we have them and where our vital national strategic goals align.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

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.

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

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

HONORING SENIOR CORPORAL LORNE AHRENS

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I wanted to speak for just a few moments this afternoon about how the tragedy in Dallas touched many in Alaska, particularly the bedroom community of Eagle River, AK, just outside of Anchorage. Among the five law enforcement heroes who were murdered last Thursday was Senior Corporal Lorne Ahrens of the Dallas Police Department. His father, William, and his stepmother, Sue, live in Eagle River. Last Friday morning Bill and Sue became members of a very exclusive fraternity that no law enforcement family ever wishes to join, and that is the fraternity of families who have lost an officer in the line of duty.

Lorne never lived in Alaska. He did visit on several occasions. He grew up in Southern California. He served with the L.A. County Sheriff's Department and then with the Dallas Police Department. But if you read the accounts of the articles in the Alaska papers—not only in the Alaska Dispatch News over the weekend but in the Juneau Empire yesterday—the accounts of Lorne and his story and his connection with Alaska, one would have assumed that he was one of ours, that he was an Alaskan. I think it just spoke to the loss, and the tragedy we all saw last Thursday reminded us that we are truly one community in so many ways.

Bill and Sue Ahrens attend the Anchorage Baptist Temple. When they heard the news that Bill's son had been killed in Dallas, this church community truly opened their arms and they opened their hearts to support the family not only over that difficult weekend but really to provide them what any church community would do, what any broader community would do—to provide them that support. One can certainly understand that the grief is almost inconsolable.

Lorne Ahrens was a huge guy, if you follow the descriptions in the paper, a big guy, a former semi-pro football player. He was a smart cop with a big heart, is what they said. His stature made people feel that he was almost invincible. But as much as we might not want to believe it, our law enforcement heroes are not invincible. They put on the badge in the morning, they kiss their wives and their kids, and then they enter a world that is entirely unpredictable and, unfortunately, increasingly dangerous.

Lorne's wife Katrina is a detective with the Dallas Police Department. She understands this problem more than most, but, really, how do you explain it to your children—in this case, their children, Sorcha, who is just 10 years old, and their son Magnus, age 8.

Fortunately, Katrina, Magnus, Sorcha, Bill, and Sue will not be alone.

The law enforcement community closes ranks to support survivors and their children at the local and the national levels. There is a wonderful organization known as Concerns of Police Survivors that comes in and enters the family's lives. It doesn't make everything all right, but hopefully it will help.

The National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund will work with the Dallas Police Department and the family to honor Lorne's memory in perpetuity just a few blocks away from here on Judiciary Square.

Since coming to the Senate, I have actually grown pretty close to the folks who maintain the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial. I have gone to the candlelight vigils during National Police Week, and I have read the names of fallen officers from the State of Alaska. My staff has decorated the memorial with commemorative items that were sent by departments and family members who could not make it to Washington for the candlelight vigil. We have sent pencil etchings back to the Alaskan families and to the departments. I have driven down to Alexandria to meet with the families of the fallen at the annual Concerns of Police Survivors Conference. Their cause is my cause. This has become quite personal to me.

Next May, the name of Lorne Ahrens will be inscribed on the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial, and I am pretty certain that Bill and Sue will be invited to travel to Washington to participate in the observance, and I hope to welcome them here on Capitol Hill, along with Katrina, Sorcha, and Magnus. Communities throughout the Nation are grieving the loss of Lorne Ahrens as well as his four colleagues from the Dallas Police Department this week. It becomes even more personal to the communities with which they are connected, where they lived, where they called home—in Lorne's case, his home community of Burleson, TX, the city of Dallas, Los Angeles County, CA, and, yes, in faraway smaller places like Eagle River in Alaska.

As we recognize Senior Corporal Lorne Ahrens, know that the people of Alaska stand with the Ahrens family at this very difficult time and throughout their lives because he truly was one of ours.

BREE'S LAW

Mr. President, I would like to bring up a matter that oftentimes people would just assume not have a discussion about; that is, abusive relationships that unfortunately we see with young people and teenagers. All across this country, teenagers and young adults are victims of abuse in their relationships. There is no part of the country where we don't see this. According to some research, more than 1 million high school boys and girls admit to being physically abused by their boyfriend or girlfriend. One in three teens will be in an abusive or unhealthy relationship that includes

sexual, physical, verbal, or emotional abuse. One in three teens reports knowing friends who were abused, but most don't know how to intervene. Only one-third of the teens reported their experiences to anyone, not even their parents.

We are not just talking about those who are 18 years old. Nearly two-thirds of young people between the ages of 11 and 14 who have been in a relationship have been verbally abused by people who are supposed to care for them. One in three teenagers has been hit, punched, slapped, kicked, or choked by someone who is supposed to care about them.

Research also tells us that teens who are abused in dating relationships are more likely to succumb to post-traumatic stress disorder, alcoholism, eating disorders, suicidal thoughts, and even violent behavior. Yet, over 80 percent of parents don't know that teen dating violence is an issue that affects young people from all backgrounds, all parts of the country, and children who are not even old enough yet to be called a teenager. It is often much harder for teens to leave an abusive relationship than for adults because they often don't know how they can access resources or that resources exist at all.

As a parent, this is hard for me. I think it is hard for all parents. We try to do everything we possibly can to keep our children safe as they are growing up. We make sure we buckle the seatbelt when they are little kids. We put them in the infant seat. We teach them how to safely cross the street. We make them wear bike helmets, and we teach them about stranger danger. But, again, one in two teens somehow or another ends up in an abusive relationship.

Statistics are one thing, but the experiences of real Americans inform our work in the Senate every day, far more than just the mere numbers of statistics. Today I would like to tell you about a beautiful young woman who has inspired a bill I have introduced. This is a young woman by the name of Breanna Richelle Moore. Breanna went by the name of Bree.

Bree was a strong, engaging, happy, accomplished young woman. She excelled in all kinds of sports—in swimming, track and field, volleyball, and many other sports. Her school offered a Japanese immersion program, so at the age of 5, she started to learn to read and write and speak Japanese. She was an accomplished flute player. She sang beautifully at many public events across the city of Anchorage. She was really the quintessential Alaskan woman.

In addition to her athletics and her artistic talents, the girl could hunt, she could fish, ride a dirt bike and snow machine better than most boys, and when they broke down, she could even fix them. She did well in school. She volunteered to nurse sick, abandoned, and dying pets. She worked her way up from being a dental hygienist

assistant to the dentist's assistant, and she was about to change her major in college to pre-med. She was motivated, funny, and she was happy. Everywhere she went, her friends would say Bree "saw the good in everyone, spreading happiness wherever she went, and had the gift to make everyone else a better person."

But Bree was also in an abusive relationship. On June 26, 2014, her boyfriend shot and killed her. She was 20 years old. That same year, Alaska was ranked No. 1 in the Nation for the rate of women murdered by men—over twice the national average. This is not a statistic in Alaska we are proud of.

After her death, three of Bree's co-workers said they knew she was being abused. She came to work a couple times with a black eye. They also said: We didn't know what to do or whom to call—if there was just something we could have done. They and Bree's parents will be forever haunted by the knowledge that they did not understand or act on the signs of dating abuse and violence that took this marvelous young woman's life.

In the 2 years since Bree's death, her parents have learned Bree's relationship with her boyfriend was an absolute textbook case of dating violence, but those closest to her didn't know what was happening or, if they did know, if they had the sneaking suspicion, they just didn't know what to do about it.

Bree Moore was a young woman who was destined to make a difference, and while her life was tragically cut short, she continues to make a difference. Bree continues to make a difference. Last year, the Alaska Legislature passed a provision in law entitled "Bree's Law." It mandates that every school across Alaska teach dating violence and abuse awareness and prevention in grades 7 through 12. The bill was controversial. I recognize that. Many wondered how school districts would pay for adopting the curriculum and providing the courses, but they made it through the controversy and that bill passed and is now signed into law.

In December of last year in Washington, DC, the Every Student Succeeds Act was enacted. A provision within that law allows schools to use their Safe and Healthy Students funding to "improve instructional practices for developing relationship-building skills, such as effective communication, and improve safety through the recognition and prevention of coercion, violence, or abuse, including teen and dating violence, stalking, domestic abuse, and sexual violence and harassment."

I have come to the floor to honor a young woman from Alaska. I come to the floor to speak about the legislation I have introduced that would rename that provision within the Every Student Succeeds Law after Bree Moore. My bill would allow, not require, schools, parents, teens, everyone to

call this provision of Federal law Bree's Law, and the programs and activities funded by it Bree's Law programs and Bree's Law activities.

Bree Moore was a young woman who every father and mother, every sister and brother, every friend, and every employer could be proud of. She was bright, funny, and she was motivated to help the less fortunate. She was accomplished. She was devoted.

It is fitting that those who loved and respected Bree should see her life honored in this way. It is right that the U.S. Congress honor her in this way, and by doing so, make a further commitment to protecting young women and men from dating abuse and violence in the years to come.

It is fitting to know that as the young people of Alaska learn how to recognize, prevent, avoid, and act on dating violence, that they remember and honor Bree Moore and that they learn from her, that all the good Bree represents goes on to inspire and help future generations.

Like Amber Hagerman, who was the 9-year-old abducted and murdered in 1996, for whom the Amber Alert System is named, it is fitting that young people across the country have the opportunity to know that the U.S. Congress believes so strongly in their future that they would take this opportunity to name a provision of Federal law after Bree Moore.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

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

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

TRIBUTE TO KIM CARTER

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, I would like to recognize Kim Carter of Hot Springs as this week's Arkansan of the Week, for her commitment to ensuring Arkansas' children have the love and support they deserve. Kim is a foster parent in Hot Springs, and with her family has spent over a decade helping nearly three dozen children, but her support for Arkansas' children does not end there. Kim is also the director of Camp Tanako in Hot Springs, a local church camp.

Under her leadership and direction, Kim has helped the camp expand its reach tremendously. Each year, dozens of area children are able to participate in Camp Tanako's various summer programs. Recently, Kim also started a day camp for local children to attend in the summer, which has also been a huge success.

For those who know her, Kim is known as Momma Kim, and hearing their stories, it is not hard to see why. According to her friends and neighbors, Kim's impact on children cannot be overstated. Whether it is her own children, one of her many foster children,

friends of her own children, or campers and camp staff, everyone seems to have a story about Kim.

Kim's dedication to Arkansas' children is inspiring, and her compassionate spirit is a living example of the close-knit and caring community we have across our great State. I am pleased to recognize Kim Carter as this week's Arkansan of the Week and join all Arkansans in thanking her for committing her life to making the lives of children in Arkansas brighter.

I yield the floor.

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.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. It looks as though we are here at the end of the day. The State of Alaska is well represented. I appreciate that.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 1915

Mr. President, I understand that there is a bill that Senators AYOTTE, BOOKER, and others have worked on to ensure that first responders are equipped to deal with anthrax threats. It is my understanding that this bill was cleared early on both sides of the aisle because of the hard work of Senators AYOTTE and BOOKER.

I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 458, S. 1915. I further ask that the committee-reported substitute amendment be withdrawn, the Ayotte substitute amendment be agreed to, the bill, as amended, be read a third time and passed, the title amendment be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Democratic leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we would be happy to pass this bill as soon as the Republicans schedule and pass a bill to close the terror gun loophole. In that I don't see that is going to happen in the next little bit, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

DEBT LEGISLATION

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, the total outstanding Federal debt has risen by more than \$8.7 trillion during Presi-

dent Obama's tenure, to almost \$19.4 trillion today.

That is the highest level of Federal debt in U.S. history and, relative to the size of the economy, is at a level not seen since the years surrounding World War II. Such debt levels pose significant risks to financial stability and the economy, as the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office has repeatedly made clear for many years now.

Unfortunately, President Obama's failure to address the debt leaves those risks in place and leaves a legacy of burden on future generations, who will be saddled with almost twice as much Federal debt today than when the President took office.

According to CBO projections, Federal deficits and debt are on an upward trajectory. As we all know, the main drivers of our debt are entitlement programs that are, at this point, essentially on autopilot.

As the Nation confronts its astronomical debt, it is imperative that those charged with managing the debt do so with transparency and accountability. I am sure that all of my colleagues agree that, if we are going to saddle future workers with outsized debt, then, at the very least, Congress and the American people are entitled to know how debt management decisions are made.

That, of course, requires the cooperation of the U.S. Treasury Department, as well as its fiscal agents at the Federal Reserve. As our debt has exploded, the Federal Reserve has simultaneously ballooned its balance sheet, in part by increasing its holdings of U.S. debt securities by nearly \$2 trillion since President Obama took office. Like it or not, what the Fed does with its debt purchases and holdings carries many implications for the Treasury debt market.

At the same time, both Treasury and the Fed have been unacceptably opaque regarding federal debt management practices, cash management, and contingency planning. This has been a pattern that has repeated itself over and over under the Obama administration.

When we have approached the Federal debt limit, the Obama Treasury has repeatedly withheld vital information.

When the U.S. sovereign credit rating was downgraded for the very first time in 2011, Treasury, the Fed, and other financial regulators withheld vital information.

When members of Congress have asked Treasury, the Fed, and other agencies for contingency plans for dealing with any kind of default resulting from any number of causes, they have withheld vital information.

When members of Congress have simply needed to know the amount of the Federal Government's operating cash balance—which is managed by Treasury—the Obama administration has withheld that vital information.

For years now, since at least 2011, I have, as either the Chairman or Rank-

ing Member of the Senate committee with oversight jurisdiction over the management of our debt, repeatedly requested basic information about our Nation's finances and, at almost every turn, have been stonewalled. Often, the stonewalling has come with the excuse that the information I have been seeking is "market sensitive," an ironic designation given that much of the information I and others have been seeking has been shared with large financial institutions—actual participants in the markets.

Let me get a little more specific.

Beginning almost exactly five years ago—in July of 2011—I began asking the administration for information regarding contingency plans formulated by Treasury, the Fed, and other agencies that would outline what they would do in the event of delayed payments, a default, or a credit-rating downgrade.

I made my initial request in the weeks surrounding the debate over the debt limit in 2011 when there was clear evidence that various agencies had formulated these kind of contingency plans. In addition, I asked questions about how much cash was in the till at Treasury, and how much they were projecting would be available in future days and weeks.

Rather than giving a full and fair accounting to Congress and the American people, the administration withheld this vital information and, instead, opted to engage in a political battle over the statutory debt limit, apparently believing that their position in that debate would be strengthened if lawmakers and their constituents were unaware of the fiscal state of the country or what plans were in place.

Before anyone jumps to the conclusion that my inquiries were politically motivated and that I was trying to strengthen the hand of congressional Republicans in debt-limit debates, let me be clear: my requests for contingency plans were not and have not been limited to debt limit impasses.

Instead, I have sought to find out what Treasury and others would do if timely payments could not be made for any reason.

Delayed payments could occur under a variety of circumstances, not only in the event of a debt-limit impasse. A cyberattack, a terrorist attack, a prolonged power outage in financial centers, or a natural disaster could all result in delayed payments. While any such event would surely be catastrophic, they are all within the realm of possibility. Quite frankly, it would be imprudent risk management and, really, fiscal malpractice to not plan for those types of contingencies.

Indeed, we know that agencies in the Federal Government have made such plans, in consultation with representatives of large financial institutions—or, as my friends on the other side would say: Wall Street.

We know they have developed these plans because investigations and subpoenas issued by the House Financial