

needs to give the U.S. Supreme Court a full complement of nine Justices. The Republicans still refuse to give Chief Judge Merrick Garland a hearing or a vote. ORRIN HATCH, who opened the Senate a few minutes ago, has said Merrick Garland is a consensus nomination. I don't know if he forgot what he said or didn't mean it at the time. I think he did mean it at the time. Republicans want to hold the seat open for Donald Trump to fill. If that doesn't startle you, I don't know what would.

What more do you need to see from Trump to realize that he is dangerous and unfit for the Presidency? How can you hold a Supreme Court vacancy open for this man and his weird ideas?

It is not just the Supreme Court. Republicans have deadlocked our entire system of justice because of the Republican Senate's dysfunction. This Republican Senate has confirmed the fewest circuit and district court judges in many decades. Republicans want Trump to remake the justice system in his image. What an image that would be—a Trump judiciary.

To show the American people's disgust with how Republicans have treated Merrick Garland's nomination, starting today I am objecting to committees meeting for other purposes until the Judiciary Committee schedules a meeting to consider Judge Garland's nomination. If the Republican leader thinks there is a committee that needs to meet because of extraordinary circumstances, I would be pleased to consider his request. But in the meantime, as of today, we are objecting to committees meeting, in line with the rules of the Senate.

In addition to ending the disgusting and repugnant opposition to Merrick Garland's nomination to the Supreme Court, we must also pass legislation to keep guns and explosives out of the hands of suspected terrorists and other dangerous individuals. How many more acts of gun violence must we witness before we need to do something about it? How many more slaughters must we witness? The American people agree with us. Eighty-five percent want to do something about this worsening gun situation. It is gun violence. Eighty-five percent of Americans support legislation to keep guns away from suspected terrorists. This is the case all over America. Sensible background checks—that is all it is.

The Senate Republicans should listen to the American people and stop listening to the National Rifle Association. We must take a stand against violence.

There are many, many other pressing ideas. We need to address the criminal justice system, which is in deep need of repair and renovation. The United States needs to help make college more affordable for American families. The United States needs to address campaign finance reform. We must keep dark money out of politics. It is here and getting bigger every day, principally because of two people—the

Koch brothers. The Kochs today are in hog heaven because they now can secretly funnel money to all their clandestine committees and groups. They are spending hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars, funneling money to the Chamber of Commerce, the National Rifle Association, and many other front groups that no one has ever heard of—none of us have—but they are out running those ads with this secret money.

The U.S. Senate has much to do; I have mentioned only a few of the things. We have to use our time wisely. Sadly, for the last 7 weeks, we have not been using our time in a productive manner, and that is an understatement. That is why I was baffled to learn that the Republicans want to move to the Water Resources Development Act next week. I understand WRDA legislation. I have been chairman of that committee on two separate occasions. I know there is money in this bill for beleaguered Flint, MI. The people of Flint have waited months and months for this overdue relief.

Also in this bill is the Tahoe Restoration Act, which I support. Last Wednesday I had my 20th and last summit on Lake Tahoe. It is a much better place because of what we have done over the last 20 years. Two billion dollars has been spent on that beautiful lake. There is only one other lake like it in the whole world, and that is in Siberia. I know how important this Tahoe Restoration Act is. The fact remains that the Republican House is not going to pass it anyway, but I am willing to do what I can to act responsibly by not blocking this bill, as the Republicans would do, but we will legislate very carefully. Staffs are working to find out if we can have a path forward. I hope we can.

I appreciate the good work of Senators BOXER and INHOFE. I am hopeful that we can find a path forward on WRDA, as well as Zika, funding the government, and other matters about which I have spoken. In the meantime, the Senate has to prioritize. I know the Republican leader sets the Senate schedule, but he should acknowledge the situation for what it is. Now we have a logjam of important legislation that he created by recessing for 7 weeks—7 weeks, everybody.

We have a mess, but the mess is of the Republican leader's own making. Now that the Republicans have finally decided to come back to the Nation's Capital, it is time we move forward on these important issues that have been ignored for 7 weeks. In short, it is time for the Republicans to do their job.

Mr. President, I see no one on the floor. I ask that the Chair announce the business of the day.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

#### TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2017—CONFERENCE REPORT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the conference report to accompany H.R. 2577, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Conference report to accompany H.R. 2577, a bill making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

OBAMACARE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, over the past several weeks, I spent a lot of time traveling around my home State of Wyoming. I know the Presiding Officer spent a lot of time traveling around his home State of Oklahoma. I talked to a lot of people in Wyoming, as he did in Oklahoma, about one of the top concerns of the things that are on their minds. To me, and I know to the Presiding Officer, that has been the Obama health care law and the disastrous problems that people are facing. People now tell me that some of them are paying more for their health insurance than they are for their mortgage. That is not just a problem in Oklahoma or in Wyoming; it is a problem all across the country. And that is now.

What they are also doing is reading stories in the papers, front-page stories that are saying the rates next year are going to go up again—not just a little but a lot. I know that my Senate colleagues from all across the country—Republicans and Democrats—are hearing that because of the disastrous problems that the Obama health care law is currently experiencing. In Wyoming, the Obama health insurance exchange has only one company selling insurance—only one. Wyoming is not alone. This wasn't supposed to happen.

The Democrats in Congress who supported this health care law said that they were going to create more competition—bring down prices by lots of competition. I can still remember when the President gave a speech to Congress in 2009, and what did he tell us? He said that in 34 States, 75 percent of the insurance market was controlled by five or fewer companies—five or fewer. Now in Wyoming we are down to one.

The President said that without competition, the price of insurance goes up, and he said that the quality goes down. That is what President Obama said 7

years ago. He said that five options or fewer were such a threat to competition and to quality of care for American families that he needed to create his entire ObamaCare health care system.

What is the situation today? One-third of America will have only one ObamaCare insurer in 2017. The color-coded map from the Kaiser Family Foundation came out just last week, and it shows all these areas in orange have only one ObamaCare insurer selling insurance in their locations. I note that Oklahoma and Wyoming are all in orange.

Millions of Americans will have fewer choices in 2017 than they had in 2016, with one-third of the country having only one option for coverage next year. The Obama administration said that these were supposed to be competitive marketplaces. That is what President Obama said. When there is only one company selling a product in an area, that is not competition; that is a monopoly. The President ought to understand that, and so should every Democrat in this body.

What do the national newspapers have to say about it? The Wall Street Journal, front page story, last week, August 29: "Health-Plan Choices Shrink."

It says that in 31 percent of U.S. counties, insurance exchanges appear likely to offer consumers only one option. It is a monopoly. That is the Wall Street Journal. You go through the article and it will tell you 2.3 million people currently on ObamaCare will have one option for when they shop next year.

What are people expecting? They are expecting their insurance premiums to go up? When will they go up? November 1, a week before the election. When people start signing up for next year's insurance, they will see the incredible sticker shock and how that affects them. That is what competition looks like under President Obama. There is only one insurance company in all of those orange areas.

I see the minority leader left to go back to his office—the same office, behind closed doors, where the health care law was written.

He is from the State of Nevada. Let's look at the State of Nevada—orange, orange, orange. All of those counties, other than this one area, have just one option because these very bright people—the architects of ObamaCare—wrote a health care law behind that closed door that says that one in three Americans will only have one ObamaCare insurer in 2017.

It was what we predicted on the floor of the Senate as this bill was being debated. President Obama said: No, you are all wrong. It doesn't matter whether it was the minority leader, who was then the majority leader. They obviously lost the majority as a result of the poor judgment of the Democrats, NANCY PELOSI saying that first you have to pass it before you get to find

out what is in it, or others who said this is going to be wonderful.

This is what the American people are facing now. All the areas in blue have only two options to choose from. It is astonishing what has happened. When you are down to one choice, you basically have no choice. Except for the people in Pinal County, AZ—this area in red—they actually have no choices. No one wants to sell ObamaCare insurance to the people who live there—none. It is an ObamaCare ghost town. The others may be ObamaCare wastelands or no man's land, but this is an ObamaCare ghost town.

What does President Obama say about that? It has gotten so bad in some places that State insurance commissioners have said that some of the ObamaCare exchanges are very near collapse. Does President Obama hear any of these things? Do the Senate Democrats hear any of these things? You would think they would if they go home and talk to people who live in their home States, but the insurance commissioner in Tennessee described the situation in her State as very near collapse.

Now, if you look at Tennessee on the map, there are actually some places where they have more than one choice, but the companies that are selling insurance are saying: We cannot do it; we cannot continue because of the losses that have been incurred by trying to comply with all of the rules and regulations of the Obama health care law.

The people in Tennessee who get ObamaCare insurance will be paying as much as 62 percent more starting in January. When they go to sign up on November 1, they will pay 62 percent more in January.

Our colleague from Tennessee, Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER, recently said that for a 40-year-old person who is a nonsmoker, lives in his home State of Tennessee, and buys the cheapest possible ObamaCare silver plan, comparing this year's plan to next year's plan, that same person is going to have to pay \$852 more than they did this year—not \$852 but \$852 more than they did this year.

I talked to Senator KIRK, our colleague from Illinois, about that, and they will pay 45 percent more next year. Georgia will pay 33 percent more. These aren't just proposed increases. These are increases that have been approved by the insurance commissioner of those States.

It is interesting that when the Democrats come to the floor, they say: Well, they are only proposed increases that will never happen. These are the increases that have been approved by the insurance commissioners of each of those States. Premiums are going through the roof. Americans are stuck with fewer options because the insurance companies just can't afford to sell on the exchanges due to the rules, regulations, and mandates of the exchanges.

It is interesting to note that if you pick up a newspaper, you have to page

all the way through to get to the stories. Here is the Washington Post, dated Sunday, August 28. The Presiding Officer can see it. It says: "Health exchange sign-ups fall short." Well, if this is such a great deal, as the President says it is, why are the health exchange signups falling short? The American people know it is not a good deal. It is not a good deal for them personally. It goes on to say: "Several firms opt-out citing losses."

When you go through the whole article, it goes on to say that the "Obama administration's promise"—promise of a menu of health care choices—"has been replaced by a grim forecast." Those are their words—"a grim forecast." This is the forecast right here on the map. This is what the country has gotten because of President Obama's plan and the demands by the Democrats that they take complete control of the health care in this country rather than leaving it in the hands of the men and women at home across the country who know what is best for them and their families. People living in one-third of the country won't have any choice next year. They will all have to deal with an ObamaCare health insurance monopoly and heading to ObamaCare no man's land.

Companies are giving up because people don't want ObamaCare insurance. People can't afford it, and they are not buying it. They say that for them it is not a good deal.

The Congressional Budget Office made some predictions. They predicted there would be about 24 million people signed up for ObamaCare by now. They made that prediction 1 year or so ago. The actual number is just 11 million. They overestimated by more than 2 to 1. From the very beginning, the health care law has failed to live up to the hype and to all the promises that Democrats and President Obama have made.

Remember when President Obama said: Under this law, if you like your insurance, you can keep your insurance. If you like your insurance, you can keep your insurance. That is what the President told the American people. One of the factfinders called it the lie of the year. But President Obama said: If you like your insurance, you can keep your insurance.

Here is USA Today of August 30, and the front page says: "Health care choices choked further." More than 2 million people could be bumped from insurance plans in 2017. More than 2 million people currently on ObamaCare could be bumped from their plans, and the President looked the American people in the eye and said: If you like what you have, you can keep it. That is what the American people are facing today. So one in three only have one insurer to choose from.

The situation is going to get worse. State insurance commissioners say things are very near collapse. What is the best thing the President can do and says about all of this? He says to the

Democrats: Forcefully defend and be proud. Where are the proud defenders? Where are they today? Why aren't they here on the floor of the Senate defending this monstrosity that has hurt so many American people who had insurance? If you want to help people who didn't have insurance, you shouldn't have to hurt people who do have insurance. Yet I don't see the Democrats who are supposed to be proud and forcefully defending this law coming to the floor. I challenge them to come to the floor and debate me about this law and the impact it has had on the American people.

What does Hillary Clinton say? She is running for President. She says: Defend and improve. Why aren't her supporters here on the Senate floor defending it? These ideas have failed. The promises have gone up in smoke.

Do they have any solutions? Do they have any recommendations? The recommendations are more Washington control. That is what Zeke Emanuel said the other day on television. He is the architect who sat behind the closed doors over there and came up with this plan, along with the Senate minority leader and a number of the Senate Democrats. That is what he says—more Washington control, more taxpayer money, and bigger taxpayer funded subsidies. That is what they said.

Hillary Clinton talks about expanding the failing Medicaid Program. They want to hurt our seniors by cramming more people onto the Medicare Program, which is already headed for insolvency. Americans know that our health care system is in trouble. ObamaCare has failed. It is in the insurance death spiral, and Democrats cannot fix it by making it larger.

People in one-third of the counties in America won't have a choice for where they buy their health insurance starting November 1. America does have a choice when it comes to fixing our broken health care system. We can choose to get rid of ObamaCare and put solutions in place that we know actually will work for people—not for unelected and unaccountable bureaucrats but for people who we talked to in our home States over the August break. It means letting people get out from under the burden of all the Washington mandates. It is the mandates that are really the cause of these devastating price increases. We want to create real competition, not ObamaCare monopolies. We should let people choose the coverage and costs that are right for them and their families, not what Washington says is right for them.

When we are from a rural State such as Wyoming or from the Presiding Officer's State of Oklahoma, we know about rural medicine, we know about rural health care, we know about big distances, and we know what people need. The people there know a lot better than what people in Washington think they know about smalltown and rural America.

The Republicans in this body and Republicans all around the country are

going to continue to fight. We will not stop fighting for the kinds of reform that get the power out of Washington and gives the power back to the States so people can have more control of the decisions that affect them, their lives, their communities, and their future. Democrats don't have any ideas other than higher subsidies, more government control, more one-size-fits-all for the failed policies of the past. These policies, I will tell the Presiding Officer, have failed. From the President's first speech, where he was condemning the fact that there were only four or five choices, to now, where you are looking at one, two, or zero choices, this points to the failure of the ObamaCare health care law.

It is time, as we get back here—and I hope that Democrats listened to people at home and heard their complaints—for Democrats to work with us and give the American people the health care they want, need, and deserve.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 10 minutes.

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

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I have a very personal interest in a vote that is coming up on Zika, and I wish to share my thoughts on that.

Today we have the opportunity to provide the funding to help combat the mosquito-borne Zika virus that has hit Florida and some other southern States. As of this week, there have been 49 travel-related cases of the Zika virus in Florida and 576 travel-related cases altogether. Within those cases, 80 are pregnant women who have been infected with the virus. This is extremely concerning since the Zika virus has been linked to severe birth defects in children born from mothers who contracted the Zika virus. Zika has created a public health emergency that can't be ignored.

This isn't the first time we have taken up this vote. In June, Senate Democrats blocked the passage of the conference report, claiming that funds did not need to be offset. The \$1.1 billion provided in funding in the conference report will be used to fight the Zika virus and prevent it from spreading. This is the same amount as the Senate-passed bill in which every Democrat voted in favor. All the Democrats voted for it. Republicans have put together a responsible funding package that includes \$750 million in offsets, with strong oversight and control to

ensure that funds are being used properly.

There has been a lot of discussion and a lot of things we are saying here on the floor and to the public that the public doesn't understand. They can't be expected to understand; they are too busy out trying to make a living. But when they hear things like this, they shake their heads and they say: What is wrong with that system up there?

I say this because there is a little girl who happens to be my sister's granddaughter. Her name is Callie Hamilton. Callie Hamilton has lived for some time in Florida, and she is pregnant. She has called me several times. She said: I don't understand it. You have Democrats who are saying "We don't want to do something to save the lives of these pregnant mothers in Florida and elsewhere unless you also fund Planned Parenthood and some of the other programs." Everything gets all mixed up, and because of the sense of urgency, it is now a vehicle for everybody else to hitchhike on.

Let me tell my colleagues, when I was asked the question by my own great-niece, who is pregnant and living in Florida, saying, Why is it that people aren't too concerned about the political politics of a vote when this is different from any other virus vote we have taken? We have had many, and normally there is some question as to what caused it, some question as to whether the solution is a viable solution when, in fact, in this case, it is. There is no question about it.

There are two things that are factual about this that we have not seen before. First of all, the virus is contracted through mosquitoes. We all know that. Nobody refutes that. The second thing is, you can kill mosquitoes, and everybody knows that. Now, whether the amount is \$750 million or whatever the amount is—it doesn't really matter; even if you are out there with a very small amount and you just kill several million mosquitoes, that could save lives, and it could be my grand-niece, Callie Hamilton.

So this is different. I hope—and I am going to encourage my Republican and Democratic friends alike, when this vote comes up to consider, that this isn't something to put something else on. This is something that—we can immediately get in there and eradicate a bunch of mosquitoes and save lives and very likely prevent this from happening. I hope they will make an exception on this. It doesn't make any difference about offsets. It doesn't make any difference about the cost when we know we can save lives. This isn't something that is up in the air and debatable; these are facts we are aware of.

I wasn't going to talk about that, but I do think it is necessary for us to concentrate on what we are really doing since we are now back here. We have been gone for several weeks. I think the country has probably benefited from that—I don't know—but we are

back now and we have an opportunity to do some things.

WRDA

Mr. President, I chair a committee and have chaired a committee that is called the Environment and Public Works Committee. It is a committee that—sometimes, somewhat jokingly, I say: Now we will hear from a committee that actually does things. We do. We had the bill that was the FAST Act, the highway bill, the first one we have had in 17 years. It is one on which we all got along. We had Democrats and Republicans and passed it almost unanimously out of our committee, and almost unanimously we had support on this floor.

Then we came up with Frank Lautenberg's chemical safety act. That is an interesting one because there are a lot of Democrats who are opposed to that to begin with, yet there is no regulation over the use of chemicals—none whatsoever. So our manufacturing base has disappeared, many of them going to countries where they know they can define what a chemical is. There are a lot of liberals around who say: Let's just oppose all chemicals. Well, obviously, if we don't have chemicals, we can't manufacture, and that affects everyone. So we have people going overseas now. By the way, I have personally talked to them since we have that under control. For the first time in 4 years, we are getting people to come back to this country to manufacture. So we achieved that chemical bill.

Working together with Senator BOXER—this is interesting because when they talk about the most conservative Members of the U.S. Senate, I am always in that crowd, and BARBARA BOXER is in the most liberal group, and yet we worked together on the things we are supposed to be doing. We have that old, worn-out document that nobody reads anymore called the Constitution, and it says that we are supposed to be defending America and doing infrastructure. So that is what this is all about.

We have the WRDA bill, the Water Resources Development Act. It is coming up. If we get on that, it is going to benefit everyone. I worry about it because we get to something that is good for everyone—Zika is a good example—and then all of a sudden opposition comes up, and you don't know what the source of that opposition is, but it is there.

Briefly, I want to cover these things because of the significance of the WRDA bill, the water resources bill. We talk about five different areas. One is the Corps projects. We know about the Corps of Engineers and its projects. There is one Member of the Senate who has had efforts and dogs in that fight—dams and levees. Certainly the occupier of the chair and I both know some of these problems that exist in our State of Oklahoma.

The EPA water infrastructure on both drinking water and wastewater is something that—particularly in my

State, a State that is primarily rural, we have a lot of small towns. They don't know how in the world they are going to come up with the massive amounts of millions of dollars to somehow do something to stop the unfunded mandates that come from government, primarily the EPA. When I was mayor of Tulsa, that was the biggest problem we had because we had unfunded mandates. We needed things to be done, and we were not able to get them done.

We also deal with the restoration programs and the coal ash programs.

So let's start with the Corps of Engineers. In their part of the bill, we authorized 29 projects recommended by the chief of engineers that will provide benefits that significantly exceed the cost of the projects. These include important harbor-deepening projects for Charleston, SC; Jacksonville, FL; and Brownsville, TX, as well as significant flood protection projects in Kansas, Missouri, California, North Carolina, Louisiana, and elsewhere.

Chart No. 1 shows—this happens to be the Port of Charleston, and it gives you an idea of what we have.

We also authorized the next phase of the Everglades restoration project. Certainly the two Senators from Florida have this as a great concern. I have been on this road going through the Everglades, and they have problems there. It is one of the real gems we have in this country, and we do address that in a very cost-effective way.

In addition to new projects, the bill modifies some existing projects that need additional congressional authority before they can continue. These include critical flood control projects in Missouri, Kansas, Kentucky, and Arizona, as well as critical navigation safety projects in Texas.

The bill also makes policy changes on the recommendations of Senators, project sponsors, and the users of our water transportation infrastructure. This photo I have in the Chamber gives you an idea, and I have been not to the one in Ohio, but I have been to the one in Oklahoma. A lot of people don't know—I am sure both the Chair and I are aware of this, but a lot of people are not aware that we in the State of Oklahoma are navigable. We have ports, including the Port of Catoosa. It looks just like this when you go through the lock and dams, and they are about in that condition, and when that stops, everything stops.

We have some ideas on how to do this using local sponsors. We have people who are users of the navigation way throughout America who want to be able to update and make sure that they are going to be safe and that they are going to continue to operate. But the law does not allow us to do that, so we correct that in this bill. So we talk about how local sponsors can make changes so levee districts are not caught in bureaucratic nightmares when they attempt to repair levees, which means everything stops. So drought-stricken communities can increase reservoir storage capacity.

When the Corps rebuilds a levy after a disaster, we now allow local levy districts to increase the level of flood protection at their own expense. We actually did that 2 years ago in the last WRDA bill, and I might add that I was proud of us when we came back in and we were able to get back on a 2-year cycle. We are supposed to do a water resources development bill every 2 years. We haven't been doing it. We didn't do it during the years the Democrats controlled the Senate. But right now we are doing that, and that is one of the benefits that came from the last bill.

In WRDA 2016, we expand the current authority of the Corps to accept funds from non-Federal interests to expedite permits for rail transportation projects. Overall, we estimate that the Corps of Engineers' section of the bill will cost about \$6 billion over a 10-year period.

The second group is called dams and levees. We address this in the—just imagine. This is the Ohio River. A minute ago, we showed one of the levees. This is just like that levee, except this one erupted. There is a term that is used called the "high-hazard potential." When a classification of "high hazard" takes place—we have about 14,726 potentially high-hazard dams in the United States. The definition of "high hazard" is that if it breaks, people will die, and we can see that people will die. This is serious stuff. Anyway, we now have that in this bill so that we will be able to protect those and to do something about the high-hazard dams and infrastructure that we have, and the levee system.

Under our legislation the Federal Emergency Management Agency is authorized to help rehabilitate dams in States where safety officials have determined them to have a high hazard potential. FEMA is authorized to come in and do the work. CBO estimates that implementing these dam and levee safety programs will cost \$401 million over 10 years.

In our substitute we have added the Bureau of Indian Affairs dam safety program for dams in Indian Country at a cost of \$129 million. This is based on S. 2717, which Senator BARRASSO moved through the Indian Affairs Committee with unanimous support. Senator BARRASSO, whom we heard from just a few minutes ago, was one step ahead of everybody else when he moved this legislation through the committee that I chaired, the Indian Affairs Committee. We had unanimous support for this program to be expanded in Indian Country.

The third issue is the drinking water and waste water infrastructure. I spent a lot of my time going into the small communities. As I said, years ago I had a hard job. I was mayor of a major city. At that time the biggest problem we had was unfunded mandates—the Federal Government coming along. We tried to stop that, but this bill goes a long way toward making sure that the

smaller communities, the poorer and rural communities, have access to resolving the problems of these mandates. It is primarily in the drinking water and waste water infrastructure. We are working on that now.

S. 2848 includes several million dollars to address lead emergencies and public health consequences for those emergencies. For example, we provide \$70 million to capitalize the new Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act, the WIFIA Act, so that we can provide secured loans for water and waste water. That is what we are in the process of doing.

In the fourth area, restoration programs, we have four regional restoration programs that we reported out of committee. These include Senator KIRK's Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and the Lake Those Initiative that was put forward by Senators HELLER, REID, BOXER and FEINSTEIN. So we are addressing these restoration programs.

The final area is coal ash. Some people don't know about coal ash. They think of it as being something that is dangerous and that environmentalists shouldn't like, when in fact coal ash is a critical ingredient for making concrete for roads and bridges. It is more durable and less expensive than the alternatives, and many States actually require fly ash to be used in their projects. We have a whole section on coal ash which includes consensus legislation to allow the EPA to review and approve the State permitting program for coal ash disposable units. This is something that is very effective. There is no other environmental regulation solely enforcing this very issue we are talking about. So this is our chance.

I know the next vote is going to be on the Zika virus—I assume—and I do encourage people to keep in mind that when they vote on that they are voting on something I don't remember ever seeing before, but it is something where we know a government program will work. We know it comes from mosquitoes, and we know how to eradicate mosquitoes. So let's get with it and quit talking about who we are offending politically. Let's just get it done.

In the meantime, let's be lining up for a major bill that we need to be doing. Hopefully, we will be doing it during this work period. It is the WRDA bill.

With that I yield the floor.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### BIPARTISAN ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I thought I had gotten to the point where I wasn't surprised at some of the rhetoric we hear from our colleagues

on the other side of the aisle, particularly the Democratic leader when he claims that we haven't gotten anything done in the U.S. Congress since Republicans have been in the majority. I guess to the extent that he says that and there is nobody who corrects it, then people might actually believe it.

I just want to point out from the beginning some of the important work we have been able to do on a bipartisan basis. I see our friend the Senator from Tennessee here. He has been the point man for so many of these pieces of legislation, such as the education reform bill, among others that I will mention, but the fact is that since Republicans have been in the majority after the election in 2014, more than 140 pieces of legislation have been signed into law, and 240-plus bills have passed the Senate alone. We have also had, by and large, an open amendment process where any Senator who thinks they have a better idea on a bill can come to the floor and offer an amendment and get a vote on it. So compare the 240 amendment votes in this Congress to the 15 when Senator REID was majority leader in the 113th Congress. People need to know that his representation isn't borne out by the facts. It is not even close.

I was reminded of the quote from Abraham Lincoln. He defined a hypocrite as a man who murdered his parents and then pleaded for mercy because he was an orphan. It is true that we find ourselves in the current messy posture primarily because of the obstruction of our Democratic colleagues on the other side.

We were hoping that we would get back to what we internally call regular order, which is a more transparent process where each of the 12 appropriations bills can be passed out of the Appropriations Committee, come across the floor, be amended and voted on, then matched up with what our friends and colleagues in the House do, and then sent on to the President for his signature. Instead of that normally functioning Congress, there are the filibusters of our Democratic colleagues led by the Democratic leader who is claiming that the Congress has become dysfunctional all of a sudden. It is because of their actions. They are the ones that have blocked the appropriations process. This is why we find ourselves in the remaining few weeks of September trying to figure out how we pay the bills, how we keep the government up and running.

I have a list of legislation that makes up that 240 bills and 140 laws written that were signed into law. I will not waste the Senate's time by reciting those, but I ask unanimous consent that following my remarks it be printed in the RECORD.

Mr. President, we find ourselves voting again on a \$1.1 billion appropriation to combat the Zika virus. There has been a lot of discussion about the Zika virus. As we have come to learn, this is a virus carried by a certain spe-

cies of mosquito and because of summer weather and because the Zika virus seems to be coming our way from Central and South America, we figured it was important for us to do something about it.

On the high-tech end, our scientists need to come up with a vaccine to make sure that pregnant women don't have to worry about birth defects in their unborn children, typified by this chart that demonstrates a condition known as microcephaly, where literally the head is shrunk along with the brain. One can imagine the prognosis for this child to be very poor, and nothing but heartache is in store for this child's family. This is what our Democratic colleagues are risking by continuing to filibuster the spending that we have provided for in this appropriations bill—\$1.1 billion.

It is also important to do what sometimes is referred to as the low-tech part of this as well. Recently I was in Houston, TX, with some of my friends from the Harris County Public Health district. They were demonstrating to me how they trapped mosquitoes. The Culex mosquito can spread other types of virus, but the Aedes aegypti mosquito carries the Zika virus. There is fantastic work being done at the local level by our public health districts to monitor the mosquito population and then test it to see whether they can detect the presence of the Zika virus. When they do, that of course directs the spraying effort by the public health district. One of the most important things to do is control the mosquito population. It cannot be eliminated entirely, and spraying without any particular target is a waste of time and money. But it can be targeted, and that is what is happening in places like Houston, TX, and in the Harris County Public Health district.

I spent an afternoon with public health officials at what is called the mosquito and vector control unit. Of course, Houston is a big place. Harris County, where Houston is located, is the third largest county in the country by population, and it covers 1,777 square miles. It is bigger than the State of Rhode Island. The reason I mention that is to just consider the idea of going out to spray 1,777 square miles. That doesn't make any sense. That is why the work being done by the mosquito and vector control unit is so important—to actually target the spraying where it is needed most.

The most important thing we can do as citizens is to educate ourselves and to prevent ourselves from being bitten by the mosquito in the first place. Some of that has to do with the clothing we wear and also wearing insect repellent, particularly for pregnant women. The danger of this particular birth defect is real, and it is important that women of childbearing age take care to protect themselves. Part of the reason I visited with the public health officials in Houston was to not only educate myself but to help raise public

awareness of what we can do as individual citizens to protect ourselves. I met with one of the surveillance entomologists; it is quite a title. A surveillance entomologist with the mosquito and vector control unit is a fellow I met who has a wonderful name. His name is Max Vigilant—what a great name for a surveillance entomologist in Harris County, TX. He gave me a glimpse of what he and his colleagues are doing every day to safeguard their communities, but they cannot do this alone. That is why this funding that has been blocked on numerous occasions by our Democratic colleagues over ridiculous objections makes no sense whatsoever.

I happened to see that the senior Senator from New York, Mr. SCHUMER, sent out a tweet this afternoon urging Senate Republicans to pass Zika funding, to which I responded: Well, you blocked it, CHUCK—which is true. And they continue to block it.

It has unfortunately fallen to local leaders such as County Judge Ed Emmett in Harris County and people like Max Vigilant to take care of this pending crisis because frankly the dysfunction that is occurring in Congress is led by the Democratic leader. So I think it is important to set the record straight. I am grateful we have leaders at the local and State level who step up when the Federal Government seems incapable of doing so.

But now it is time for the Federal Government to step up. Why our Democratic colleagues would risk this horrific birth defect for political reasons is just lost on me. It makes no sense whatsoever. I might add that not only is it spread by mosquitoes, there is now some demonstrated cases or proven cases of sexual transmission of the Zika virus.

As we know, our friends in Florida in particular have had domestically transmitted cases of Zika virus and are working hard to combat the mosquito there and to contain the virus and to prevent this sort of terrible result, but for the health of our country and for the protection of all our children, let's get this compromise legislation done.

No one should doubt the gravity of the threat or the long-term health consequences of failing to get our work done. So I hope our Democratic colleagues put their words into action and vote to send additional resources to those communities across the country that are already working hard to defeat the Zika virus.

I will conclude by saying, I implore our Democratic colleagues, including the senior Senator from Nevada, the Democratic leader, to quit saying things that are demonstrably not true. We have worked hard, many times over the Democratic leader's objection. I can think of two of them that stand out in my mind: for trade promotion authority and for a long-term highway bill, where he did not support it and he actively tried to block it. So we had to find other Democrats and work with

the White House to get it done. We have been able to pass a number of important bills but very little with his help because, for some reason, he seems intent on trying to cause this Congress to be as dysfunctional as it was when he was the leader, but it is not going to happen. We are working with people of good faith on both sides of the aisle and, when we can, with the White House, to do the important work of the American people.

So with that, I yield the floor.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

#### MAJOR BIPARTISAN ACCOMPLISHMENTS

##### ADDRESSING IMPORTANT ISSUES

First significant education reform since 2002, First major Trade Promotion Authority bill since 2002, First significant reforms to Social Security since 1983, First major environmental law reauthorization (TSCA) since the 1990's, Addressed the fiscal crisis in Puerto Rico, Acted to preempt states from imposing costly, unworkable mandates on the food supply, Protecting the homeland: National Defense Authorization Act, Cybersecurity, North Korea sanctions.

##### ENDING MANAGEMENT BY CRISIS/CLIFF

First multi-year Highway Bill since 2005—longest since 1998, First time enhanced small business expensing was made permanent, First time a prohibition on Internet Access Taxes is made permanent, First time cycle of patching Medicare Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) since 1997, First major Energy Bill passes Senate since the Bush Administration, First long-term FAA Bill in almost a decade.

##### HELPING THOSE WHO NEED IT MOST

First major legislation confronting America's opioid crisis (CARA), Protected Victims of Trafficking, Reauthorized Adam Walsh.

##### CONSERVATIVE PRIORITIES

Bill to repeal Obamacare & defund Planned Parenthood to the President's desk, Preventing an activist liberal majority on the Supreme Court, NLRB ambush election CRA, Pain Capable abortion ban, Sanctuary Cities/Kate's Law, Syrian refugee pause, Audit the Fed, First time Senate passes measures overturning Obama-era EPA overreach: Waters of the US (WOTUS), Carbon rules on existing power plants, Carbon rules on new power plants.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I am here for another reason, but I am listening to the distinguished majority whip, the Senator from Texas. I congratulate him on his remarks and make an observation.

I was once the Republican Governor in a State that had a Democratic legislature. If I had gone around the State for the first 4 years of my term announcing that we could not get anything done because I could not work with the Democratic legislature, I think about half the people would have said: Well, maybe we need another Governor. Maybe we need someone who has the capacity to work with people and get results.

So I have never understood the strategy that exists—I hope temporarily—on the other side of the aisle of telling the American people the Senate can't

function. That does not bring any respect and credit to this body. It does not help the Democrats to say that. It does not help the Republicans. All it does is cause the American people to think that those of us whom they elect are not capable of working together to get a result, when, in fact, as the Senator from Texas said, that is not true.

I know for a fact—he cited one example; that is, the bill we passed last December to fix No Child Left Behind. President Obama signed it. He said it was a Christmas miracle. It got 85 votes in the Senate. It was difficult to do, but I have been careful every time I talk about this to say, it would never have happened had Senator PATTY MURRAY, the Democratic Senator from Washington, not been willing to work with me and other Republicans and Democrats on the committee to get a consensus.

In fact, every single Democrat on the committee worked that way. For example, the Senator from Minnesota, Mr. FRANKEN, held back an amendment he cared a lot about in committee and agreed to offer it on the floor because he did not want to hurt the bill.

We passed very important legislation in the Senate. The cyber security bill is important. It would not have passed without Democratic support.

The Wall Street Journal said the Education bill that was passed, with the support of not just the Governors but of the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers—usually Democratic constituents—it was the most significant devolution of power from Washington to States in 25 years. I hear from everybody I talk to in Tennessee—teachers, Governors. They like the bill we passed. They are proud we did it. They thank us for it.

I have heard from physicians in Tennessee they are glad that for once now we have fixed the doc fix. In other words, every few months we are not leaving them in limbo about how they are paid for their Medicare patients. That has been taken care of, not just by Senator HATCH but also by Democratic Senator WYDEN.

Right out of the box last year, with a new Republican majority, we passed a trade bill. With whose support? With President Obama's support. That was a Democratic and Republican effort together. The chemical safety bill. Several Republican Senators worked hard on that but so did the Senator from California Mrs. BOXER. Without her leadership, it never would have passed.

Our legislature in Tennessee has not been able to agree on a long-term highway funding bill, but in Washington we have, again, because of cooperation between Republicans and Democrats.

My practice always has been to give people credit when they do something good because I think often that credit reflects back on the institution and maybe even on the person giving the credit. That is a time-honored way of doing business in the Senate.



I would like to see us get back to that in the next Congress. Let's recognize the fact that there are a number of things that have not gotten done. I can cite all the reasons I am unhappy about the fact that we were able to pass 12 appropriations bill in committee, but we are blocked from bringing them to the floor by the Democrats.

I would rather talk about the things we accomplished, the things we have gotten done, and show the American people that when they put us here, they were making a good decision.

We have had a productive Senate these last 2 years. One newspaper said it was the most productive we have had since the early 1990s. Anytime you pass a bill that sends more power from Washington back to the States that has the support of the Governors, the NEA, and the American Federation of Teachers at the same time, I think we have done something pretty good.

I am happy to give credit to the Democratic Senators who voted for it, because without them and without the President's signature, it would have not happened. So a little more of that spirit would help this Senate function and function in the way it traditionally has.

We can finish our work this year, by the way.

We have a mental health bill that Senator CASSIDY and Senator MURPHY have worked hard on. We have a 21st century cures bill that has broad support—19 bipartisan cosponsors. We are moving, next week I think, to a water resources development bill that Senator BOXER as well as Senator INHOFE are working on. Why do we not give other Members of the Senate due credit when they work together and get a result? No wonder the American people wonder whether we are getting anything done. The truth is, we are getting quite a bit done, and it is in their interests, and I am proud of it.

#### HONORING OFFICER KENNETH RAY MOATS

Mr. President, now, let me take 3 or 4 minutes, because I see other Senators here, on something that is very important to me, a completely different subject and important to the people of my hometown of Maryville, TN.

Last Tuesday, I attended a funeral for Officer Kenny Moats, a Maryville, Tennessee, police officer who was killed in the line of duty responding to a domestic disturbance call.

Kenny Moats was a young man with three young children, Mackenzie, Kamron, and Tyson. His wife, Britteni, and he are in their early thirties.

Nothing has so touched our community that I can remember in a long, long time. Maryville, TN, is a small town. Blount County is our county. Things like this are not supposed to happen where we live.

An officer gets a call, he goes to deal with a domestic disturbance, and he is ambushed from the house he was called to by a person who is now in jail.

There was a huge outpouring of support from our community, not just for

Kenny Moats but also for the men and women in blue of the Maryville Police Department and of the Blount County Deputies who were there as well.

There was a procession before the funeral. The funeral was at 7 o'clock last Tuesday. The church, Sevier Heights Baptist Church, began filling up at 4 p.m. It was nearly full with hundreds of people, and there were more than 1,200 who listened in on a Webcast.

The next day, as I was driving to the airport, I found myself behind a procession of maybe 200 squad cars from many different police departments and sheriffs' offices around our State and other places. There was a flag of honor—the United States flag of honor—that is flown to honor first responders who are killed in the line of duty. It was driven from Texas so it could be there to honor Kenny Moats as well.

So today on the Senate floor, I come simply to express the feelings of the Senate—I am sure all of us—to his family and to those who served with him in the Maryville Police Department, to the Blount County Sheriff's Deputies, to the entire community who have all grieved over his loss.

After the funeral, the police chief, Tony Crisp, gave a commendation to Officer Moats. It is called the "Commendation of Valor." It is awarded to a police officer who demonstrates gallantry and extraordinary heroism. The act must have been so exceptional that the rules say that "the officer while fully aware of the imminent threat to their own personal safety assumed a voluntary course of action above and beyond the call of duty, at the risk of his own life." This commendation is the highest decoration conferred by the department.

I was moved, as was everyone in the church last Tuesday night, by Chief of Police Tony Crisp's reading of the "Commendation of Valor." I would like to offer that "Commendation of Valor" to be printed in the RECORD and express once again to the family of Kenny Moats and to the Maryville Police Department and all of the law enforcement officers in the area, our respect for his life, his bravery and for what they do to protect us on a daily basis.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

CHIEF TONY JAY CRISP,  
MARYVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT,  
Maryville, TN, August 30, 2016.

#### Re Commendation of Valor

##### OFFICER KENNETH RAY MOATS.

Officer Kenneth Ray "Kenny" Moats of the Maryville Police Department and the Fifth Judicial Drug Task Force voluntarily responded to a domestic dispute call involving a handgun on the afternoon of August 25, 2016, where the perpetrator had made threats to kill his father. Officer Moats was assigned to the Fifth Judicial Drug Task Force when this event occurred. The response of Officer Moats along with Deputy Dave Mendez of the Blount County Sheriff's Office, was predicated by their close proximity to the call, along with a sense of voluntary service due to their positions as law enforcement officers.

On the scene, Officer Moats and Deputy Mendez positioned their vehicle in the driveway of 3111 Kerrway Lane. Upon their arrival, Officer Moats and Deputy Mendez were able to make contact with the perpetrator's father, who had been able to escape from his 625 Alcoa Trail residence, unbeknownst to the perpetrator, who was still positioned in a makeshift bunker located in the garage of the residence. Shortly after speaking with the father, Officer Moats, Deputy Mendez and the father came under gunfire from the perpetrator's concealed location within the garage of the residence. At this time Officer Moats and Deputy Mendez were able to place the father behind the engine block and front wheel of their service vehicle and placed themselves between him and the perpetrator in an attempt to protect the father to the best of their ability considering the fluidity of the evolving situation.

The suspect fired multiple shots from his fortified location, one shot fatally striking Officer Moats. The suspect was successfully taken into custody, unharmed, after an exchange of gunfire with Deputy Mendez and Deputy Craig Flanagan, who had arrived on scene during the perpetrator's initial assault.

While knowing full well the risk and imminent threat to his own personal safety, Officer Moats took a voluntary course of action to confront an armed suspect. Officer Moats ultimately lost his life in the line of duty.

The quick actions of Officer Moats helped preserve the life of the perpetrator's father and exemplified behavior above and beyond the call of duty. Officer Moats' actions and selfless sacrifice bring great honor upon himself and hold true to the highest traditions and expectations of the Maryville Police Department.

Officer Moats demonstrated the extraordinary act of courage, under dangerous circumstances, gallantly and heroically giving his life in the service of the City of Maryville Police Department and the community of Blount County.

It is my honor and privilege that I posthumously bestow the highest honor conferred by the Maryville Police Department to Kenneth Ray "Kenny" Moats.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I want to express once again to the family of Kenny Moats, the Maryville Police Department, and all of the law enforcement officers in the area, our respect for his life, his bravery, and for what they do to protect us on a daily basis.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

#### ENDING THE THREAT OF UNEXPLODED ORDNANCE IN LAOS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I suspect there are not many Americans who have either visited or know much about Laos. It is a poor country, geographically about the size of Utah, with less than 7 million people. It is wedged between Vietnam and Cambodia.

I am sure that back in the 1960s and 1970s, even fewer Americans had heard of Laos, and virtually no one was aware that the United States was involved in a war in Laos.

For nearly a decade, from 1964 to 1973, the United States military unleashed more than 2 million tons of ordnance on Laos during some 580,000 bombing missions. That amounts to a payload of bombs every 8 minutes, 24 hours a day, for 9 years. Laos became,

and still is, the most heavily bombed country per capita in history.

It was part of a U.S. war in Laos that was never declared or publicized. It was kept secret. It was done to support the Royal Lao government against the Pathet Lao and to interdict the Viet Cong along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, but the bombs destroyed many villages and displaced hundreds of thousands of Lao civilians.

As is so often the case with landmines, cluster bombs, and other types of munitions, wars end but the suffering continues. The Vietnam War ended in 1975. In April of 1975, the Senate Armed Services Committee, by a one-vote margin, voted to finally end the authorization for that war. I remember it very well because that was the first vote I cast as a member of the Armed Services Committee.

The war ended, but the casualties continue from the bombs that failed to explode. All this ordnance is scattered on or beneath the surface of the ground. A child is walking to school, a farmer is working in the field, a woman is collecting water or firewood, and they step on one of those and they are killed or maimed.

Of the 270 million U.S. cluster bombs that were dropped on Laos during that period, it is estimated that as many as 80 million did not detonate, but they remain ready to explode if they are disturbed by an unsuspecting farmer or child.

Nearly 40 years later, only a small fraction of these munitions have been destroyed. But progress has been made. Today there are just under 50 new UXO casualties in Laos each year. That is down from more than 300 a decade ago. The majority of the accidents result in death, and nearly half of the casualties are children.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to show a photograph to my colleagues on the Senate floor.

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

Mr. LEAHY. This photograph of a Laotian girl was taken a number of years ago. She was actually one of the lucky ones because she survived, but as you can see her left leg is gone and she uses a homemade crutch. This is what cluster munitions do to civilians. This happened after the war ended, and she stepped in the wrong place.

I first became concerned with this problem in the late 1980s, and in 1990 the first assistance from the Leahy War Victims Fund was provided to help victims of U.S. cluster bombs in Laos. Since then, the Leahy War Victims Fund, administered by USAID, has provided medical and related assistance for thousands of Laotians.

Also, as either chairman or ranking member of the Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, I have included funding each year above the amounts requested by successive administrations, Democratic and Republican, to support programs to locate and destroy

unexploded ordnance in Laos. Since fiscal year 1995, the United States has contributed more than \$100 million for UXO programs in Laos. There is \$19.5 million for UXO clearance in fiscal year 2016, which has bipartisan support, including the current chair of our subcommittee, Senator GRAHAM, and of the House subcommittee, Representative GRANGER, and the House ranking member, Representative LOWEY. I appreciate their support for this.

But I have long felt that the United States should do more, and so I am very pleased that President Obama—the first American President to visit Laos—announced earlier today that the United States will increase its support for UXO programs in Laos.

The President pledged \$90 million over the next 3 years to continue clearance, victims' assistance, and risk education programs at the fiscal year 2015 level of \$15 million annually. The balance of \$45 million is going to be used to support a national UXO survey. The survey is extremely important. As I said, Laos is about the size of Utah. The survey will establish a baseline for contaminated land that remains to be cleared so the Lao Government and international donors can plan their future clearance activities and accurately forecast how much time and money it will take to make Laos UXO impact-free.

Earlier this year, in anticipation of President Obama's trip to Laos, Tim Rieser from my office met twice with White House staff. They discussed ways to increase funding for UXO programs in Laos. I applaud President Obama for publicly recognizing that we have a responsibility to do more to end this tragic legacy by accelerating our efforts.

I will do all I can to ensure that Congress does its part to appropriate the funds, so that in the not too distant future all Laotians can walk in safety.

I think what President Obama is doing is similar to what President George H. W. Bush did, the first President Bush. Even though we had fought a war with Vietnam, even though it divided this country, after the war he decided we needed to do something to begin to reengage with Vietnam and to show our appreciation for those who had helped us with MIAs in Vietnam. He worked with Bobby Muller, Tim Rieser, me, and the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation and used the Leahy War Victims Fund there.

I visited it at the time and could see what a difference it can make. I look forward to going to Laos and seeing what a difference the Leahy Fund and our country's efforts will make there.

#### JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. President, as most of us do in August, I traveled around my State, Vermont—the land area is only the second largest State in New England, which makes it not that large. I can travel all over it. I heard from Vermonters all around my home State about the issues that are important to them.

One thing I heard at almost every stop I made—whether it was for a Republican group, a Democratic group, or an Independent group, whatever their age, whatever they did for work, they said: What about the Supreme Court? Why has the Senate failed to act on the nomination of Chief Judge Merrick Garland?

I told them that the Senate is returning from the longest recess in nearly 50 years, and perhaps the Republican leadership was hoping that Americans had forgotten about the unprecedented obstruction of a Supreme Court nominee. But I can assure you that Americans—and certainly Vermonters—have not forgotten. They have not forgotten the fact that Senate Republicans have refused to hold a hearing for Chief Judge Garland, and they have not forgotten this unprecedented step in not allowing a hearing. They have not forgotten that some Senators still have not even afforded Chief Judge Garland the courtesy of a meeting. This means the Supreme Court continues to be hindered by the lack of a full bench of Justices.

Chief Judge Garland's nomination has been blocked by Republicans in the Senate for 174 days. Nearly half a year has passed since President Obama nominated Chief Judge Garland to the Supreme Court after Justice Scalia's untimely death—and Senate Republicans have done nothing about it. At no time in the history of our country has something like this been done.

I think the Senate should get to work and fulfill its constitutional duty of providing advice and consent on the nomination and then have the guts to vote either yes or no to ensure that we have a fully functioning Supreme Court. Instead of doing our job, we are voting "maybe." Over the recess, the Majority Leader bragged that one of his "proudest moments" was when he unilaterally declared that he would not allow the Supreme Court vacancy to be filled by President Obama. Such cynical rhetoric is beyond disappointing. The partisan decision to refuse any sort of consideration of a highly qualified nominee such as Chief Judge Garland is an embarrassment. It is not an accomplishment of which the Senate can be proud.

We must all be reminded that this stubborn refusal to consider Chief Judge Garland has real world consequences that go beyond politics. The Republican obstruction of Chief Judge Garland has diminished the Supreme Court. It has impacted millions of families across the country. This summer when the Supreme Court completed its most recent term, the damage became clear. In seven separate cases, the eight remaining Justices could not serve as the final arbiter of law when they were unable to issue a final decision on the merits. In another case involving a death penalty appeal—a matter of life and death—the Court also deadlocked. Just last week, the Court deadlocked on consideration of an election law



case that will impact the constitutional rights of millions of voters ahead of this year's election.

Notwithstanding that, Senate Republicans, who are in the majority, have taken this unprecedented step—the only time in the history of the country. For months, in poll after poll, two-thirds of the American people want a public hearing for Chief Judge Garland. They continue their blockade in the hope that their party's Presidential nominee wins in November. It is disappointing that they continue to hold our highest Court hostage in support of an intemperate political candidate who has demonstrated contempt for the rule of law and who has said that some judges aren't qualified because their forebears were Mexican.

The Republican nominee for president is a man who opposes the bedrock principle of freedom of the press. He is a man who attacked a Federal judge based on his race and heritage. He is a man who repeatedly attacked the gold star parents of a brave, selfless Army captain who was killed in Iraq while protecting his fellow soldiers. Despite these and several additional episodes demonstrating that the Republican nominee represents an unacceptable risk to our country, Senate Republicans continue to block Chief Judge Garland in the hope that their nominee is elected and can appoint judges.

The Republican obstruction and disregard for a coequal branch of government also extends to the lower Federal courts. Since taking over the majority last year, Senate Republican inaction has allowed judicial vacancies to more than double and to reach 90 vacancies. This amounts to more than 10% of the Federal bench. Vacancies have reached what the Congressional Research Service calls “historically high” levels. The American people are left waiting for justice as the number of vacant seats pile up. Yet the Republican leadership refuses to allow a vote on any of the 27 judicial nominees who are already pending on the Executive Calendar. These nominees are the result of the President working with home State Senators, Republicans and Democrats, to make a nomination. Each of these nominees was voted out of the Judiciary Committee with bipartisan support.

For example, the next Federal district court nominee ready for a vote is Edward Stanton from Tennessee. Mr. Stanton is the U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Tennessee. He has the support of both of his Republican home state senators and was voice voted out of the Judiciary Committee. Yet this excellent nominee, who has been serving the people of Tennessee as one of the state's top Federal prosecutors, has been languishing on the floor since last October. I think both Senators from Tennessee will agree with me that there is no good reason why Mr. Stanton should have waited this long for an up-or-down vote.

In 2008, George W. Bush was President. He was in the last year of his

term. Democrats controlled the Senate. I was chairman of the Judiciary Committee. All Senators, whether Republican or Democratic, actually worked together to fill these lower court vacancies. In September 2008, we confirmed 10 judicial nominees in 1 day. We actually did it in September. And not a single nominee was left on the Executive Calendar. Of those 10 nominees, nine had support from home state Republican Senators. I was proud to work with Senators Arlen Specter, PAT ROBERTS, Sam Brownback, John Warner, Mel Martinez, Wayne Allard, Bob Bennett, and ORRIN HATCH to confirm nominees to fill vacancies in their states, and help ensure that the people of those states had access to justice in our Federal courts.

Today, 13 judicial nominees from States represented by 16 Republican Senators are ready for confirmation votes. These nominees have been waiting two, three, even 10 months for a simple vote. I hope that these 16 Republican Senators are able to impress upon their leadership just how important it is to allow the Senate to do its job and vote on these nominees who would serve their States. I despair somewhat because even though they are nominees from their States and are here with their approval, they are not getting their leadership to move forward, just as not a single Republican Senator has been able to get their Republican leadership to allow a hearing and a vote on Judge Garland.

I hope the Republican leadership will reconsider their outright refusal to allow a hearing and vote for Chief Judge Garland's nomination on the Supreme Court. This unprecedented, unwarranted stance has already undermined one term of the High Court, but there is still time to avoid harming another term.

It is good that we actually show up now and then in Washington to do our work. There is plenty of time to have a hearing and vote on Chief Judge Garland's nomination. It is time for the Senate to get back to work.

I hope my friends on the other side of the aisle will realize what they have done to the Supreme Court and will reverse this. It is able to be blocked only because all Republicans stood with their leader and blocked the Supreme Court nominee. I think that is wrong. It has never been done before. In fact, the last time there was a vacancy—I mention this for the young pages who are here. They will get a little history lesson, and it is something the Senators should know. The last time there was a vacancy in a Presidential election year, there was a Republican President and Democrats were in control of the Senate. We confirmed that nominee in the Presidential election year, and the vote was unanimous.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum, and I ask unanimous consent that the time be equally divided.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. AYOTTE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. NELSON. Madam President, we have a vote coming up at 5:30 on the Zika crisis. Unfortunately, it is not the vote we voted on in the bipartisan bill which there were 69 votes in favor of out of 100 Senators and which we then sent to the House. The House then added a number of political messages that don't have anything to do with Zika, such as the display of the Confederate flag. There are some people who want that displayed in certain areas. What does that have to do with Zika? There are others who definitely don't want that.

Here is another one: Defund Planned Parenthood. Well, there are clearly people in the House of Representatives who want to defund Planned Parenthood, but what does that have to do with Zika, save for a lot of women who are pregnant and who suspect they might have the Zika virus and might go to a Planned Parenthood clinic? That would suggest we shouldn't defund Planned Parenthood.

What about cutting back on Medicaid funding for Puerto Rico? Now, that has something to do with Zika because Puerto Rico and Brazil are the two places that are the most infected. The CDC estimates that 25 percent of the population of Puerto Rico is infected with the Zika virus. So why would we want to cut Medicaid funding for Puerto Rico? Well, that is not only ridiculous, it is silly.

So once again—now multiple times—at 5:30, we will have that vote, and those who desperately want the funding to meet the emergency crisis of Zika are being asked to do so by having to take these political riders that people who are in the extreme spectrum of politics in the House of Representatives want and think they can force us to take. Well, it is not going to happen.

Is there a crisis? Well, let me tell you what the latest is in my State of Florida. There are 67 non-travel-related cases of Zika that have been established. There are 577 in the State of Florida that are travel-related. What does that mean? That means that 577 people have contracted Zika someplace else and they have come to Florida. But they are there. There are 67—maybe over 70—who have contracted Zika in the State of Florida.

You can contract it one of two ways. You can contract it from a mosquito that is infected. The *Aedes aegypti* strain of mosquito is not a normal mosquito. He lurks in the back, dark corners of the house. She can lay her eggs in stagnant water in something as little as a bottle cap. That is one way

to get Zika transmitted in Florida, and there have been upwards of 70 of those cases. The other way is by sexual transmission. If one of the partners has Zika, they can transmit it to the other.

The Zika virus lives in the male for about 2 months. The Zika virus itself manifests itself like a mild flu. That is not really the problem; the problem is the over 80 females in Florida who are pregnant and who also have the Zika virus. Madam President, you have seen the photos of these terribly deformed children. That is because as the fetus develops, the virus attacks the brain stem and lessens the ability of the fetus to develop a normal head and a normal size brain. As a result, we see these pictures of these terribly deformed babies. It is such a tragedy not only for the family, but it is a considerable expense. We have heard some authorities estimate that for the expected life of a child who is born with microcephaly, it may cost as much as \$10 million. Where is that money going to come from? And in our State of Florida, there are over 80 females who are pregnant and who are infected with the Zika virus.

I gave just the statistics of our State. We happen to be ground zero for the Zika virus. There are 12 flights a day into the Miami International Airport from Brazil and Puerto Rico. So you see the opportunity to keep bringing it in just into the State of Florida. It is elsewhere in the country as well.

Some of our brethren and sistren around here—but especially in the other body, since we passed the bill here—still have their heads in the sand and are refusing to recognize that this is an emergency. If they continue, here is what is going to happen: An infected person doesn't necessarily stay in one place. They can get on an airplane or they can get on a train or in a car and go elsewhere in the country. Elsewhere in the country, if that infected person is bitten by an aegypti mosquito, now that mosquito is infected, and that mosquito feeds on an average of four people at one sitting for dinner. So now the infected mosquito has now infected four more people in another State because that person traveled to another State.

It ought to be common sense. And how many times have folks like me and the Senator from Maryland come and pled with our colleagues to stop this monkey business? Let's stop these political games. Let's stop these political riders. Let's do what the Senate did 3 months ago when it passed—bipartisan—by 69 votes \$1.1 billion in emergency funding and sent it to the House and asked the House to stop playing these games.

So it seems to me we are going to go through another exercise, now having done so multiple times. We are going to vote this down at 5:30. What is going to happen next? I hope reasonable heads will prevail.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, first, I want to thank my colleague from Florida, Senator NELSON, for his comments in regard to the Zika funding. As the Senator from Florida, he knows firsthand of the locally acquired Zika virus in his own State. This is not just a matter of individuals traveling to other countries and obtaining the Zika virus and coming back to the United States; we have a locally acquired Zika virus here in the United States, and Senator NELSON has been an outspoken leader in the Senate and in the Congress for doing the right thing.

He was absolutely right when he said that 3 months ago we passed a compromise bill that would have funded the NIH, USAID, and the other agencies and what they need for the remainder of the year. It would have done it in a way that was not all the money I thought or he thought should be provided, but it was a fair compromise. Instead, of course, we got a conference report that contained less funds, poison pills, and issues that are not related to the Zika funding to try to move forward a pretty extreme agenda. That is not what we should be doing with the health of the people of this country.

So I take this time to support what Senator NELSON has said, and I rise to talk about the urgent need for us to provide full funding—full funding—for our response to the Zika virus.

More than 6 months ago, President Obama submitted a request to Congress for \$1.9 billion in emergency supplemental funding to address the virus. The request included \$1.5 billion for the Department of Health and Human Services, \$335 million for the U.S. Agency for International Development, \$41 million for the Department of State, and support for several other Federal agencies.

The administration's plan, which had the full weight of the scientific community behind it, represents a coordinated, well-funded, whole-of-government approach to combating the virus, with a focus on prevention, treatment, and research. But instead of listening to the experts, Republicans offered a Zika conference report that underfunded critical Federal, State, and global response efforts by more than \$800 million and included poisonous policy riders and pay-fors. The Senate rightly rejected the Zika conference report. We will have another opportunity, and I just urge my colleagues: Let's stop playing politics with this and let's bring forward clean funding for the Zika virus. Many Senators, including myself, were extremely disappointed that we adjourned for the summer recess before dealing with this public health emergency.

One thing is clear. Zika will not simply disappear on its own. When we left town in July, there were approximately 1,100 travel-associated Zika cases reported in the continental United States, including 31 in my home State of Maryland and 2,474 locally ac-

quired cases across U.S. territories. As has been pointed out, people travel and they bring the virus back here to the United States. It can be transmitted via mosquitoes here, and it can be locally acquired here. Just 6 weeks later, the number of travel-associated Zika infections has more than doubled to 2,500 cases, including 77 cases in Maryland. The number of locally acquired cases across the U.S. territories has jumped fourfold in the last 6 weeks to more than 9,000 cases, and, perhaps most alarmingly, as Senator NELSON pointed out, it is documented here in the United States. Florida has documented approximately 30 locally acquired Zika cases.

Zika isn't just a threat to us at home. It also threatens American service men and women and their families and other personnel who are serving abroad. Earlier this month, the Department of Defense officially confirmed that 33 U.S. servicemembers have contracted the virus abroad. Just last week, officials in Singapore—a country we haven't even considered in the context of Zika—announced that it had 82 confirmed cases of the virus and had detected local transmission.

We cannot play partisan politics with this virus. Because of Zika, babies are being born in the United States and throughout Central and South America with horrible birth defects. A recent study found that microcephaly is not the only birth defect resulting from this virus. To date, more than 1,300 pregnant women in the continental United States and territories are being monitored following laboratory evidence of possible Zika virus infection. This is according to the Zika Pregnancy Registry.

Without congressional action to fund our response to the Zika epidemic adequately, the efforts to better understand and combat this terrible disease are in danger of being derailed. Let me quote from Dr. Tony Fauci, the Nation's leading infectious disease expert and the Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. He is well known by all of us on both sides of the aisle, and he is frequently used by Democrats and Republicans here as the expert. This is what he said: "The vaccine effort will be blunted if not aborted if we don't have the funding."

Dr. Fauci also emphasized that other vital HHS and National Institutes of Health programs will suffer if the agency is forced to focus funding primarily on vaccine development. Already, the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases has diverted funds from tuberculosis and malaria research to fund Zika efforts. These funds have not been paid back. Those programs are now suffering.

While Congress has been away, the administration has been forced to rob vital research programs focusing on Ebola, kidney disease, and cancer. Earlier this month, Secretary Burwell announced that HHS will transfer another \$81 million from other research

programs to NIH and Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority to continue Zika vaccine development. It is unconscionable that we are forcing our public health officials to make these kinds of decisions. Funding of NIH has always been a bipartisan priority, yet here we are not making the money available, requiring money to be diverted from other important NIH projects and inadequately funding a response to the public health emergency of Zika.

Even with those additional funds that were made available, Dr. Fauci will still need \$196 million to fully fund NIH's research of Zika. If Congress doesn't approve emergency funding for Zika research, NIH's Zika vaccine trials will once again be interrupted and treatments will be further delayed. How do we explain this to the millions of Americans at risk for contracting Zika here at home?

Let me just point out that on August 30, just a couple of days ago, the Director of the Centers for Disease Control announced that the agency will run out of funding to fight Zika. We don't have the money there. It is up to Congress to provide those funds. As we know, from mosquitoes is how this virus is contracted. The peak mosquito season in the United States typically lasts through October. If local transmission spreads in other areas, the CDC is unlikely to have the resources to respond and send teams to support local and State health departments. That is what is at risk. Millions of Americans are at risk.

State and local health departments also bear the brunt of the consequences of not fully funding Zika response efforts. Our Nation's health departments are on the front line, fighting the disease while working on grassroots levels to expand and enhance prevention efforts, including mosquito surveillance and control, promoting culturally conscious education programs to raise public awareness, and equipping our public health care workforce with the most medically accurate guidelines to help patients make informed decisions about their health care.

The first order of business for this Congress should be to pass an adequate and clean Zika funding bill. Neglecting to pass an appropriate Zika response bill is a failure to expectant mothers who are growing concerned about the lasting impact that mosquito bites this summer could have on the health of their unborn children, and it is a failure to the millions of Americans who trust us to do everything in our power to safeguard their health and well-being. If we expect to make adequate progress on combating this virus this year, if we want to protect the health and welfare of all Americans, Congress must pass a clean, well-resourced funding bill without delay.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the conference report to accompany H.R. 2577, an act making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

Mitch McConnell, John Cornyn, John Thune, Orrin G. Hatch, Jerry Moran, Shelley Moore Capito, Johnny Isakson, Mike Crapo, Thom Tillis, John Hoeven, Joni Ernst, Steve Daines, Chuck Grassley, James E. Risch, John Boozman, Cory Gardner, John Barrasso.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the conference report to accompany H.R. 2577, an act making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) would have voted "yea".

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Virginia (Mr. KAINE) is necessarily absent.

I further announce that, if present and voting, the Senator from Virginia (Mr. KAINE) would vote nay.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 52, nays 46, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 135 Leg.]

#### YEAS—52

Alexander	Enzi	Perdue
Ayotte	Ernst	Portman
Barrasso	Fischer	Risch
Blunt	Flake	Roberts
Boozman	Gardner	Rounds
Burr	Graham	Rubio
Capito	Grassley	Sasse
Cassidy	Hatch	Scott
Coats	Heller	Sessions
Cochran	Inhofe	Shelby
Collins	Isakson	Sullivan
Corker	Johnson	Thune
Cornyn	Kirk	Tillis
Cotton	McCain	Toomey
Crapo	McConnell	Vitter
Cruz	Moran	Wicker
Daines	Murkowski	
Donnelly	Paul	

#### NAYS—46

Baldwin	Heitkamp	Peters
Bennet	Hirono	Reed
Blumenthal	King	Reid
Booker	Klobuchar	Sanders
Boxer	Lankford	Schatz
Brown	Leahy	Schumer
Cantwell	Lee	Shaheen
Cardin	Manchin	Stabenow
Carper	Markey	Tester
Casey	McCaskill	Udall
Coons	Menendez	Warner
Durbin	Merkley	Warren
Feinstein	Mikulski	Whitehouse
Franken	Murphy	Wyden
Gillibrand	Murray	
Heinrich	Nelson	

#### NOT VOTING—2

Hoeven Kaine

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 52, the nays are 46.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn not having voted in the affirmative, the motion is rejected.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 524, H.R. 5293, an act making appropriations for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2017, and for other purposes.

Mitch McConnell, James Lankford, John Thune, Orrin G. Hatch, Jerry Moran, Shelley Moore Capito, Johnny Isakson, Mike Crapo, John Boozman, Thom Tillis, John Hoeven, Joni Ernst, David Perdue, Dan Sullivan, Steve Daines, Chuck Grassley, James E. Risch.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DAINES). By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to proceed to H.R. 5293, an act making appropriations for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2017, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Virginia (Mr. KAINE) is necessarily absent.

I further announce that, if present and voting, the Senator from Virginia (Mr. KAINE) would vote "nay."

The result was announced—yeas 55, nays 43, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 136 Leg.]

#### YEAS—55

Alexander	Barrasso	Boozman
Ayotte	Blunt	Burr

Capito	Graham	Portman
Cassidy	Grassley	Risch
Coats	Hatch	Roberts
Cochran	Heller	Rounds
Collins	Inhofe	Rubio
Corker	Isakson	Sasse
Cornyn	Johnson	Scott
Cotton	Kirk	Sessions
Crapo	Lankford	Shelby
Cruz	Lee	Sullivan
Daines	Manchin	Thune
Donnelly	McCain	Tillis
Enzi	McConnell	Toomey
Ernst	Moran	Vitter
Fischer	Murkowski	Wicker
Flake	Paul	
Gardner	Perdue	

## NAYS—43

Baldwin	Heinrich	Reid
Bennet	Heitkamp	Reid
Blumenthal	Hirono	Sanders
Booker	King	Schatz
Boxer	Klobuchar	Schumer
Brown	Leahy	Shaheen
Cantwell	Markey	Stabenow
Cardin	McCaskill	Tester
Carper	Menendez	Udall
Casey	Merkley	Warner
Coons	Mikulski	Warren
Durbin	Murphy	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murray	Wyden
Franken	Nelson	
Gillibrand	Peters	

## NOT VOTING—2

Hoeven	Kaine
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The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 55, the nays are 43.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn not having voted in the affirmative, the motion is rejected.

The majority leader.

#### WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2016—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 523, S. 2848.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 523, S. 2848, a bill to provide for the conservation and development of water and related resources, to authorize the Secretary of the Army to construct various projects for improvements to rivers and harbors of the United States, and for other purposes.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. 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.

#### TRIBUTE TO JAMES BAIRD

Mr. REID. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the 60th birthday of James Baird, who is a hard-working businessman, ecclesiastical leader, and friend.

James was born in Las Vegas, NV, and raised in Provo, UT. His father, Joseph Hugh Baird, worked at Brigham Young University, and his mother, Florence Richards, was a piano teacher. As a child, James enjoyed spending

time with his nine siblings and nurturing his horse, Julie.

James grew up with a strong entrepreneurial spirit. He began his career in grade school by mowing lawns and eventually starting his own landscaping company. He graduated from the University of Colorado with a business degree and went on to own and operate multiple start-up companies, each of which made a positive impact on their local communities. James currently serves as the director of operations for Madison Fields, a farm and riding facility for children and adults with autism, where he is regarded as a patient and caring colleague.

In addition to being a successful businessman, James is also devoted to his wife of 38 years, Dr. Melinda Lambert Baird. Dr. Baird is a phenomenal concert pianist and serves as the director of piano programs at Levine Music and the director of education and community outreach at Steinway & Sons. James and Melinda have four children and eleven grandchildren, whom they love dearly.

James's family values come from his membership in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—LDS. At a young age, James served a mission for the LDS church in Baton Rouge, LA. During that time, James's brother, Mark, was killed in a jeep accident. James decided to remain in Louisiana and continued to serve the people there. Since then, James has remained an involved member of his church and served as a bishop in Rockville, MD. Currently, James is acting as the president of the Washington, DC, Stake. In this position, President Baird lends his service to more than 2,000 church members in the Washington DC, and southern Maryland areas without pay or reimbursement. James's arms are open for anyone in need, and he is devoted to improving the lives of people in Washington, DC. I have had the pleasure of knowing James as one of my church leaders and friends, and I admire and appreciate his service.

James is a man who has inspired countless lives in his local, work, and religious communities. I congratulate him on his many successes, and I wish him the best as he continues to serve the people of Washington, DC.

#### RECOGNIZING THE WORK OF THREE NEVADA CONSERVATION CHAMPIONS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, today I wish to honor Terri Robertson, Helen Mortenson, and Marge Sill, three lifelong conservation activists from Nevada.

Terri Robertson has been a longtime advocate for the protection of southern Nevada's unique outdoor spaces. This fourth-generation Nevadan embarked on her mission to protect Nevada lands over 40 years ago, beginning with her work to protect Red Rock Canyon from encroachment from nearby Las Vegas. Terri was also instrumental in the des-

ignation of Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area. I know of her outsized influence because I led the effort in the Senate to establish Red Rock Canyon and Sloan Canyon National Conservation Areas. Even today, Terri continues to push for additional protections and amenities for Sloan, where she visited ancient petroglyph galleries on family trips as a child. It is because of the work of people like Terri that the Bureau of Land Management recently unveiled a plan to add a visitor center, information kiosks, and paved roads to provide access to the canyon. In May 2016, the BLM and city of Henderson celebrated the opening of the first paved access road to Sloan. Terri has also used her passion and knowledge of Nevada's natural resources to protect other special places in Clark County, including Tule Springs and Gold Butte.

Marge Sill has been a wilderness advocate in Nevada and California for 50 years. After she moved to Reno, she began working to protect wilderness land in northern and central Nevada as urban development began to encroach upon those wild spaces. Marge has been working to protect the stark and stunning vistas of the West for so long that she has earned the nickname "Mother of Wilderness." Marge got her start in the Sierra Club a half century ago. To describe that time, she once remarked that the women of the club did the work, while the men just talked about change. Marge put in the work to create the Lake Tahoe State Park in 1963, and she fought to establish the Great Basin National Park, Nevada's only national park. However, Marge considers her greatest accomplishment to be the passage of the Nevada Wilderness Protection Act of 1989, which designated over 700,000 acres of wilderness in the Silver State. I was pleased to author this legislation, which created several wilderness areas that Nevadans now treasure, including the Mount Charleston, Mount Rose, and the Ruby Mountains Wilderness Areas, among others, and expanded Nevada's first wilderness area, Jarbidge. Marge has always been my most avid supporter, for which I will always be grateful.

Finally, I would like to recognize Helen Mortenson. Together with her late husband, Harry, Helen advocated for the preservation and protection of Nevada's outdoors for decades. A consultant specializing in nuclear, radiological, and environmental issues, Helen fought for years with her husband, Harry, a conservation champion in the Nevada State Assembly, to keep Nevada's environment safe and clean by opposing the Yucca Mountain Nuclear Waste Repository. But Helen's greatest work has no doubt been her advocacy for the protection of Tule Springs in northern Las Vegas. Thanks to Helen and Harry's activism, I was able to work with my colleagues in Congress to pass legislation in 2014 that designated the Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument. As president