

Another area that I want to emphasize is college affordability, where inaction has exacerbated a crisis in which sending a child to college can often put families hopelessly in the red.

We all understand that education is the engine that pulls this economy forward, fulfills individual aspirations, and makes America what it is. The United States invented modern public education and led the world in access to higher education for generations. It is a great irony that we are falling behind.

Rising college costs and student loan debt are putting America at risk. And too many institutions lack accountability, putting profit before providing a quality education to students. We need to revamp our system for financing college, and we need to help families currently struggling under the weight of student loan debt.

Many of my colleagues, and I have joined them, have put forth common-sense proposals to allow families to refinance student loans at today's low rates; to ensure that all Americans have access to tuition-free community college; to strengthen the Pell grant and reduce the reliance on student loans; and to ensure that States and institutions live up to their shared responsibilities in providing high quality and affordable higher education. These solutions are badly needed, and the majority needs to work with us to do our job and not leave students and families behind.

It is a great honor to serve the people of Rhode Island, and I know all of my colleagues in the Senate feel the same way about their respective States. Congress has always faced an array of complex and varied challenges. We must come together and find sincere solutions to improve our country.

I say to my colleagues: It is long past time to get to work, to do your job, and to act on these pressing problems. They cannot wait any longer.

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

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

GLOBAL ANTI-POACHING ACT

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 459, H.R. 2494.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2494) to support global anti-poaching efforts, strengthen the capacity of partner countries to counter wildlife trafficking, designate major wildlife trafficking countries, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Foreign Relations, with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) *SHORT TITLE*.—This Act may be cited as the “Eliminate, Neutralize, and Disrupt Wildlife Trafficking Act of 2016”.

(b) *TABLE OF CONTENTS*.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.

Sec. 2. Definitions.

TITLE I—PURPOSES AND POLICY

Sec. 101. Purposes.

Sec. 102. Statement of United States policy.

TITLE II—REPORT ON MAJOR WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING COUNTRIES

Sec. 201. Report.

TITLE III—FRAMEWORK FOR INTERAGENCY RESPONSE

Sec. 301. Presidential Task Force on Wildlife Trafficking.

TITLE IV—PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS THE ESCALATING WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING CRISIS

Sec. 401. Anti-poaching programs.

Sec. 402. Anti-trafficking programs.

Sec. 403. Engagement of United States diplomatic missions.

Sec. 404. Community conservation.

TITLE V—TRANSITION OF OVERSEAS CONTINGENCY FUNDING TO BASE FUNDING

Sec. 501. Sense of congress on funding.

TITLE VI—OTHER ACTIONS RELATING TO WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING PROGRAMS

Sec. 601. Amendments to Fisherman's Protective Act of 1967.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) *APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES*.—The term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(A) the Committee on Foreign Relations and the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate; and

(B) the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives.

(2) *CO-CHAIRS OF THE TASK FORCE*.—The term “Co-Chairs of the Task Force” means the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Interior, and the Attorney General, as established pursuant to Executive Order 13648.

(3) *COMMUNITY CONSERVATION*.—The term “community conservation” means an approach to conservation that recognizes the rights of local people to sustainably manage, or benefit directly and indirectly from wildlife and other natural resources and includes—

(A) devolving management and governance to local communities to create positive conditions for sustainable resource use; and

(B) building the capacity of communities for conservation and natural resource management.

(4) *COUNTRY OF CONCERN*.—The term “country of concern” refers to a foreign country specially designated by the Secretary of State pursuant to subsection (b) of section 201 as a major source of wildlife trafficking products or their derivatives, a major transit point of wildlife trafficking products or their derivatives, or a major consumer of wildlife trafficking products, in which the government has actively engaged in or knowingly profited from the trafficking of endangered or threatened species.

(5) *FOCUS COUNTRY*.—The term “focus country” refers to a foreign country determined by the Secretary of State to be a major source of wildlife trafficking products or their derivatives, a major transit point of wildlife trafficking

products or their derivatives, or a major consumer of wildlife trafficking products.

(6) *DEFENSE ARTICLE; DEFENSE SERVICE; SIGNIFICANT MILITARY EQUIPMENT; TRAINING*.—The terms “defense article”, “defense service”, “significant military equipment”, and “training” have the meanings given such terms in section 47 of the Arms Export Control Act (22 U.S.C. 2794).

(7) *IMPLEMENTATION PLAN*.—The term “Implementation Plan” means the Implementation Plan for the National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking released on February 11, 2015, a modification of that plan, or a successor plan.

(8) *NATIONAL STRATEGY*.—The term “National Strategy” means the National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking published on February 11, 2014, a modification of that strategy, or a successor strategy.

(9) *NATIONAL WILDLIFE SERVICES*.—The term “national wildlife services” refers to the ministries and government bodies designated to manage matters pertaining to wildlife management, including poaching or trafficking, in a focus country.

(10) *SECURITY FORCE*.—The term “security force” means a military, law enforcement, gendarmerie, park ranger, or any other security force with a responsibility for protecting wildlife and natural habitats.

(11) *TASK FORCE*.—The term “Task Force” means the Presidential Task Force on Wildlife Trafficking, as established by Executive Order 13648 (78 Fed. Reg. 40621) and modified by section 201.

(12) *WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING*.—The term “wildlife trafficking” refers to the poaching or other illegal taking of protected or managed species and the illegal trade in wildlife and their related parts and products.

TITLE I—PURPOSES AND POLICY

SEC. 101. PURPOSES.

The purposes of this Act are—

(1) to support a collaborative, interagency approach to address wildlife trafficking;

(2) to protect and conserve the remaining populations of wild elephants, rhinoceroses, and other species threatened by poaching and the illegal wildlife trade;

(3) to disrupt regional and global transnational organized criminal networks and to prevent the illegal wildlife trade from being used as a source of financing for criminal groups that undermine United States and global security interests;

(4) to prevent wildlife poaching and trafficking from being a means to make a living in focus countries;

(5) to support the efforts of, and collaborate with, individuals, communities, local organizations, and foreign governments to combat poaching and wildlife trafficking;

(6) to assist focus countries in implementation of national wildlife anti-trafficking and poaching laws; and

(7) to ensure that United States assistance to prevent and suppress illicit wildlife trafficking is carefully planned and coordinated, and that it is systematically and rationally prioritized on the basis of detailed analysis of the nature and severity of threats to wildlife and the willingness and ability of foreign partners to cooperate effectively toward these ends.

SEC. 102. STATEMENT OF UNITED STATES POLICY.

It is the policy of the United States—

(1) to take immediate actions to stop the illegal global trade in wildlife and wildlife products and associated transnational organized crime;

(2) to provide technical and other forms of assistance to help focus countries halt the poaching of elephants, rhinoceroses, and other imperiled species and end the illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products, including by providing training and assistance in—

(A) wildlife protection and management of wildlife populations;

(B) anti-poaching and effective management of protected areas including community managed and privately-owned lands;

(C) local engagement of security forces in anti-poaching responsibilities, where appropriate;

(D) wildlife trafficking investigative techniques, including forensic tools;

(E) transparency and corruption issues;

(F) management, tracking, and inventory of confiscated wildlife contraband;

(G) demand reduction strategies in countries that lack the means and resources to conduct them; and

(H) bilateral and multilateral agreements and cooperation;

(3) to employ appropriate assets and resources of the United States Government in a coordinated manner to curtail poaching and disrupt and dismantle illegal wildlife trade networks and the financing of those networks in a manner appropriate for each focus country;

(4) to build upon the National Strategy and Implementation Plan to further combat wildlife trafficking in a holistic manner and guide the response of the United States Government to ensure progress in the fight against wildlife trafficking; and

(5) to recognize the ties of wildlife trafficking to broader forms of transnational organized criminal activities, including trafficking, and where applicable, to focus on those crimes in a coordinated, cross-cutting manner.

TITLE II—REPORT ON MAJOR WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING COUNTRIES

SEC. 201. REPORT.

(a) **REPORT.**—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Commerce, shall submit to Congress a report that lists each country determined by the Secretary of State to be a focus country within the meaning of this Act.

(b) **SPECIAL DESIGNATION.**—In each report required under subsection (a), the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Commerce, shall identify each country listed in the report that also constitutes a country of concern (as defined in section 2(4)).

(c) **SUNSET.**—This section shall terminate on the date that is 5 years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

TITLE III—FRAMEWORK FOR INTERAGENCY RESPONSE

SEC. 301. PRESIDENTIAL TASK FORCE ON WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING.

(a) **RESPONSIBILITIES.**—In addition to the functions required by Executive Order 13648 (78 Fed. Reg. 40621), the Task Force shall be informed by the Secretary of State's annual report required under section 201 and considering all available information, ensure that relevant United States Government agencies—

(1) collaborate, to the greatest extent practicable, with the national wildlife services, or other relevant bodies of each focus country to prepare, not later than 90 days after the date of submission of the report required under section 201(a), a United States mission assessment of the threats to wildlife in that focus country and an assessment of the capacity of that country to address wildlife trafficking;

(2) collaborate, to the greatest extent practicable, with relevant ministries, national wildlife services, or other relevant bodies of each focus country to prepare, not later than 180 days after preparation of the assessment referred to in paragraph (1), a United States mission strategic plan that includes recommendations for addressing wildlife trafficking, taking into account any regional or national strategies for addressing wildlife trafficking in a focus country developed before the preparation of such assessment;

(3) coordinate efforts among United States Federal agencies and non-Federal partners, in-

cluding missions, domestic and international organizations, the private sector, and other global partners, to implement the strategic plans required by paragraph (2) in each focus country;

(4) not less frequently than annually, consult and coordinate with stakeholders qualified to provide advice, assistance, and information regarding effective support for anti-poaching activities, coordination of regional law enforcement efforts, development of and support for effective legal enforcement mechanisms, and development of strategies to reduce illicit trade and reduce consumer demand for illegally traded wildlife and wildlife products, and other relevant topics under this Act; and

(5) coordinate or carry out other functions as are necessary to implement this Act.

(b) **DUPLICATION AND EFFICIENCY.**—The Task Force shall—

(1) ensure that the activities of the Federal agencies involved in carrying out efforts under this Act are coordinated and not duplicated; and

(2) encourage efficiencies and coordination among the efforts of Federal agencies and inter-agency initiatives ongoing as of the date of the enactment of this Act to address trafficking activities, including trafficking of wildlife, humans, weapons, and narcotics, illegal trade, transnational organized crime, or other illegal activities.

(c) **CONSISTENCY WITH AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES.**—The Task Force shall carry out its responsibilities under this Act in a manner consistent with the authorities and responsibilities of agencies represented on the Task Force.

(d) **TASK FORCE STRATEGIC REVIEW.**—One year after the date of the enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the Task Force shall submit a strategic assessment of its work and provide a briefing to the appropriate congressional committees that shall include—

(1) a review and assessment of the Task Force's implementation of this Act, identifying successes, failures, and gaps in its work, or that of agencies represented on the Task Force, including detailed descriptions of—

(A) what approaches, initiatives, or programs have succeeded best in increasing the willingness and capacity of focus countries to suppress and prevent illegal wildlife trafficking, and what approaches, initiatives, or programs have not succeeded as well as hoped; and

(B) which foreign governments subject to subsections (a) and (b) of section 201 have proven to be the most successful partners in suppressing and preventing illegal wildlife trafficking, which focus countries have not proven to be so, and what factors contributed to these results in each country discussed;

(2) a description of each Task Force member agency's priorities and objectives for combating wildlife trafficking;

(3) an account of total United States funding each year since fiscal year 2014 for all government agencies and programs involved in countering poaching and wildlife trafficking;

(4) an account of total United States funding since fiscal year 2014 to support the activities of the Task Force, including administrative overhead costs and congressional reporting; and

(5) recommendations for how to improve United States and international efforts to suppress and prevent illegal wildlife trafficking in the future, based upon the Task Force's experience as of the time of the review.

(e) **TERMINATION OF TASK FORCE.**—The statutory authorization for the Task Force provided by this Act shall terminate 5 years after the date of the enactment of this Act or such earlier date that the President terminates the Task Force by rescinding, superseding, or otherwise modifying relevant portions of Executive Order 13648.

TITLE IV—PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS THE ESCALATING WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING CRISIS

SEC. 401. ANTI-POACHING PROGRAMS.

(a) **WILDLIFE LAW ENFORCEMENT PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND COORDINATION ACTIVI-**

TIES.—The Secretary of State and the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, in collaboration with the heads of other relevant United States agencies and nongovernmental partners where appropriate, may provide assistance to focus countries to carry out the recommendations made in the strategic plan required by section 301(a)(2), among other goals, to improve the effectiveness of wildlife law enforcement in regions and countries that have demonstrated capacity, willingness, and need for assistance.

(b) **AUTHORITY TO PROVIDE SECURITY ASSISTANCE TO COUNTER WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING AND POACHING.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The President is authorized to provide defense articles, defense services, and related training to security forces of focus countries for the purpose of countering wildlife trafficking and poaching where appropriate.

(2) **TYPES OF ASSISTANCE.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—Assistance provided under paragraph (1) may include intelligence and surveillance assets, communications and electronic equipment, mobility assets, night vision and thermal imaging devices, and organizational clothing and individual equipment, pursuant to the applicable provision of the Arms Export Control Act (22 U.S.C. 2751 et seq.) or the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2151 et seq.).

(B) **LIMITATION.**—Assistance provided under paragraph (1) may not include significant military equipment.

(3) **SPECIAL RULE.**—Assistance provided under paragraph (1) shall be in addition to any other assistance provided to the countries under any other provision of law.

(4) **PROHIBITION ON ASSISTANCE.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—No assistance may be provided under subsection (b) to a unit of a security force if the President determines that the unit has been found to engage in wildlife trafficking or poaching.

(B) **EXCEPTION.**—The prohibition in subparagraph (A) shall not apply with respect to a unit of a security force of a country if the President determines that the government of the country is taking effective steps to hold the unit accountable and prevent the unit from engaging in trafficking and poaching.

(5) **CERTIFICATION.**—With respect to any assistance provided pursuant to this subsection, the Secretary of State shall certify to the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives that such assistance is necessary for the purposes of combating wildlife trafficking.

(6) **NOTIFICATION.**—Consistent with the requirements of the Arms Export Control Act (22 U.S.C. 2751 et seq.) and the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2151 et seq.), the Secretary of State shall notify the appropriate congressional committees regarding defense articles, defense services, and related training provided under paragraph (1).

SEC. 402. ANTI-TRAFFICKING PROGRAMS.

(a) **INVESTIGATIVE CAPACITY BUILDING.**—The Secretary of State and the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, in collaboration with the heads of other relevant United States agencies and communities, regions, and governments in focus countries, may design and implement programs in focus countries to carry out the recommendations made in the strategic plan required under section 301(a)(2) among other goals, with clear and measurable targets and indicators of success, to increase the capacity of wildlife law enforcement and customs and border security officers in focus countries.

(b) **TRANSNATIONAL PROGRAMS.**—The Secretary of State and the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, in collaboration with other relevant

United States agencies, nongovernmental partners, and international bodies, and in collaboration with communities, regions, and governments in focus countries, may design and implement programs, including support for Wildlife Enforcement Networks, in focus countries to carry out the recommendations made in the strategic plan required under section 301(a)(2), among other goals, to better understand and combat the transnational trade in illegal wildlife.

SEC. 403. ENGAGEMENT OF UNITED STATES DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS.

As soon as practicable but not later than 2 years after the date of the enactment of this Act, each chief of mission to a focus country should begin to implement the recommendations contained in the strategic plan required under section 301(a)(2), among other goals, for the country.

SEC. 404. COMMUNITY CONSERVATION.

The Secretary of State, in collaboration with the United States Agency for International Development, heads of other relevant United States agencies, the private sector, nongovernmental organizations, and other development partners, may provide support in focus countries to carry out the recommendations made in the strategic plan required under section 301(a)(2) as such recommendations relate to the development, scaling, and replication of community wildlife conservancies and community conservation programs in focus countries to assist with rural stability and greater security for people and wildlife, empower and support communities to manage or benefit from their wildlife resources sustainably, and reduce the threat of poaching and trafficking, including through—

(1) promoting conservation-based enterprises and incentives, such as eco-tourism and sustainable agricultural production, that empower communities to manage wildlife, natural resources, and community ventures where appropriate, by ensuring they benefit from well-managed wildlife populations;

(2) helping create alternative livelihoods to poaching by mitigating wildlife trafficking, helping support rural stability, greater security for people and wildlife, sustainable economic development, and economic incentives to conserve wildlife populations;

(3) engaging regional businesses and the private sector to develop goods and services to aid in anti-poaching and anti-trafficking measures;

(4) working with communities to develop secure and safe methods of sharing information with enforcement officials;

(5) providing technical assistance to support sustainable land use plans to improve the economic, environmental, and social outcomes in community-owned or -managed lands;

(6) supporting community anti-poaching efforts, including policing and informant networks;

(7) working with community and national governments to develop relevant policy and regulatory frameworks to enable and promote community conservation programs, including supporting law enforcement engagement with wildlife protection authorities to promote information-sharing; and

(8) working with national governments to ensure that communities have timely and effective support from national authorities to mitigate risks that communities may face when engaging in anti-poaching and anti-trafficking activities.

TITLE V—TRANSITION OF OVERSEAS CONTINGENCY FUNDING TO BASE FUNDING

SEC. 501. SENSE OF CONGRESS ON FUNDING.

It is the sense of Congress that the President and Congress should provide for an appropriate and responsible transition for funding designated for overseas contingency operations to traditional and regular annual appropriations, including emergency supplemental funding, as appropriate.

TITLE VI—OTHER ACTIONS RELATING TO WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING PROGRAMS

SEC. 601. AMENDMENTS TO FISHERMAN'S PROTECTIVE ACT OF 1967.

Section 8 of the Fisherman's Protective Act of 1967 (22 U.S.C. 1978) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) in paragraph (1), by inserting “, in consultation with the Secretary of State,” after “Secretary of Commerce”;

(B) in paragraph (2), by inserting “, in consultation with the Secretary of State,” after “Secretary of the Interior”;

(C) in paragraph (3), by inserting “in consultation with the Secretary of State,” after “, as appropriate,”;

(D) by redesigning paragraph (4) as paragraph (5); and

(E) by inserting after paragraph (3) the following new paragraph:

“(4) The Secretary of Commerce and the Secretary of the Interior shall each report to Congress each certification to the President made by such Secretary under this subsection, within 15 days after making such certification.”; and

(2) in subsection (d), by inserting “in consultation with the Secretary of State,” after “as the case may be,”.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported amendment be withdrawn; the Coons amendment at the desk be agreed to; and the bill, as amended, be read a third time.

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

The committee-reported amendment was withdrawn.

The amendment (No. 5078) in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

(The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under “Text of Amendments.”)

The amendment was ordered to be engrossed, and the bill to be read a third time.

The bill was read the third time.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I know of no further debate on this measure.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate, the bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

The bill (H.R. 2494), as amended, was passed.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I am going to take a few minutes, if I might, to celebrate something that we, frankly, have a chance to celebrate far too rarely—a bipartisan legislative success.

I am thrilled to be here to celebrate the passage of the End Wildlife Trafficking Act, a bill Senator FLAKE and I have been working on for months since it was introduced in December of last year, an idea which we have been working on for well over a year. This bill has been a long time in coming.

I first saw the tragic consequences of poaching and wildlife trafficking decades ago when I was a young man in Kenya, and I first visited Africa with a number of my colleagues on a trip to look at the dramatic increase in wild-

life trafficking just a few short years ago.

President Obama issued an Executive order to combat wildlife trafficking back in 2013, and Senator CARDIN and I held a joint hearing on the topic in 2014 when I chaired the African Affairs Subcommittee. Senator FLAKE, now the chair of the African Affairs Subcommittee, and I introduced this bill together last December, and now we are excited to see it pass this body and be one step closer to becoming law.

Why is this bill important? Why does wildlife trafficking in Africa matter? Because nearly 100 elephants are killed every single day so their ivory tusks can be sold on the black market. Ivory now commands prices higher than heroin or gold, and it has become one of the principal ways of financing transnational networks of terrorists and of criminals.

The tragic consequences for the African elephant were recently noted in a report that showed that the population of elephants across the continent shrank by one-third in the last decade. In 2014, more than 1,000 rhinoceroses were illegally killed in South Africa, a several thousand-percent increase since the decade before. And as rhino horn and elephant tusks command outrageous prices on the world market, the demand has driven both wildlife poaching and trafficking steadily upward. Until today, it has become a multibillion-dollar industry that threatens wildlife, fragile ecosystems, and our national security.

Wildlife poaching and trafficking is one of those problems about which it is tempting to throw up our hands and ask: What could we possibly do about this? It happens on the other side of the world and it affects wildlife most of us will never see in person. But we didn't. And because of that, because of our persistence and determination and because so many people on the committee staff in the Senate and in the executive branch have devoted time and effort to coming up with a strategy and a pathway toward addressing it, we have lots of reasons today to be optimistic.

In President Obama, we have a President engaged in the continent of Africa and committed to combating trafficking and poaching. In Secretary Kerry, we have a former Senator who, when he was chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, dedicated personal time and effort to highlighting the issue of wildlife trafficking. As I mentioned, in 2013, the President created a task force on wildlife trafficking that produced a national strategy for working together to combat wildlife trafficking. Now, just today, we have a strong bill—the End Wildlife Trafficking Act—that has passed the Senate and is on its way to the House.

Based on a recent conversation, I am optimistic that Chairman ROYCE and Ranking Member ENGEL, of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, will move this forward in the week ahead. Both

Chairman ROYCE and Ranking Member ENGEL deserve great credit for passing a complementary bill in the House, and it is because they have already acted on this that I am optimistic we will be able to together reach our end goal.

What exactly does that bill do? Let me briefly say, it requires a strategy, it authorizes an interagency approach to working with the governments of many countries affected by wildlife trafficking, and it produces recommendations on how to address those threats in coordination with non-governmental organizations. It authorizes the Secretary of State and the Administrator of USAID to support efforts to combat poaching and wildlife trafficking and to encourage community conservation programs—an initiative, a direction, that Senator FLAKE and I have seen in person on the ground in southern Africa.

It also includes strategic regular reviews to monitor progress being made, and it gives prosecutors more tools to go after individuals involved in high-value wildlife crime. Last, but not least, it encourages diplomatic efforts around the world to try and reduce the demand for wildlife trafficking and for the markets that consume so much of this illicit traffic, whether in China, Vietnam, Malaysia, or elsewhere. Finally, it requires an annual report back to us in Congress to let us know how any taxpayer dollars appropriated in this fight against wildlife trafficking are being spent.

This bill isn't just good policy. In a Congress that is all too often paralyzed by division and by dysfunction, the passage of this act is an important example of what it can look like when we put good policy before partisan politics.

I want to briefly thank the staff of Senators CORKER and CARDIN; my own staff, including Lisa Jones, who spent a great deal of time on this; the staff of Senator FLAKE, Colleen Donnelly and Sarah Towles; and three terrific people, all of them AAAS fellows who have helped bring this bill to passage: Rosa Mutiso, Allie Schwier, and Leah Rubin Shen, who has moved from being an AAAS fellow to my office and has done a terrific job getting us to the finish line today.

I am so grateful for all of the work of the dedicated folks in Congress and in the executive branch who have made this possible.

Thank you very much.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

WRDA

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I rise to applaud the Senate for passing earlier today the Water Resources Development Act of 2016, better known as WRDA. It is important to pause for a moment and appreciate the fact that we were able to come together in such a bipartisan way on such an important

and substantive matter. Today, WRDA passed by an overwhelming majority of 95 to 3.

Today we took a critical step toward making real investments in our Nation's waterways, ports, harbors, ecosystems, and the infrastructure we rely on for our drinking water. We also made a statement that when a group of people are suffering, our country must pull together to help.

Delivering assistance to Flint, MI, and other communities suffering from poor drinking water quality is, frankly, quite overdue. We should have provided funding to fix Flint's water infrastructure long ago, but today we have taken a meaningful step toward the future, where the people of Flint, as well as communities all across America, can turn on their taps and trust that it is safe to use the water that comes out of them.

We cannot forget that right now the people of Flint are still living in this crisis. People are still depending on bottled water and filters for everyday water needs. The health effects will last for decades to come.

Over the past year, I have regularly heard from Flint families about their ongoing struggles. Just this week, I heard from Flint residents who came to Washington. They came to share their stories and to keep up the fight for the Federal support their community needs. These Americans continue to endure unimaginable circumstances with both grace and dignity.

The breadth and severity of the hardships these families have faced are breathtaking, but I continue to hear news stories that would shock all of us in this Chamber and push Congress to finish our work to get this package signed into law.

This week I heard from one Flint mother who told me a story about her 10-year-old daughter with aching bones and teeth. Lead and calcium compete for the same locations in the body and are stored in bone tissue. This is one of the many reasons lead exposure is especially devastating to growing children.

Try to imagine the horror of seeing your daughter's teeth crumble while biting into a sandwich. This is what the people of Flint are living with. The girl's blood lead levels, even recently, were up and down, and she takes large supplements to improve her bone strength. As these Flint residents continue to tell their stories, we must not let their reality fade from the minds of this Nation. As a nation, we can do better than this. We must take care of our own.

As we pause to recognize the weight of our actions today, we must recognize and remember the people who have been fighting for a very long time.

I would like to recognize Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, Dr. Marc Edwards, and Miguel Del Toral for their tireless work to identify and shine a light on the crisis of Flint last year, as well as for all of their advocacy and work since then.

I would also like to recognize the grassroots leaders in Flint who realized there was a serious problem way before anyone else. LeeAnne Walters, Melissa Mays, the Concerned Pastors of Flint, and many others. Despite being repeatedly dismissed and ignored, they kept talking and marching and battling to let the world know about the injustice.

Senator STABENOW and her team have worked tirelessly with us on this effort and to advance our package helping Flint and other countries across the country. She and I underwent weeks of negotiations to carefully craft a bipartisan agreement, and we have a number of Senators who were willing to work with us and truly wanted to find a solution.

Senator STABENOW's staff, particularly Matt VanKuiken and Aaron Suntag, deserve a lot of credit for late nights drafting legislative language and making calls to negotiate a deal.

Senators INHOFE and BOXER deserve special gratitude for their creative ideas and steadfast determination.

I would also like to thank the Environment and Public Works Committee staff, including Alex Herrgott, Jason Albritton, Bettina Poirier, and Susan Bodine, among others. Your long hours and commitment were critical to the bill's passage.

I should also recognize the cosponsors of our bipartisan legislation, including Senators BROWN, PORTMAN, KIRK, REED, BURR, DURBIN, MIKULSKI, CAPITO, and BALDWIN.

I would like to recognize Senators MURKOWSKI and CANTWELL and their staff who worked for weeks to help us find a path forward on a bipartisan energy bill. While this did not come to fruition, we kept working hard to find a path forward. We didn't let one roadblock stand in the way. We kept on fighting for Flint, just like the families in Flint keep on fighting.

So while I am pleased the Senate finally passed this bipartisan, fully paid-for legislation to provide much needed support for Flint families, we now need to redouble our efforts to get it done and get it over the finish line.

I urge my colleagues in the House to swiftly pass similar assistance to Flint and other communities across the country. This bill is the best way for us to help them make critical investments in their aging water infrastructure.

I thank my colleague Congressman KILDEE, who has been Flint's most steadfast champion in the U.S. House. He has worked with Senator STABENOW and me to secure Federal resources for Flint families, and I know he is working hard with his House colleagues to pass legislation to aid Flint.

Local elected officials, such as State Senator Jim Ananich, State Representative Sheldon Neeley, and Mayor Karen Weaver continue to battle for their constituents, secure resources to fix problems, and shine a light on all of the many positive aspects of the city of Flint.