

seen a difference in the last 2 years under a Republican majority in the Senate, and apparently they saw enough that they liked that they wanted to keep us in the majority. They have seen a Senate that has prioritized the American people, that has carefully and methodically returned the Senate back to the basics of doing our job, which is legislating. That includes passing key pieces of legislation through Congress, like the first multiyear highway bill in a decade. I realize that does not excite a lot of people, but it is the basic fundamental job of the Senate and the Congress to legislate, to deal with our infrastructure needs, as the Democratic leader talked about. We actually did deal with some of our major infrastructure needs by passing the first multiyear highway bill in a decade, which is important to our economy, to public safety, and to the quality of the environment. That represents a substantial accomplishment.

We also passed the first education reform law since No Child Left Behind, which was admittedly controversial. We repealed the common core mandates and devolved more authority from Washington, DC, back to the States, back to our school administrators and parents and teachers where it belongs.

We should have learned by now the hard way that when somebody has a bright idea here in Washington, DC, that has not been tried and tested across the rest of the country in the laboratories of democracy known as our States, we are just as likely to get it wrong. I would say Exhibit No. 1 or A for that is ObamaCare. Trying to take one-sixth of our economy and transform it in a way that does not get the buy-in of both political parties, much less the American people, only to see those promises not kept—that does nothing to promote public confidence in their government.

We did pass the Every Student Succeeds Act, which does send some of that power back home.

We have done a number of other things, including one that I am particularly proud of, which was to help root out human trafficking and protect the victims of this heinous crime—the first major human trafficking legislation passed perhaps in 25 years, and more resources are now available to the victims of human trafficking so that they can begin to heal.

We proved that we could get some things done—not as much as we would have liked but some substantial things.

As the Presiding Officer knows, lifting the crude oil export ban has been very important to the energy producers here in the United States and will go a long way to making sure they get a fair price for their product on the world markets. It will also give us a chance to help some of our allies around the world against whom energy is used as a weapon by people who would cut off their supply to elec-

tricity, oil, gas, and other energy sources as a way to keep them in tow.

We also passed major legislation to address the growing opioid epidemic hurting families across the country.

Under Republican leadership, the Senate saw all 12 appropriations bills pass out of their respective committees for the first time since 2009 and the first balanced budget passed since 2001. Unfortunately, our Democratic colleagues saw fit to filibuster those Senate appropriations bills, which is why we are here after the election in the waning days of 2016 to try to make sure that we pay the bills and keep the government up and running in a lameduck session.

This is not a great way to do business, and this isn't our first choice. But because of the filibuster of those appropriations bills—even though they passed out by overwhelming bipartisan majorities and represent policies that are agreed to by both political parties—here we are.

We have also had more participation on a bipartisan basis by Members of the Senate in the legislative process. There were more votes on amendments—more than 250 during this Congress. This is because of the determined leadership of our majority leader, Senator MCCONNELL, who has seen fit to restore the power to committee chairmen to have the freedom and flexibility to lead their committees while allowing Members, on a bipartisan basis, to contribute to legislation before it comes to the floor and is subject to further action. I believe the result is the creation of solid legislation that will stand over time—not partisan or ramming legislation through because you can do it but building consensus and trying to address problems on a step-by-step basis.

With the election behind us, the Senate can begin looking to next year. We are eager to finish our work this year, which I am sure we will shortly, and are looking to what we might be able to do with what the American voters have given us in terms of majorities in both Houses and President-Elect Trump. As I said, I look forward to working with the new President to improve the lives of the men and women working day in and day out across the country. This is an exciting moment for them and for us. It is good news that we have been provided this opportunity.

Fortunately, the Senate will continue to have a major role to play. Over the last few months, we spent a lot of time talking about what was at stake in this election. At the forefront was the U.S. Supreme Court. So I look forward to hearing who President Trump will nominate to fill the seat being vacated by the death of Justice Scalia. I hope that the Senate Judiciary Committee will take that nomination up on a timely basis and that we will quickly move forward once the nomination is made.

We have a lot more work to do. Over the last 8 years, the Obama administra-

tion has been marked by a go-it-alone attitude. Remember, the President said he had a phone and a pen, and he was quite prepared to act and not consult with Congress. Of course, that resulted in a flood of Executive orders and unilateral actions that won't live out his term of office. When he becomes President, I am confident President-Elect Trump will reverse many of those Executive orders, and we will work with the administration to repeal much of the overregulation that is strangling small businesses and our economy.

Going into this year's Presidential election, we all knew that the President-elect would have a decision to make—either to shore up President Obama's policies and further those burdensome regulations that were created by his administration or to rip up those that are in place or were put in place unilaterally and instead work with Congress on a bipartisan basis. After all, we are the elected representatives of the American people. It is our firm desire to unleash the sleeping giant of the American economy, and I believe we can, given the outcome of this election.

Fortunately, President Trump appears to be eager to work with us to help grow American jobs, strengthen our economy, and make sure that the next generation is better off than those before it. As I said, that means pushing back on harmful regulations that have been promulgated by, for example, Obama's Environmental Protection Agency. It certainly means repealing ObamaCare, a law that was jammed through on a party-line vote and that has not worked as it was promised to work.

We have a lot of work ahead of us. I believe we also have a mandate from the American people, who are sick and tired of business as usual, ready for change and for a government that works for them and not against them.

I look forward to being part of that change. I am grateful the American people have given us the opportunity to serve.

I yield the floor.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. AYOTTE). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

OPIOID ADDICTION

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, last month, Democratic staff on the Finance Committee put out a report documenting the staggering shortage of treatment services in America for those suffering from opioid addiction. This report surveyed a cross-section of American communities and found there is a yawning treatment gap keeping

many from getting the help they need. Nearly 90 percent of Americans suffering from opioid addiction, according to the most current analyses, are not receiving the treatment they need—90 percent. The treatment gap is caused by a shortage of available treatment services across the country, and even where these services do exist, they are overwhelmed by demand. This gap is straining rural communities that are already struggling to provide other essential medical services. Asking these communities to provide care when they are stretched in such incredibly thin ways forces them into impossible choices. The result is even more lives in America are lost to opioid addiction.

Earlier this year, after Congress passed legislation called CARA authorizing anti-addiction programs, Members did an awful lot of celebrating, an awful lot of victory laps, and fired off a forest of press releases, but that act didn't put a penny into these essential treatment programs. I just wanted to come to the floor because we are looking at another crucial time to help those suffering from addiction. The press releases don't do anything for people suffering from these horrible illnesses who might turn next to heroin, and when nearly 9 out of 10 addicted to opioids aren't getting treatment, clearly there is much more that needs to be done so it is critical in this lameduck session to follow through with funding.

I have been encouraged by several of the conversations that have taken place over the last few days about finding a path forward to ensuring there be real funds for treating opioid addiction, but I have seen some of these debates before, and I have been encouraged before only to see the chance for progress stall out. I would like to note that I believe there is a special reason right now to stand up for patients and make sure they have access to treatment, that they have what they need.

In the next few weeks, the Congress is going to consider another piece of legislation called the 21st Century Cures Act. This will be a bill designed to encourage research and scientific development of new pharmaceuticals, fast-tracking the development of pharmaceuticals.

I don't take a backseat to anyone when it comes to supporting innovation and scientific research. In fact, early in my Senate days, I chaired the Senate's Science Subcommittee so I know how important it is. At the same time, this piece of legislation will also offer a great benefit to the large pharmaceutical companies in America. The Congress will be considering the Cures bill with the backdrop of so many who are addicted to opioids not being able to get access to treatment, and they are going to be concerned about how there will be more research for new drugs because we want to see these cures. They are going to ask: How are we going to afford them? We want the cures, but we also want to be able to afford these medicines.

Every time we look at a football game, we see dozens of ads for blockbuster drugs, but Americans watch those ads and say: Yes, we want those cures, yes, we want the scientific progress, but please, Congress, think about policies that are going to allow us to get those drugs. It is no wonder a recent editorial pointed out it was cheaper to fly round trip to India for a hepatitis C treatment than to get it here in the United States. People see these bills piling up. If they are able to afford their medications today, they are saying: Are we going to lose access tomorrow?

To me, here is the bottom line for the fall. Here is the bottom line for where we ought to go. Yes, we should support medical breakthroughs and research into cures, but let us not keep the patients out of the debate. Let us make sure we add the funds needed for treatment for those who are addicted to opioids, and as we look at this issue of cures, let us also look at policies to make sure people can afford their medicines.

The Committee on Finance has been looking at these issues. For example, recently, I raised a serious objection when I learned a panel meant to be studying how to turn the tide on opioid addiction was stocked with people closely tied to opioid manufacturers. We blew the whistle on that and four nominees to the panel were dismissed.

We have a lot to do this fall. I know time is short, but, yes, let us promote these new cures; yes, let us make sure people who are addicted to opioids have new opportunities for treatment; and as we look at drug development, let us make sure we don't see so many Americans on the outside looking in as prices go up and up and up. There is more work to be done on both fronts: ensuring access to new science, ensuring access to treatment services, ensuring access to affordable medicines. That is what we ought to be focusing on this fall.

With that, I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

GOLD STAR FAMILIES VOICES ACT

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, I ask that the Gold Star Families Voices Act be reported.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Committee on Rules and Administration is discharged from and the Senate will proceed to the consideration of H.R. 4511, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4511) to amend the Veterans' Oral History Project Act to allow the collection of video and audio recordings of biographical histories by immediate family members of members of the Armed Forces

who died as a result of their service during a period of war.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be 30 minutes of debate equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from Missouri.

OPIOID ABUSE

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, I am pleased to be here to talk about this bill. First of all, following up on what my friend just talked about on opioid abuse, I want to particularly thank the Chair for her leadership on this issue. Really, as the chairman of the appropriating committee that looked at this before we had any legislation, it was largely the Chair's effort that made us triple the amount of money we were committing to this cause over a year ago. I thank her for understanding this and advocating for it as one of the two or three earliest Members to bring to the attention of the Senate that this is a problem that affects rural America, urban America, small States, and big States. I thank her for her leadership.

Because of that, last year we had a 284-percent increase in the money committed to that. We doubled that amount again this year. Assuming we are able to move forward with the Labor, Health and Human Services bill this year, it will be virtually a 600-percent increase. We are already halfway there, and that first half was largely because of the Presiding Officer's understanding of this issue, and I am grateful for that.

Madam President, on the bill before the body today, I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting the Gold Star Families Voices Act. The legislation passed the House unanimously in September. I hope the Senate will do the same today.

In 2000, Congress created the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress. That project was designed to collect and catalog the stories of American war veterans. The purpose of the project was "to preserve the memories of this Nation's war veterans so that Americans of all current and future generations may hear directly from veterans and better appreciate the realities of war and the sacrifices made by those who served in uniform during wartime."

To date, the Veterans History Project has collected the oral history records of over 100,000 veterans who have served in the military since World War I—100,000 stories preserved that wouldn't have been otherwise.

As important and extensive as that project is, as important as those 100,000 memories are, today the project only includes firsthand narratives. Now, what does that mean? That means that only people who are telling their own story are included in the stories we have created and have been able to secure because of the Veterans History Project, which effectively excludes the stories of veterans who didn't return from the battlefield—the men and women who lost their lives defending