

In the Senate seat to replace me, we won by a large margin. We picked up two Democratic House seats. Out of the six Democratic House seats that were picked up in this past election, a third of them came from Nevada. We turned the assembly to a big, big majority. The State senate now has 21 members. It was 11-to-10 Republican. It is now 11-10 Democratic. To make it even better, the day after the election a Republican State senator switched to become an Independent, like BERNIE SANDERS and ANGUS KING. So there is a two-vote majority there. It was really a good day for Nevada.

We rejected the divisive vision of America that some had, but we also enacted some important reforms. In Nevada—the Wild West, NRA members galore—we voted to have background checks. When I went to the State legislature a long time ago, in 1969, as a young assemblyman, I introduced legislation to have a 3-day waiting period before you can buy a gun. That has been longstanding in most of rural Nevada. They eliminated that. But I started being concerned about this a long time ago, and now in Nevada we are going to have background checks for people purchasing guns. That is good. The National Rifle Association spent millions of dollars trying to stop that, but we cared more about keeping guns out of the hands of dangerous people than catering to people with special interests.

I mention the NRA. Listen, the National Rifle Association used to be a different organization. After the Columbine horror in Colorado, they came out saying that we should do something for background checks. They have changed. Members of the NRA in Nevada understand that. They are like NRA members all over the country. The majority of NRA members believe there should be background checks and you shouldn't as a criminal be able to buy a gun or you shouldn't be able to buy a gun if you are unstable mentally.

We elected the first Latina Senator in the history of the country, CATHERINE CORTEZ MASTO. We are a diverse State. I am happy that our elected leaders that we brought back here certainly represent that.

I have talked about CATHERINE CORTEZ MASTO. She is going to be a wonderful Senator. I am so proud of her. I have known her family for years. I have admiration for her accomplishments as a prosecutor and attorney general for the State. The Nevada seat was a Koch brothers prize, but they came in second.

We also elected RUBEN KIHUEN. He is a fine man. He is a Mexican immigrant elected to the House of Representatives. He will do a good job, this young man. I have so much admiration for him. The picture on the front page of our papers in Las Vegas was really wonderful. His mom and dad, immigrants themselves, with their boy who is now going to be a Member of Congress. That is pretty dramatic. They

came to the United States wanting to live the American dream, and that is what they have done.

Serving with RUBEN and serving with CATHERINE in the Congress is a woman by the name of JACKY ROSEN. JACKY has been an inspiring community leader for years, working as president of her synagogue. JACKY has no experience in politics—zero. She ran for a seat that is just a tiny bit Democratic, but a very competitive seat. It is a seat that Congressman HECK lost for the Senate and held for three terms. She didn't have a really long resume, other than being a wonderful person who had a great family and was involved in community activities. She was president of her synagogue. She proved to be a tremendously talented candidate, and she will be good here in Washington as a Member of Congress.

DINA TITUS, a longtime Member of Congress, is returning to the House for a fourth term. She knows Nevada inside and out. She is a longtime member of the State legislature and a professor at UNLV.

So I am grateful for these good people who are now going to be Members of the Congress of the United States. CATHERINE, RUBEN, JACKY, and DINA will be great for Nevada and the country.

Our Democratic legislature in Nevada will be led by an African American, Aaron Ford. We have an African American leading the State senate. He is the majority leader. He is a wonderful young man who is so talented, well educated. He has a Ph.D. and a law degree. He has it all.

Jason Frierson is going to be leading the assembly as speaker. He is just a good person, a good guy with an accomplished record in the State assembly.

There has been some talk about “the Reid machine,” but, of course, the machine is leaving Washington in a few weeks. But it is not about me. It is about our State and about the progress we have made over the years. The victories we saw last week speak volumes about the talent of the candidates and the people working to make sure these victories happen. Most of the work done in the State was by volunteers. There were thousands of people—thousands of people—out in the streets 2 weeks before the election.

On one Saturday, 70,000 doors were knocked on in the small State of Nevada—70,000. Having done door-to-door stuff ourselves, we all know that there were not 70,000 people home, but thousands and thousands of people were reached through that process.

As I have mentioned, our State has a crop of incredibly talented leaders to stand up to the Trump administration and hold Republicans accountable. Our new leaders are going to fight for the issues that are important to the people of the State of Nevada, all issues dealing with immigrants. My father-in-law was an immigrant to the United States from Russia. My grandfather was from

England. We are going to do everything we can to make sure that people understand the importance of immigration.

On Yucca Mountain, they asked me a couple of days ago about the Republicans wanting to revive Yucca Mountain. Well, I know the Presiding Officer and the Republicans are concerned about money. So if the Republicans want to revive Yucca Mountain, bring a great big checkbook because what it is going to cost to revive that is not millions of dollars but billions of dollars—billions. There is nothing there. All the equipment has been junked, ground up. It is where they sell junk and metal. It is gone.

What I say is, if the Republicans want to waste money on that, let them do it. Let them do it because it doesn't meet the environmental standards of anyplace, let alone our country. So let them try to revive it. But I say to my Republican friends, make sure you have a lot of money.

We are going to do everything together in the next few weeks, and certainly when I am gone, the new Congressional delegation will do everything they can to protect clean energy. We have really done a lot with wind, solar, and geothermal. We need to continue that.

In Nevada, 87 percent of the land is owned by the Federal Government. I know that is hard to comprehend. The Presiding Officer is from South Carolina. If you come to one of the beautiful wilderness areas, that land is not mine. That land is not Nevada land. It is your land. It is public land. You have as much right as anyone to enjoy those beautiful mountains that we have. We have 314 mountain ranges. We have a mountain that is 14,000 feet high. We have 32 mountains over 11,000 feet high. These are your mountains, just as they are mine.

I say to the Presiding Officer, don't be part of a deal to sell those public lands to the private sector. The States and local governments—they cannot protect those lands. So for our children and our grandchildren, don't let them mess with public lands.

I appreciate the Presiding Officer listening to me. I will close by saying that I am very proud of what happened in the State of Nevada a week ago yesterday.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TOOMEY). The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, what is the business before the Senate?

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

#### AMERICAN ENERGY AND CONSERVATION ACT OF 2016—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to

proceed to S. 3110, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 543, S. 3110, a bill to provide for reforms of the administration of the outer Continental Shelf of the United States, to provide for the development of geothermal, solar, and wind energy on public land, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I want to speak on the bill. We are going to have a vote somewhere around midday tomorrow on this bill. This Senator comes to this issue with a long history of drilling for oil off our coast. Ever since I was a young Congressman, I have been fighting to keep oil rigs off Florida's coast. It is especially important at this time, as we have a new administration coming in that took a public position in the election declaring the intent of the President-elect to open up additional areas off the coast to oil drilling. The package that we are going to consider tomorrow is an enhancement of exactly that goal.

I want to point out to the Senate why this is not in the interest of our country now. First of all, we are dealing with a law that we passed about 5 or 6 years ago with an acronym of GOMESA, which opened up for the first time oil revenues that came from Federal waters to be shared with the Gulf States.

We were doing this primarily in the interests of Louisiana because Louisiana had been hit so hard by Hurricane Katrina, and there was a need to restore a lot of those marshes. This was another way of getting revenue to the State of Louisiana. At the same time that bill was passed, it enhanced a law that we had passed with my former colleague Senator Mel Martinez back in the 2006 timeframe that kept the oil drilling off Florida in the gulf—and kept it off, and it is in law. It is the only place of the Outer Continental Shelf where it is in law that you cannot drill up through the year 2022.

I want to point out for the historical record why that is so and why this bill we are considering tomorrow is not in the interest of the country. This area in yellow is the Gulf of Mexico off of Florida. This is Florida, the peninsula, the Keys. This is the gulf coast of Florida. Over here is Pensacola. All of that area in yellow is off limits to drilling until the year 2022.

Why? Well, it does not take a rocket scientist to realize what happened to Florida's economy after the Deep Water Horizon oil spill. The oil got as far as Pensacola. The spill was over here off of Louisiana. It got to the beaches of Pensacola, some to Destin, some tar balls to Panama City, until the wind started sending it back the other way.

But what happened to Florida's tourism industry on its gulf coast for an entire season? The tourists thought there was oil on our beaches, and tour-

ists did not come for an entire season all the way down to Marco Island, Naples—all of those beautiful sugary white sand beaches, including the beaches of Northwest Florida.

They did not come because they thought there was oil there. That did not just affect the airlines and the hotels. It affected the dry cleaners and the restaurants and all of the largest industry in Florida, which is the tourism industry. That is one reason.

Another reason is that there are so many of the bays and estuaries along this gulf coast where the critters are hatched that supply the fish stocks for the entire gulf. Of course, there are stocks that are hatched here that migrate out into the other oceans.

But there is a third reason. That reason is that all of this area to the east of this line—in other words, 125 miles off Panama City, 235 miles off Tampa Bay, even further off Naples—all of that is the largest testing and training area in the world for the U.S. military. The Department of Defense has issued two letters under the signatures of two Republican Secretaries of Defense saying that any oil-related activities here would be incompatible with our testing and training mission, this being the largest one in the United States.

That is why we do not have drilling there. You will hear the proponents of the bill say: Well, we have exempted this part. We have exempted it not only because it is off limits in law, but what they are doing to the rest of the gulf coast is almost doubling the revenue sharing that would go to the States, the Gulf States, thereby giving even more incentive for the State governments to want to have drilling off of their coasts regardless of the U.S. military, regardless of the economic engine of Florida, regardless of the very delicate environment.

But there is more. As a matter of fact, the bill before us would offer revenue sharing to States. Mind you, this is drilling in Federal waters. Any revenue would typically go to the Federal Government. As a matter of fact, it is estimated by CBO that it would be a loss of \$7 billion to the U.S. Treasury.

That would also be available for the States on the Atlantic. Here is Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, and on up on the Atlantic coast. I brought this chart to show not only the gulf area off of Florida and the military testing and training ranges, but to look at the military testing and training ranges off the Atlantic coast. If it is incompatible here, are we not going to hear, as we have heard from some in the Department of Defense, that it is going to be incompatible in the Atlantic region?

I want to urge that not only have we been battling to keep our coastal environments and beaches clean and unpolluted—that is not the only argument. The argument is also one of keeping our national security tested and trained in the most sophisticated

weapons and training for the best military in the world.

This Senator is a senior member of the Senate Armed Services Committee. There is a reason that we do not have oil rigs out here. First of all, in the State of Florida, we have Tyndall Air Force Base at Panama City. That is where they are training our pilots on F-22s. At Eglin Air Force Base near Fort Walton Beach, that is where about half of the U.S. Air Force training and the other services—the Navy as well as the Air Force—are training their pilots for the F-35 that is now being cycled in to be the workhorse of our fighters.

The U.S. Navy, which will have F-35s but presently has F-18s, will fly a squadron to Key West Naval Air Station. They will be there for a week or two. When they lift off from the runway at Boca Chica Key, in 2 minutes they could be over restricted airspace, not having spent a lot of time and fuel to get to the area of restriction for their testing and training. So the Department of Defense has said: You simply cannot have oil rigs operating in an area where we are testing these very sophisticated weapons systems—and they need a lot of space; from this location down here, this is some 300 miles—as well as the training that goes on.

It is not just for the benefit of our military, it is key to our national defense.

We have watched the tar balls wash up on the beaches. We have seen the sugary white sands of Pensacola Beach completely black, covered in oil. We saw the harm that was done to not only the local businesses that cater to tourists, such as the hotels, restaurants, and attractions, but to all the ancillary businesses, such as the drycleaners and the real estate firms.

To put it into perspective, for our State of Florida, this is a \$50 billion industry that oils the engine of our economy. We are talking about generating some \$700 million in sales tax revenue for the State, and it helps support more than 450,000 jobs throughout the State. Why would you risk destroying a State's economy as well as our military preparation? It is not as if we don't have other places that we want to produce oil. Think of the oil shale that has been tapped in the Dakotas, in Oklahoma, and in Texas that is not producing at maximum capacity.

As Floridians, the images of the hazmat crews in those hazmat suits and the Coast Guard vessels skimming off the water just 6 years ago are emblazoned on our memories. Our fishermen and our businesses certainly haven't forgotten their own losses that amounted to hundreds of millions of dollars. So if the new administration and the oil industry want to have a fight on in issue, well, they certainly have one. This Senator is going to continue to try to keep the oil rigs off the State of Florida with everything I have, for all of the reasons I have stated.

When we vote tomorrow, I would commend to our colleagues to beware of all of the effects of almost doubling the revenue for the Gulf Coast States of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, which is at the heart of what is behind this particular bill we are going to vote on, but also beware there are hidden messages in this revenue sharing, and it strikes at the heart of what we have been trying to protect here—the environment, our economy, and our U.S. military preparedness.

I yield the floor.

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

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

#### BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, as long as no other Senator is asking to be recognized, let me just say that from the perspective of the senior Senator from Florida, I think it is the obligation of those of us who were backing the candidate who did not win the Presidency—as President Obama has said, the President-elect will be the President. It is incumbent upon the rest of us, regardless of party, to reach out and to try to help the new President on behalf of and for the sake of our country.

This Senator, who in four decades of public service has always tried to reach out in a bipartisan way and bring people together, to build consensus in order to govern, will continue to do so, and this Senator greets the new administration with that statement. It is important that a statement like that be made, especially in this time where we are so rent asunder, where we are so divided, and where we have come through an election that has been—the only word I can think of is “ugly.” Things were said in the ordinary course of conversation in this election that should not have been said. Particularly as we try to heal the wounds of both sides and take back the awful things that were said and create an atmosphere where we can come together for the sake of our country, that is especially important, and this Senator is going to contribute to that.

It is my hope that it will be received on all sides and that we will reach out and try to bring people together. I think it is important to say that, particularly at a time where feelings have been hurt and feelings have been so high and so tense.

I yield the floor.

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.

#### WORKING TOGETHER

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, we are living in historic times. The 115th Congress will be the first time in a decade that Republicans have held both Chambers of Congress and the White House. Before the George W. Bush administration in the early part of this century, you would have to go back to the Eisenhower administration—I believe it was 1953—to find a comparable time of Republican control.

Interestingly, for the history buffs who may be listening, there have actually been 14 times since 1945 when we have had single-party majorities in both Houses and the White House. Eleven of those times have been our Democratic colleagues and three times have been Republicans. So I come back to where I started in saying these are truly historic times.

This morning, our Republican conference met to elect our leadership team to serve in the next Congress during this extraordinary time.

After gaining the majority 2 years ago, it has been a pleasure to look back and see what we have been able to accomplish even with the President from the opposing party in the White House.

Yesterday I mentioned the rewrite of No Child Left Behind, which sent more authority back to the States, parents, and teachers to make education decisions for children in kindergarten through 12th grade. I also mentioned passing a long-term highway bill for 5 years—something we hadn't been able to do for a long time. Those are just two concrete examples of how, working together, we can tackle big, intractable problems. Frankly, nothing happens in the Senate unless it is bipartisan.

We also passed some other important legislation, something negotiated by the majority leader in the House at the time, NANCY PELOSI, or Leader PELOSI, and Speaker John Boehner, which was the reform of our Social Security laws in terms of how doctors under Medicare are paid. It is an important item because if doctors are not paid a prevailing fee or competitive fee for their services, they are simply not going to see Medicare patients and seniors are not going to have access to the care they deserve. We passed a bill sanctioning North Korea for its nuclear program and its human rights abuses. We also passed legislation to better support our troops, who fight and put themselves in harm's way to keep us safe every day.

I am grateful to our Republican colleagues for voting to continue the direction of progress for the American people by reelecting their current leadership, including the senior Senator from Kentucky, Mr. MCCONNELL. As all of us have, I have had the honor to serve alongside Senator MCCONNELL for several years now, although I have served for the last 4 years as the whip or the right hand of the majority leader when it comes to trying to corral

votes and trying to promote our legislative agenda. I found the majority leader to be a wise and steady hand in a town marked by the absence of those virtues, among many. So I am proud to serve with him in the next Congress, as I am with all of our colleagues, and in his case as the majority leader, as his assistant.

We also had a chance, having come back together after the election, to talk about the future and to talk about our agenda going forward. Yesterday I pointed out several legislative priorities at the top of the list—policy items we have to get right on behalf of the American people—such as confirming a Supreme Court Justice who will interpret the laws as we write them and as the Constitution is written, rather than as another policymaking branch of government.

We have also promised we would repeal and replace ObamaCare, which was a failed experiment—failed because the President, when he promoted it, said: If you like what you have, you can keep it. He said: If you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor. And he said: An average family of four will see their premiums go down \$2,500. None of that has been proven to be true. So it is very important we keep that promise of repealing ObamaCare and then replace it on a step-by-step basis over a transition period with more affordable health care that will preserve the choices in health care through Americans and their families and not Washington, DC.

And then there is the matter of legislation. After our Democratic friends lost their 60-vote majority in the Senate and the Republicans flipped the House, providing for a divided government, the one thing that has characterized the Obama administration has been its Executive actions and overregulation. In August, it was reported the President and his administration had issued 600 major regulations with a pricetag of more than \$740 billion.

If there is one thing I hear from my constituents back in Texas—small business owners and the like—it is that they are feeling the strangling effect of overregulation, along with the cost of compliance and the uncertainty that goes along with it. So it is no surprise to see that our economy has essentially flatlined and not been growing because none of this is good for the small business owners we are relying upon to create jobs and opportunities, and it is not good for American families looking for those jobs in order to provide for their families and simply put food on the table. So we are eager to roll back those expensive, and in many instances unnecessary, certainly in every instance burdensome regulations so the economy can have some breathing room and begin to grow again.

Many of us are interested in addressing tax reform as well. There is bipartisan consensus that our Tax Code is simply too complex and counterproductive. In fact, it is literally a self-

inflicted wound when it comes to forcing \$2 trillion-plus overseas that American-based companies would like to bring back, but the reason they do not is they would be subject to double taxation, first, in the country where the money has been earned and, secondly, when they bring it back to the United States. Rather than do that, many of them will leave that money overseas. That means that rather than investing in American jobs and American infrastructure, they are literally investing in jobs overseas and in building infrastructure to support their facilities in other countries. That makes no sense whatsoever.

So tax reform is high on our agenda. I believe, and I am optimistic, that at a time when everybody understands our Tax Code has simply gotten too complex, too expensive, and too counterproductive, we will be able to make some real progress.

Coming from a border State, I can tell you I am delighted to hear President Elect Trump talk about the importance of border security. In a post-9/11 world, it is simply critical we know who is coming into our country and make sure they do so only by legal means. So securing our border is something we need to deal with, and thank goodness there is no shortage of good ideas.

Chairman MIKE McCAUL of the House Homeland Security Committee has a bipartisan bill I think would make great progress along those lines, but obviously we are going to have to have an important discussion among all Members of Congress and the administration about how best to accomplish the goal.

We also need to remember our ports of entry are where legitimate trade and travel occur, and we should do nothing to impede that because legitimate trade and travel are very important to our economy. The U.S. economy enjoys about 6 million jobs as a result of trade between the United States and Mexico alone.

So I look forward to working with the administration and with our colleagues to make sure we secure our border against illegal immigration, including human trafficking, drug trafficking, and the potential violence that goes along with that, while making sure our legitimate trade and travel at our ports of entry are supported so we can benefit from those as well.

Of course, as we debated earlier this Congress, having an updated and efficient infrastructure is vital to the health and well-being of our economy. I mentioned the Transportation bill we passed. A long-term Transportation bill will provide for some of that, but certainly not all that is necessary. We need to take a look at the proposals the President-elect is going to send our way, but there is no shortage of good ideas being discussed both in the House and the Senate as well.

I look forward to learning more about those, but one thing that hasn't

been talked about very much is how we are going to pay for it, and that is going to be an important item to discuss as well. Frankly, we can't keep spending our kids' and grandkids' inheritance or at least forcing upon the younger generations the obligation to pay for bills we incur today.

One of the things I hope will occur as a result of this historic election is that we will have the courage and the willingness to sit down and come up with structural solutions to our financial situation, which is \$19 trillion-plus in debt. Because of the Federal Reserve keeping interest rates very low, we are not having to pay huge amounts of money in order to service that debt or pay interest to the people who own that debt, but that is going to change if the Federal Reserve begins to raise interest rates, and we are going to find ourselves paying more and more money to service that debt to the bondholders and less and less of that money will be available for our priorities domestically, whether they be national security or other investments in things such as medical research and the like.

So finding out how we can crack that nut and come together on a bipartisan basis, working with the White House to deal with our long-term fiscal problems and continuing to meet the needs of our Nation are going to be challenging but exhilarating to do.

Many are talking about the next steps and what should and shouldn't happen in light of the new political reality, but what is clear to me today is that Republicans are united by a strong desire to listen to the concerns of the American people and to deliver results—results that make their lives easier and our collective futures stronger. I want to say that as committed as the majority party is to that, we can't do this without the cooperation and consensus building that comes along as part of the legislative process.

Unfortunately, we have seen the last years characterized by obstruction and filibusters and blocking things that essentially have already received bipartisan support. I am talking particularly about the appropriations process. One of the terrible things that happened this last year in the Congress is the Appropriations Committees have gotten back to work on a bipartisan basis. We would see bills coming out at a fiscally responsible level, with agreed-upon spending caps and Democrats and Republicans supporting them, only to see them dead on arrival on the floor of the Senate. That is the kind of mindless obstructionism I hope we can avoid going forward.

Just from the conversations I have had as a result of this election, many of our Democratic colleagues appear to be willing to work with us. Certainly, with the new leadership on the Democratic side of the aisle, I am more optimistic than I have been in a long time that we can come together while maintaining our strongly held convictions and principles—I am not talking about

compromising those but rather working together when we can—and try to develop more ideas to better serve the American people.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

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. VITTER. 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. VITTER. Mr. President, I rise in strong support of S. 3110, the American Energy and Conservation Act of 2016. This would increase revenue-sharing with the States for offshore oil and gas development. This legislation is scheduled for a vote on the Senate floor tomorrow.

I am pleased the Senate is finally voting on this critical legislation, and I thank my colleague from Louisiana, Senator CASSIDY, for his lead and his hard work on this crucial issue. Senator CASSIDY and I and several of our colleagues have worked hard over the years to bring this issue to the forefront and help both Congress and the American people understand how important revenue-sharing is not only to Louisiana, to other energy-producing States, but to the country and for the good of the country to expand American energy.

I also thank Leader McCONNELL and Chairman MURKOWSKI for working with us to bring this important bill to the floor for a vote. Revenue sharing with oil- and gas-producing States is only fair, for two key reasons: First, energy-producing States incur real costs and real impacts from that production, including environmental, and second, revenue sharing is the most important way we can continue to incent domestic energy production over the long term in this country. It makes it fair and smart for our U.S. energy future.

Energy production is essential to job creation and an overall healthy economy. If it weren't for the oil and gas jobs that accompanied the energy sector boom earlier this decade, we would perhaps still be in a technical recession. One point I want to emphasize is that many of those jobs have been created by small firms in the oil and gas sector and support sectors. These small business energy jobs are something I have highlighted in my role as chair of the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, and they are vital in terms of the impact in this sector.

This legislation would increase revenue sharing for the Gulf States that produce energy offshore and would establish revenue sharing for new production off of Alaska and off of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. These are all areas that welcome the opportunity to have this revenue sharing to incent domestic energy production and increase the availability of American energy.

Contrary to what some have said, this legislation would not authorize any new offshore drilling. Let me repeat. This legislation does not provide for new or expanded lease sales. This bill is about revenue sharing.

Let me be clear on what revenue sharing means for a State like Louisiana, but there are many more. In Louisiana, we spend 100 percent of these revenues on environmental concerns—specifically coastal restoration. We lose about a football field worth of land in coastal Louisiana—just think of the football field you see every Sunday in an NFL game; that amount of land just in coastal Louisiana—every 38 minutes. That is 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year, no time off for weekends, holidays, nothing. It is a constant loss. It is an environmental disaster. That is the most significant environmental issue by far that we face in our State. Our State is committed to spending all of the money we receive from revenue sharing to restore, rebuild, and protect our coast. That is vitally important for Louisiana, but it is also vitally important for the rest of the country because Louisiana supplies so much energy that is good for America.

Let me be clear on what this legislation does. It expands revenue sharing to Alaska and the Mid-Atlantic States, so it has impacts well beyond the gulf in a very positive way. Beginning in 2027, Alaska, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia would begin receiving 37.5 percent revenue sharing from oil and gas production off of their coasts, which is what Louisiana, Texas, Alabama, and Mississippi receive on new production there.

It would also increase revenue sharing that those Gulf States receive under the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act of 2006, or GOMESA. Under that law, revenue sharing in those four Gulf States is capped at \$500 million per year between all of them, but beginning in 2027, that cap would increase substantially. That cap right now is completely arbitrary and far too low. Revenue sharing is vital when it comes to adequately compensating States that help provide so much U.S. energy. It needs to be adequate if we are going to continue to incent those States to play that very important role in our U.S. economy. This legislation would help bring that objective to reality, and it is a critical component of a robust, strengthened revenue sharing regime for those major energy-producing States.

I urge my colleagues to pass this important legislation. Again, I thank everyone who has worked on this, starting with my colleague from Louisiana, Senator CASSIDY, who will be speaking on this topic immediately following me.

With that, I welcome the Senator's remarks.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, I wish to thank Senator VITTER for his support, his kind words, and his tireless effort over his senatorial career to highlight the fact that Louisiana is losing so much land and there is something we need to do about it.

I also thank Majority Leader MCCONNELL for following through on his commitment to allow a vote on the American Energy and Conservation Act of 2016. This was introduced earlier this year by Senators MURKOWSKI, SCOTT, VITTER, TILLIS, SULLIVAN, and me. I thank each of them for their hard work.

I also thank Senators KAINE and WARNER for helping draft the Atlantic portion of the legislation and for cosponsoring an earlier version. As I just said, this is a bipartisan piece of legislation that uses an "all of the above" strategy to pursue true American energy independence.

More than anything else, though, this legislation is about creating better jobs with better benefits. If there was one message we heard from this past election—if we actually listened to the American people, if we heard what they were saying, what we heard is that they want jobs that work for them, better jobs with better benefits. This helps accomplish that. For example, a study conducted by Quest Offshore Resources, Inc., projects that this legislation would incentivize the creation of 280,000 new jobs by 2035. That same study estimates \$195 billion in new investments and an additional \$51 billion in cumulative government revenue. That is \$51 billion in new Federal revenue that this bill helps unlock. It goes a long way to addressing our debt, deficit, and obligation to future generations.

The American Energy and Conservation Act will benefit American families and small businesses by expanding opportunities for States—not just gulf coast but elsewhere—to support energy development.

For years, energy activities in coastal Gulf States and adjacent offshore waters have produced billions of barrels of oil and trillions of cubic feet of natural gas for American families. These States support offshore energy development for the rest of the country and provide the support and pay for the infrastructure needed to bring this energy to market. As with all development, there are increased costs associated with supporting increased traffic, additional use of local and State resources, as well as transportation corridors such as pipelines, vessels, and trucks to get this energy delivered to consumers across the United States.

This bill is truly an "all of the above" energy jobs bill. This legislation includes language introduced by Senators HELLER, HEINRICH, RISCH, and TESTER that streamlines the process for developing the renewable energy on public lands while establishing the first-ever revenue sharing paradigm for renewables. This legislation

incentivizes tapping into the 27,000 megawatts of carbon-free energy that the Bureau of Land Management estimates could be provided by these projects.

Furthermore, if offshore revenue exists for oil and gas development, the same should be true for offshore wind development. That is why we are using the same model established in GOMESA to extend revenue sharing to States that support offshore wind projects. This legislation thus incentivizes developing some of the 4,233 gigawatts of carbon-free generation that the Bureau of Land Management estimates is available for development off our coasts.

This is the American Energy and Conservation Act of 2016. This legislation makes significant investments in conservation projects all over the United States. This legislation provides an additional \$807 million for projects that increase access to public lands for hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreational activities. This particular provision was included in Senator MURKOWSKI's Bipartisan Sportsmen's Act of 2015, which 24 Senators have cosponsored. The legislation makes investments in a variety of important programs, including the Payment in Lieu of Taxes Program.

This legislation is supported by over 50 important stakeholder groups, including the National Association of Manufacturers, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the American Chemistry Council, the American Petroleum Institute, and the Consumer Energy Alliance. These organizations understand that this legislation is a jobs builder and good policy for American workers.

Mr. President, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, the American Energy and Conservation Act of 2016.

I yield back.

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

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

REMEMBERING JACK SHATFORD

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, my Arkansan of the week is Jack Shatford, and the recognition is both honorary and, sadly, posthumous. Jack passed away last month during one of his many hunting trips to Arkansas. He loved our State and its people, and we all miss him badly.

Jack first got to know Arkansas on the other side of the world in Vietnam. Jack and my dad Len served together in the same infantry squad in Vietnam in 1969 and 1970. They became closest of friends, a friendship that only grew over nearly a half century.

Jack was from Missouri, so he and Dad were able to see each other regularly, often on deer-hunting trips in

Arkansas and duck- and goose-hunting trips in Missouri. He became like the brother my dad never had, a second son to my grandparents and Aunt Pood. Jack also got to know my mom Avis, just as my mom and dad got to know Jack's wife Joy. Over time, my sister and I came along and Jack and Joy became like an aunt and uncle to us, just like my parents felt about Kurt, Jack and Joy's son. Some of my oldest memories are traveling to Missouri to see the Shatfords at places like Six Flags, Silver Dollar City, and Branson and seeing how happy and excited my dad was in the days leading up to Jack's visits to Arkansas.

Jack was a lifelong hunter and outdoorsman. He worked for 34 years at the Missouri Department of Conservation. If it flew, ran, or swam, you can pretty much bet that Jack knew how to find it, track it, kill it, and cook it. In fact, I have to confess that Jack probably put more meat on the Cotton family table than my dad ever did. He taught me a lot of lessons as well, not just about the outdoors but about life. Jack helped me see some things through my dad's eyes, and I figure he probably did the same thing for my dad. Their example from Vietnam contributed to my decision to join the Army. That wasn't an easy time in the Cotton household, believe me, but Jack was there to help smooth things over, and he encouraged me all along the way.

Jack was a patriot. He had put his life on the line to defend the country we love so much. I know from my dad's war stories that Jack was fearless and brave, but he was also gentle and outgoing, the kind of guy who makes fast friends. He sure made a lot of friends in Dardanelle where he was like an adopted son. He even belonged to our Yell County Wildlife Federation. Above all, though, Jack was a loving family man, a devoted husband to Joy, and father to Kurt and his wife Mary, and Jack was a doting grandpa to Sarah and Shelby. They will miss Jack as we all miss him so dearly.

The pain hasn't gone away yet. It will not for a while, and it may never go away, but with the pain, we ought to be swelled with pride and gratitude to have known and loved such a fine man.

Jack Shatford, rest in peace and follow me.

#### FUNDING OUR MILITARY

Mr. President, the world may be more unstable than ever. The security architecture we built after World War II is at risk. Our parents and grandparents fought to keep the world free from a conflict between major powers. They created order out of the chaos of world war and genocide. They protected our freedom and ensured that our democratic ideals would be the dominant power in the world. The foundation of that order is the U.S. military. Since they toppled Nazi Germany and imperial Japan, they held firm against the North Korean assault

on the democratic South. They faced down a powerful Soviet Union through decades of Cold War. They liberated Kuwait and have shed blood and sweat for over a decade, keeping America safe from Islamic terrorism.

Today our military is composed solely of volunteers. We don't press our people into service. They choose to serve. Since the draft was abolished, we have had a basic compact with our men and women in uniform. In exchange for their service, we ensure that they have the best training, equipment, and leadership America has to offer. We make certain that if our troops must face the enemy, they are equipped to meet the task. With regret, I must say this compact is fraying and we are failing in our duty to our military.

Today the Armed Forces face a growing number of threats and a shrinking budget. Russia is resurgent. They don't think they lost the Cold War, only that they were behind at halftime. Russia's invasion and occupation of Ukraine and Georgia make it clear that Moscow seeks to dominate its so-called near abroad. Moscow wants to divide the great Atlantic Alliance, viewing the confederation of democracies as a threat to the power and authority of a Putin government. Their bombers probe our airspace in ways unseen since the Cold War. They recently sent a carrier fleet through the English Channel. They probe our electronic defenses with daily cyber attacks and rattle the sabre of their nuclear arsenal at the West.

China has also risen. They have sought to establish military control over the East and South China Seas. China also probes and attacks American servers, stealing vital military and industrial secrets. China has quadrupled its defense spending in the past few years, seeking control of the Pacific Rim.

North Korea is growing a nuclear arsenal and developing the capability to hit any American city with those nuclear bombs.

Iran continues to violate the terms of its nuclear agreement and is the world's worst state sponsor of terrorism. Just last month, Iranian-backed rebels fired Chinese anti-ship missiles at an American warship. Had it not been for the skill of the crew and our modern defenses, sailors may have come home in boxes.

In Afghanistan, we lost 15 service-members in 2016. They continue to fight daily, protecting Americans from the threat of a resurgent terrorist threat.

How do we repay their service? We have cut their budget by over \$1 trillion. We have told them to do more with less. We have ignored their needs, long and repeated deployments, and brutal operations tempo. We have cut their pay, forced them to sail on rickety ships, and told them to fly on aircraft so old they date back to the Truman and Eisenhower administrations. This neglect has taken its toll.

In January, 12 Marines died in a helicopter crash. Low readiness and subpar flying hours were to blame. Last week, six Green Berets were killed in 72 hours. They died in three separate incidents, stretching from the continental United States to Jordan, to Afghanistan. The Air Force is 4,000 airmen short of what is needed to maintain their fleet, and they are 700 pilots short to fly that fleet. They are salvaging parts from scrap yards to keep their aircraft flying.

Since May, five F-18 Hornets and Super Hornets have crashed, killing two pilots and destroying all five jets. In the Army, just 30 percent of brigade combat teams are properly trained and equipped to fight. The Navy has had to defer maintenance for combat ships, leaving them more dangerous for the crews.

We are wrong to ask our military to work and risk their lives under these conditions, and we cannot wait until the next fiscal year to fix this crisis because this is a crisis. This is no way to treat our troops and the military needs relief now.

I will soon introduce a \$26 billion emergency spending request, a lifeline to our overworked warfighters. The funds will be used to address immediate needs in military readiness and overseas operations. They will give our warfighters critical relief in these trying times. They will help keep our men and women in uniform safe as we ask them to do an increasingly dangerous job.

I ask my colleagues to put aside old debates and do what is right for our Armed Forces. They are the ones risking their lives daily, not us. They are the ones out on the front lines defending our country, not us. They are the ones begging for help, and we are the ones obligated to provide it.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCAIN. 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.

#### WORKING TOGETHER

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, it has been the great privilege and honor of my life to represent the people of Arizona in the Senate. I am humbled that in last Tuesday's election they placed their trust in me for another term.

Since I first came to this body, I have never taken that trust for granted, and I never will. I will get up every day for the next 6 years determined to work harder than the day before for the people of Arizona.

Of course, mine was not the only election last Tuesday. The American people did their civic duty and chose a



new President. I congratulate the President-elect. My prayers are with him and his family as he prepares to assume our Nation's highest office, and I will do all in my power to help him lead us through the many challenges confronting our Nation.

This was a long and difficult national election and not always an uplifting one. I know there were many Americans who were disappointed on election night, and we have seen some of that disappointment in the protests that have taken place in several cities across the Nation. Some of those protesters have even taken to using the slogan "Not my President." This is misguided.

I have been on the losing side of elections before, and it is no fun. But America has only one President at a time. We do not have to agree with the President on every issue, and when we do disagree, we should express ourselves in the spirit of mutual respect that is essential for a free and democratic people.

Therefore, I urge all Americans to offer our next President good will and an earnest effort to find ways to come together to make necessary compromises to grow our economy, defend our security, and leave future generations a stronger, better America.

That better America is one in which we never forget that whatever our differences, we are all Americans. We must respect our common citizenship by treating each other with respect.

That is why I have been so disturbed by reports of increased acts of intimidation, harassment, and even violence directed at minority, racial, and religious groups in the aftermath of this election.

Prejudice and hate have no place in America. Such behavior is a betrayal of who we are as a people and all that we aspire to be. To those who have committed these disgusting acts, I repeat the words of the President-elect: Stop it.

With the campaign over, it is time for all of us to go about the work the American people sent us here to do, and there is a lot of work to do. For too long, Washington has schemed, fought, and maneuvered to gain political advantage at the cost of delivering for the American people. The predictable result is that we have made little, if any, progress toward meeting the great challenges of our time and too many Americans feel left out and left behind.

This election made clear that Americans are fed up with business as usual in Washington, and they want us to make progress now on solving national problems that threaten their ability to prosper and make a better life for their families. They want progress now on growing the economy and increasing their opportunities to live purposeful and satisfying lives. They want progress now to secure their families and America's interests from the dangerous threats we face overseas.

As chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, America's na-

tional security and the men and women in uniform who protect it will be my top priorities.

We have to put an end to business as usual at the Pentagon, where the largest government agency cannot pass a financial audit and where a broken acquisitions system is too often plagued by cost overruns, schedule delays, and poor performance.

We have to put an end to sequestration once and for all and return to a strategy-based defense budget. It gives our servicemembers the resources, training, and equipment they need to meet current and future threats. We have to accelerate the defeat of ISIL in Iraq and Syria and continue to take the fight to radical Islamist terrorists who seek to attack our homeland. Above all, we must remain the free world's leader and stand up always and everywhere for the values that make us exceptional and to which all people are entitled: the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. We have to reinvigorate America's alliances around the world, not discard them in favor of cynical deals with adversaries who want us to relinquish our global leadership.

We have to enhance shared efforts to deter and, if necessary, defeat aggression from whatever power threatens our interests and values. Achieving these goals will require a team at the Department of Defense composed of the best people our Nation has to offer. The Senate Armed Services Committee stands ready to receive nominations from the new President. The stakes for our Nation are high. So too must be our standards.

America has many challenges ahead, but none of us should despair of our present difficulties. Instead, we must believe always in the promise and greatness of America. I still do. In that spirit, my promise is this: to work as hard as I ever have; to use all my knowledge, experience, and relationships; and to work with our new President and my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to solve our problems together as fellow Americans.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LEE). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### CONGRATULATING THE CHICAGO CUBS ON WINNING THE WORLD SERIES

Mr. KIRK. Mr. President, I rise to offer congratulations to the 2016 World Series champion Chicago Cubs, who are being congratulated in a resolution that I did with my colleague Senator DURBIN.

For 100 years, it seemed fitting that we would overcome the daunting three games to one to win the series. Many times I have said that any team can have a bad century, like 108 years. One

of the most painful moments we have had as Cubs fans is watching the 1969 Cubs when we always knew we were going to beat the amazing Mets. I remember the names: the late Ron Santo, the late Ernie Banks, Fergie Jenkins, and Billy Williams. They were up nine games on the Mets but collapsed at the end of the season.

In 2016, the Cubs blew away the 1969 record and went all the way. They removed the curse of the billy goat and the black cat. That toughness exemplifies the can-do spirit of the people of Illinois. No one deserves this championship more than the best baseball fans in the country, the Cubs fans.

I also want to give a real shout-out to World Series MVP Ben Zobrist. Following the victory, I had the honor of riding in the victory parade. Over 5 million Chicagoans came to watch. I understand from the press that this was the seventh largest gathering in human history. Congratulations to the 2016 World Series champion Chicago Cubs.

I want to send my thank you to Tom Ricketts, Theo Epstein, and Joe Maddon, the players, the fans, and everyone involved in making this the most unforgettable Cubs season.

I yield back.

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

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

#### RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, 1 year ago I came to the Senate floor for a series of eight speeches on a subject central to the identity and character of our country's religious freedom. As Congress unanimously declared less than two decades ago, religious freedom undergirds the very origin and existence of the United States.

In that series of remarks, I started with the first principles to establish why religious freedom matters and must be given special protection. I reviewed the central role of religious freedom and the central role that religious freedom has played in shaping our country beginning long before independence. I have an example of how I phrased it on this chart.

From the earliest settlers to the revolutionary generation, to the 19th century, to the modern day, religious freedom has been a driving force in American life. Without the quest for religious liberty, there would be no United States, and without the continued guarantee of religious freedom, there can be no American ideal.

I also outlined the substance and status of religious freedom in America. In other words, I answered the questions of what religious freedom is and how important it is. From the pen of James Madison to the words of the First Amendment, from statutes to international treaties, religious freedom has

always been understood to include both belief and behavior in public and in private, collectively and individually. The status of the importance of religious freedom can be summed up in two words used repeatedly by America's Founders and leaders from the beginning: Religious freedom is both inalienable and preeminent.

In last year's series of speeches, I also described the ways our government institutions are increasingly undermining religious freedom. These attacks come from, of course, the executive branch and even State legislatures, and they occur because our leaders have forgotten, ignored, or never really learned the fundamentals of religious freedom.

A philosopher, George Santayana, wrote that "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Put another way, as President Andrew Jackson warned as he left office, "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty."

"You must pay the price," Jackson said, "if you wish to secure the blessing."

Unfortunately, we are no longer paying the price necessary to maintain this fundamental right. Either by negligence or intention, political forces in our society are radically changing what has been the very heart and soul of our great country. They want to restrict the substance of religious freedom so that it includes belief but not behavior; in private but not in public; individually but not collectively. They want to demote the status of religious freedom from inalienable and preeminent to optional and secondary. Examples abound in just the last several years.

When the Obama administration and Democrats in Congress fashioned ObamaCare, for instance, they gave no thought to the law's impact on religious freedom. This is especially shocking given that Federal law required them to do so. The Religious Freedom Restoration Act sets a high standard for government actions that burden religious freedom and explicitly requires that Federal laws and regulations meet that standard. The Obama administration and congressional Democrats, however, ran roughshod over religious freedom in fashioning mandates and policies that force people to violate their deeply held religious beliefs.

The Supreme Court has twice held that the birth control mandate in ObamaCare is incompatible with the protections for religious freedom that Congress previously and nearly unanimously enacted.

Another example is before us today. Two years ago, President Obama issued a sweeping Executive order prohibiting Federal contractors and grant recipients from taking into account sexual orientation or gender identity when making employment decisions. The order itself is not a surprise. President Obama has been a supporter of LGBT

rights throughout his Presidency and believes that gays and lesbians deserve the same job opportunities as everyone else. On that latter point, I—along with most Americans—agree. What was remarkable about President Obama's order was that it contained no exemption for employers with religious affiliations.

For years, laws prohibiting discrimination in employment and housing have routinely included religious liberty exemptions to protect religious organizations from having to take actions that contravene their beliefs. Such exemptions, for example, permit a religiously affiliated school that holds traditional views on marriage and human sexuality to offer married housing only to couples of the opposite sex or decline to hire as a faculty member an individual in a committed, same-sex relationship. These exemptions enable religious organizations to hold true to their beliefs while still complying with the law.

President Obama's decision not to include a religious liberty exemption in his Executive order marked a sharp turn in the wrong direction. One year earlier, Senate Democrats had agreed to include a robust religious exemption in the Employment Nondiscrimination Act, or ENDA, a bill that would have prohibited sexual orientation discrimination in hiring by employers with at least 15 employees. ENDA's exemption tracked similar provisions in numerous State laws, including Utah's. Notwithstanding requests from religious groups, President Obama refused to include a similar exemption in his Executive order.

His refusal means that a religious organization that wishes to compete for Federal funds may be forced to hire individuals who hold views or engage in conduct that contravenes the organization's religious beliefs. This is a direct attack on the ability of such organizations to preserve and promote their religious identity.

Earlier this year, the House of Representatives took action to reverse the President's troubling refusal to protect religious employers. Back in May, the House passed the annual National Defense Authorization Act, or NDAA, to fund the Armed Forces. At the markup on the bill, Representative STEVE RUSSELL of Oklahoma offered, and the committee adopted, an amendment to the bill to clarify that religious organizations that contract with or receive grants from the Federal Government do not lose religious liberty. They do not lose religious liberty protections that they enjoy under other laws merely because they choose to work with the Federal Government.

These protections, which are found in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, include the ability to hire "individuals of a particular religion to perform work connected with the [organization's] activities" and to "require that all applicants and employees conform to the [organization's] religious tenets."

Such protections enable religious organizations to preserve their religious identity by hiring employees who share the organization's religious beliefs.

Now, the Russell amendment affirms that religious organizations and schools enjoy these same protections when they contract with or receive grants from the Federal Government.

The amendment embodies the commonsense, longstanding principle that religious organizations should not have to surrender control over their religious mission in order to interact with government. Unfortunately, there has been a lot of misinformation spread about the Russell amendment and what it does and does not do so let me take a moment to clear it up.

Some have claimed the amendment would allow contractors to deny service to gays or lesbians or would enable any contractor who so wishes to make hiring decisions on the basis of religious beliefs. It would do no such thing. The amendment is limited only to hiring and employment practices and only to religiously affiliated corporations, associations, educational institutions, or societies, in conformance with the existing protections in the Civil Rights Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The amendment clarifies that religious organizations do not lose religious liberty protections merely because they enter into contract with or receive grants from the Federal Government. That is it. We might think that a position reaffirming existing religious liberty protections would not raise eyebrows. Unfortunately, we would be wrong.

President Obama swiftly expressed his opposition to the Russell amendment. Not only that, but he threatened to veto the entire NDAA, cutting off funding for the entire Department of Defense rather than allow the amendment to take effect. President Obama would rather shutter our Armed Forces than enable religious employers to select employees who share their particular values.

Regrettably, the President has been joined in his opposition by 42 Senate Democrats who recently wrote a letter to the President outlining their "strong opposition" to the Russell amendment and asking the President to "ensure that [the amendment] is removed from the final version of [the NDAA]."

The President and my Democratic colleagues are concerned, it seems, that if religious organizations that contract with the Federal Government are able to select employees who share the organization's religious beliefs, they may make decisions that liberals would disapprove of. For example, a religious family services charity may choose to hire individuals who hold traditional views on marriage and human sexuality. Because the President and my colleagues across the aisle do not share these views, they think religious organizations should be unable to take them into account when



seeking employees who will promote the organization's mission. It is difficult to imagine a position more at odds with our heritage of religious freedom.

President Obama and Senate Democrats would empower the Federal Government to compel religious organizations to hire individuals who do not share the organization's religious beliefs. They would insert Federal tentacles into fundamental decisions regarding religious mission and identity. They would have the Federal Government declare off-limits traditional views on sexual orientation and gender identity that many Americans hold as a matter of religious conviction.

But there is an even more pernicious aspect to the Democrats' position on this issue. Many liberals argue that claims of religious liberty are nothing more than a front for discrimination. They contend—with some force—that religious liberty claimants just don't like gay people or don't like women and use religion as a cover for their deep-seated animus toward disfavored groups. That is, of course, ridiculous.

I would challenge anyone who holds this view to actually interact with a religious person. They will find, contrary to their own prejudices, that people of faith are loving, gracious, and polite and, more often than not, go out of their way to help the poor and the downtrodden. Religious believers don't treat others with kindness and charity despite their faith; they do so because of their faith.

To my liberal friends, I say: Before you tar religious believers with whatever benighted stereotypes you see portrayed on TV and in the news media, get to know some of them. You will find your assumptions about them are totally wrong.

Nevertheless, many liberals claim that religious liberty is a guise for discrimination. There is no reason, they say, for a religious organization or individual to seek an exemption from an otherwise equitable law, other than animus toward those the law is designed to protect.

But what, then, are we to make of President Obama's Executive order and the left's reaction to the Russell amendment?

President Obama could have included a religious liberty exemption in his order—such exemptions are standard in other laws, and numerous religious groups asked him to include one here—but he chose not to. Senate Democrats could easily have agreed to the Russell amendment, which does nothing more than reaffirm existing protections for religious employers—but they chose not to do so. What reason is there to exclude religious contractors and grant recipients from religious liberty protections that are otherwise generally available? Why single out such contractors and grant recipients for disfavor? It makes you wonder.

Do my Democratic colleagues not see that the very argument they make

against religious liberty can be turned against them?

They are seeking to withdraw from religious contractors and grant recipients rights and protections that would otherwise be available under existing law. They are undermining the ability of believers to navigate between secular and spiritual demands. They are bringing to bear the sword of the State when they could easily stay their hand.

It is difficult for me to look at the President's actions and those of my colleagues across the aisle and see anything other than discrimination against people of faith. They could give room for believers—as our Nation has done for centuries—but they choose not to. Rather, they cut and nip at religious liberty until all that remains is a hollow shell.

I am left to wonder when the drive for equality became the drive to exclude and to undermine religion because that seems to be where we have arrived.

Give a place for us, say people of faith. Allow us to live out our beliefs. We will abide the law, but we ask you to make reasonable accommodations. Surely a simple religious liberty exemption—indeed, one that is already part of our existing laws—would be reasonable.

I close with an appeal to my Democratic colleagues. The outcome of the fight over the Russell amendment is not in doubt. Even if President Obama vetoes the NDAA or the Russell amendment is removed during conference, President Obama's Executive order will be withdrawn or else amended by the President-elect to include a religious liberty exemption. The Russell amendment will become law whether it is through congressional action or Executive order.

The question for my colleagues across the aisle is whether they will stand up for the rights of religious contractors and grant recipients or whether they will join President Obama's losing battle against religious liberty. Will they protect people of faith or will they prosecute them?

President Obama has cast his lot with the prosecution. It is not too late for my Democratic colleagues to choose a different course, and I hope and pray they will.

These are not itty-bitty issues. These are issues that go right back to the core values of our country and our beliefs. Religious liberty is not something that can be cast aside. It is not something that should be cast aside. Religious liberty is a fundamental right, and we should not be playing around with it in the Congress.

When there is prejudice and there is discrimination, that is another matter, but in virtually every case of religious liberty, I don't find that prejudice or discrimination. Our churches are a vibrant part of America, and we sure as heck ought to stand behind them and make sure religious liberty is always protected.

I hope my colleagues will think these things through, I hope the 42 Democrats who voted to remove the Russell amendment will change their minds, and I hope they start to realize that religious freedom is not some itty-bitty thing. It is the thing in many respects that has been part of making America the greatest land in the world and the freest land in the world and the place where liberty includes real liberty.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I appear to be on the floor for Utah Day, with the junior Senator presiding and the senior Senator speaking. I am delighted to follow the senior Senator. I think in the boisterous days and months we will see ahead, his long-standing reputation for collegiality and reason and the respect in which his colleagues all hold him could become valuable attributes in our Senate.

#### CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. President, I am here as the Senate reconvenes from the 2016 election recess to give my 149th climate speech, but I want first to congratulate my colleagues who were reelected and the new Members elected to the Senate and President-Elect Trump and Vice President-Elect Pence. With control of the White House and majorities coming in the House and the Senate, Republicans will wield great power in Washington, DC, and as the well-known saying goes, "with great power comes great responsibility."

In his acceptance speech, President-Elect Trump asked us all for help and guidance in governing this great Nation. My guidance would be first to be responsible. A key test will be whether our President-elect and Republicans here in the Senate choose to be responsible about climate change.

I am gravely concerned about climate change, but based on the President-elect's campaign, he appears blissfully unconcerned, and Congress has been stalled by a decades-long industry-controlled campaign of calculated misinformation on the danger of carbon pollution and by just raw industry political pressure.

But the President-elect will soon hear—and, hopefully, take it to heart—from a grownup world outside the creepy alt-right and the fossil fuel industry, a world of people who actually know what they are talking about. The President-elect will hear from our military and national security experts how deadly serious this is.

Our former Pacific commander, Admiral Locklear, said it was the biggest national security threat we face in the Pacific theater. To use Admiral Locklear's exact words, "climate change is probably the most likely thing that is going to happen . . . that will cripple the security environment, probably more likely than the other scenarios we all often talk about."

Geoffrey Kemp, former Special Assistant to the President for National

Security Affairs under President Ronald Reagan, said:

Our military and intelligence leadership have recognized, under both the George W. Bush and the Obama administrations, that climate change will present real and costly risks to our national security and that the effects are going to get worse if we don't do something about it very soon. As General Douglas MacArthur warned about the dangers of unpreparedness for war, we don't want to be too late.

The President-elect will hear from our National Labs and from NOAA and NASA, the folks who put a rover on Mars and are driving it around and may know a little bit about real science, about the robust scientific consensus on climate change, and the urgency to change our course. If he doesn't trust our own scientific agencies, he can go to any major university in any State in the Nation and confirm what the government and military experts tell him.

The President-elect will hear from world leaders who have pledged, alongside the United States, to work across borders to limit carbon emissions. The Paris Agreement brought nearly 200 countries together with the common goal of keeping global warming below 2 degrees Celsius and avoiding the most catastrophic outcomes for the planet and its people.

He will also hear from CEOs across America, particularly those in the food and agriculture sectors who are living with climate change consequences every day, and from many others that we need to quit fooling around.

I hope the President-elect will listen to these voices of reason and expertise. The people in our Nation certainly are listening. Polls show over 60 percent of Americans are concerned about global warming, and more than 80 percent of Americans favor action to reduce carbon pollution.

Rhode Island, the Ocean State, would tell the administration that the oceans are the frontlines of climate change. The oceans have absorbed approximately 30 percent of the excess carbon dioxide that we have added to the atmosphere since the Industrial Revolution—30 percent of it. They have also absorbed roughly 90 percent of the excess heat trapped in the atmosphere by those greenhouse gases. Without the oceans to absorb that added heat and carbon dioxide, we would not be worried about the 2-degree warming limit the world community is racing to avoid. We would be looking at a 30-degree increase, and life as our species knows it on this planet would be over.

Oceans have spared us thus far from disaster, but what they have done to buffer our self-inflicted harm comes at its own cost. Global ocean temperatures are rising. In Rhode Island, Narragansett Bay's mean water temperature is up nearly 4 degrees Fahrenheit. Our Rhode Island lobster fishery is crashing, and our winter flounder fishery is gone.

As water warms, of course, it also expands, and as glaciers melt, they add to

the volume of the ocean. That is why sea levels are rising worldwide. The water is up about 10 inches at the Newport Naval Station tide gauge since the 1930s, and the Navy is actively planning how to defend the Norfolk Naval Station from rising seas.

The effect of the ocean's absorbing all that carbon dioxide is a little different. It causes a chemical reaction. It is making ocean water more acidic. The ocean is acidifying and doing so at the fastest rate in 50 million years. Considering we have only been on the planet as a species for about 200,000 years, that is a long, long interval.

Rhode Island's clambers, lobstermen, and aquaculture growers are watching with real alarm the damage acidified seas are doing. On America's northwest coast, oyster hatcheries have already experienced significant losses when their new hatches were unable to grow their shells in the acidified seawater. Off the coasts of Washington, Oregon, and Northern California, 50 percent of ocean pteropods were measured to have "severe shell damage," mostly from acidified seas. If that species collapses, the bottom falls out of the oceanic food chain.

As the oceans go, so goes the planet.

It is my sincere hope that President-Elect Trump will feel the call of history, of reason, and of patriotism to live up to the awesome responsibilities he now will bear.

The 22nd session of the Conference of the Parties to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, the so-called COP-22, is now taking place in Marrakech, Morocco. A similar gathering took place in Copenhagen 7 years ago. A full-page ad in the New York Times then called for passage of climate legislation in the United States for investment in the clean energy economy and for leadership to inspire the rest of the world to join the fight against climate change. It said:

We must embrace the challenge today to ensure that future generations are left with a safe planet and a strong economy. . . . We support your effort—

They said to President Obama—

to ensure meaningful and effective measures to control climate change, an immediate challenge facing the United States and the world today. Please don't postpone the earth. If we fail to act now, it is scientifically irrefutable that there will be catastrophic and irreversible consequences for humanity and our planet.

That full-page ad from which we took this was signed by Donald J. Trump, Chairman and President of the Trump organization. The signatories also included his children, Donald Jr., Eric, and Ivanka. Their future and their reputations are at stake too.

The President-elect campaigned against big special interests controlling Washington, and he mocked Republican politicians groveling before the Koch brothers at their "begathon," as he called it. He has a simple choice now. He can make his own decisions

based on the best recommendations of our military, our national science laboratories, and our great universities, or he can fall in tow to the Koch brothers—the biggest special interest of them all.

He can believe our National Labs and our National Aeronautics and Space Administration, or he can believe the National Enquirer. He can believe our military or he can believe the fossil fuel industry's denial apparatus. He can believe established scientific principles or he can believe fanciful conspiracy theories. His choice will be fateful, and the world and history will both be watching.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### 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.

#### RECOGNIZING COMMERCE LEXINGTON INC.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to recognize an organization in my home State that has been honored for the fine work it is doing for the people of central Kentucky. Commerce Lexington, Inc., the chamber of commerce organization for greater Lexington, has been named Chamber of the Year by the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives, ACCE. In doing so, it beat other chambers of commerce from across the country, including those representing Brooklyn, NY; Jacksonville, FL; and Tacoma, WA. This is the first time Commerce Lexington Inc. has won this award.

ACCE's Chamber of the Year award recognizes the leadership role chambers of commerce play in both their respective business communities and in civic life. To win the award, Commerce Lexington Inc. had to compete against hundreds of other chambers, including those from 93 of the top 100 U.S. metro areas.

ACCE presented the award to Commerce Lexington Inc. at its annual convention in Savannah, GA, this past August. Commerce Lexington Inc. has been a finalist for the award 3 years in a row—2014, 2015, and 2016. And in addition to receiving the Chamber of the Year award, Commerce Lexington Inc. also earned one of ACCE's top communications/marketing honors, the Grand Award.