

Strategist with ties to the White nationalist movement is dangerous, it is unacceptable, it is certainly not normal, and it must never be normal. I am deeply alarmed that President-Elect Trump has appointed Mr. Bannon to such an important position, and I urge him to reconsider this decision.

I am proud that Michigan is a diverse State. I have heard from over 1,000 Michiganders about Mr. Bannon's appointment. Yes, some are angry, but more are scared—scared that the America that had welcomed them and welcomed my mother is at risk of disappearing. I have heard from mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, Muslim Americans, Jewish Americans, African Americans, and Latino Americans. They are asking what their place will be in President Trump's America as our American experiment enters into an unprecedented new era.

As our Nation continues to move forward, I would urge President-Elect Trump to look back and consult the namesake of the city in which he will soon be living—President George Washington. In a letter written in 1790 to the Newport Hebrew congregation, at the time the largest community of Jewish families in America, President Washington succinctly addressed their fears of religious oppression, and he wrote: "The government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens."

He added that "every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree and there shall be none to make him afraid."

President-Elect Trump won, and the people are afraid. It is now his job to bring our Nation together. It is his job to give bigotry no sanction and persecution no assistance. The appointment of Mr. Bannon is clearly a large step in the wrong direction. If this is indicative of how the President-elect is going to run his administration, he can expect me and my fellow Democratic colleagues to fight him every step of the way. On the other hand, if the President-elect is prepared to be a "President for all Americans" and to "bind the wounds of division," as he pledged in his victory speech just last week, I certainly hope that we can find common ground.

Whether it is making trade policy work for American manufacturers, supporting small businesses, bolstering cyber security, establishing meaningful paid and parental leave policies, or investing in infrastructure, if the President-elect is ready to roll up his sleeves and do what is right by American workers and American families, I will work with him.

We don't have Democratic bridges or Republican roads; we don't have Democratic ports and Republican railroad tracks. They are truly non-partisan. Improving our country's infrastructure is something we can come

together on and show Americans we are ready to do the people's work.

Democracy is a wonderful thing, but history shows us that it can also be fragile. We must preserve our democratic institutions and show the people of America that these institutions and their elected officials are working for all Americans. I intend to spend the next 4 years working for what is right for our country and what is right for Michigan, and I hope our President-elect joins me.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. TILLIS. Madam 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.

DEVASTATION FROM HURRICANE MATTHEW

Mr. TILLIS. Madam President, I come to the Chamber to talk about a devastating event we have experienced in North Carolina. Last month, Hurricane Matthew skirted along the Atlantic coast, and then it plowed right through North Carolina with devastating results. Matthew is the worst storm we have experienced in almost 20 years, and it is already responsible for taking some 28 lives.

Millions of people in North Carolina and across the country watched as the storm made landfall, but after a few days, many of them turned their attention back to their daily lives. I don't fault them for doing this because unless you are there and see it firsthand, it is easy to think it was just a lot of rain and a storm that came and went, but it is far worse than that. Thousands of adults and children will take years to recover from the devastation that they have experienced over the last month.

The first opportunity I had to survey the damage was just 2 days after the hurricane made landfall. I traveled across the State in a helicopter with the commissioner of agriculture, and what I saw was remarkable. In fact, it was after the rain had occurred but before the floods began almost a week later.

The next week I spent time with many of my staff working as volunteers down in one of the areas that was hit hard by the flood. We worked with the American Red Cross, the Baptist Men, and the Salvation Army, which were trying to prepare food and provide shelter for so many people who were displaced.

I was back in the area last weekend, and I had an opportunity to witness firsthand the farm damage and the damage to one of our major areas outside of Fort Bragg, an urban area that

was hit very hard. Over the course of the last 3 weeks, I have literally seen long stretches of interstate highways under water. I have seen major roads completely washed out. I have seen entire communities under water and a couple of towns that have been washed away. Some of them were washed away just 20 years ago.

I have seen farms that were under water for a period of time, and now their crops are rotting in the field. In other cases, farmers who had harvested their crops and prepared their land for the next planting season now have sand and debris on their fields.

I have heard heartbreaking stories from victims, rescue workers, and volunteers. I will share some of those stories. I also heard heartwarming stories about the responsiveness of our local, State, and Federal agencies and the kindness of neighbors and volunteers.

I wish to thank the State and local officials, FEMA, and the first responders, who are doing an excellent job under some of the most difficult circumstances.

The death and destruction caused by Hurricane Matthew is really impossible to comprehend. The 28 lives we lost are a cross section of the State. They are parents and grandparents, sons and daughters, leaders of our community and young people who had their entire lives ahead of them. One of the victims was Charles Ivey. He was a resident of Lumberton, one of the areas that was hardest hit. He was a pillar of his community. Charles served as a deacon and Sunday school director at West Lumberton Baptist Church. He was an active member of the Lumberton Lions Club, Jaycees, Robeson County Fair Board, and West Lumberton Community Watch. He was the loving father of two daughters, had four grandchildren, and leaves behind his wife Wanda.

Another victim who perished as a result of the storms was Isabelle Ralls of Godwin. She was a resilient woman who survived cancer, triple-bypass surgery, and kidney failure. She devoted her life to others, spending years as a caregiver for the Peace Corps. She was a Sunday school teacher and the church historian at Spring Hills Baptist Church. Her family and friends will always remember her as a phenomenal woman and role model who had an inspiring faith in God.

These are just a couple of stories about the victims of Hurricane Matthew. They were all people I could probably tell stories about. They were mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, and loving friends—28 precious lives lost in total. I hope the family and friends of the victims know that millions of North Carolinians and people across the Nation are praying for them and their recovery.

Although the loss of life alone was devastating, it is really not the total story. In fact, it will take years to recover. Hurricane Matthew was a massive storm. To give you an idea, it is what is referred to as a 1,000-year flood

event. In other words, for this area, statistically speaking, it will be another 1,000 years before they see the amount of water dumped in the same period of time. It was a 500-year flood event for a massive part of Eastern North Carolina. Thousands of people were forced out of their homes and relocated to shelters. Many are still in temporary housing and thousands of the homes are not habitable. The storm flooded areas that were well outside of the 100-year floodplain. So many of them didn't have flood insurance.

Last week I visited one of those communities. It was a Habitat for Humanity community that had some 90 homes built over the last 15 to 16 years. Sixty of those homes are under water. Those 60 homes are not habitable, and as a result, 60 families are displaced.

The pain is, as I said before, hard to imagine. It is immeasurable. To give you an idea, we have reports of several victims, and I have summarized a few of them. Another victim is Ann Johnson from Lenoir County, another county that was hard hit. She was one of the many people who were displaced and had to live in a shelter. As she was waiting in the shelter, she told a reporter:

I just feel kind of lost right now, loss for words. You kind of feel like you don't have anything and you're just starting all over again.

Another victim, Perry Harris of Johnston County, south of Raleigh, sustained more than \$1 million in damage to a small business that four of his children worked at and had for some 15 years. He said:

It is very emotional. I've been trying to do the best I can. I have four kids that work for me. It has been very hard on my family. We just don't know what tomorrow brings.

Another victim, Charlie Mitchell, who is a farmer in Wayne County, lost the home he lived in for 49 years. He has a 2,000-acre farm that was submerged under water. He said: "I've been in floods or around floods all my life, but I've never seen anything like this."

Hurricane Matthew has been especially difficult for children as well. In fact, the teachers and school counselors in Cumberland County asked the students to write down their experience to kind of help them begin to cope and recover from the traumatic experience. There was one sixth grade student who wrote:

I heard a loud crack followed by three loud thuds. When my family got out of bed, I saw three big trees, and one destroyed the kitchen. Not even five minutes after we left, the ceiling collapsed in all rooms except for the bathroom and my mom's room.

Matthew has been a life-changing event for many North Carolinians. Relatives and friends who lost a loved one, families who lost their homes, small businesses and owners who can no longer find a place to work and employ others, farmers who have watched their once-fertile land become unproductive due to the flooding.

I share these stories because North Carolina will need help, just like West Virginia, Louisiana, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. Those States have also has been damaged in this storm season or in the flood season. Many people lost their lives, and those States need help. North Carolina needs help.

My team is working with Senator BURR and my House colleagues to really try and quantify the damage. Over the next couple of weeks, we will be working to make sure we work with our colleagues in other States to make sure they get the assistance they desperately need before we leave at the end of the year.

More than anything else, I want to make sure the victims of this storm know they have people working for them, and we are going to make sure this great body and this Nation comes to their aid in their time of crisis.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

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

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

WASTEFUL SPENDING

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, after a long district work period and a national election, I am returning to the Senate floor to resume my weekly "Waste of the Week" speeches.

The Presiding Officer and my colleagues have watched me come to the floor 53 times in the 114th Congress to talk about documented waste, fraud, and abuse, and the expenditure of funds—of taxpayer dollars—on things that produce no positive effect.

Regardless of which party is controlling any branch of government—and we have had a significant change here in just the last couple of weeks—it is imperative that our focus remains on governing for the benefit of the American people, and this includes, from my perspective, rooting out any kind of waste, fraud, and abuse found within the Federal Government.

Taxpayers should demand an effective and efficient government that spends their money on the behalf and the future of this country and on behalf of the future of our constituents. When they read about waste, fraud, and abuse, it is perfectly natural that they would call on us to address the problem, which has been paying a dime more than is necessary to run the Federal Government, and to pull us out of this ever-spiraling deficit spending and deep entrance into debt which may not be able to be repaid.

That is why I am taking a look at yet another waste of the week, and this one is called identity theft tax refund fraud which, over the past 2 years, has accounted for \$23 billion in stolen tax-

payer money; that is right, \$23 billion of stolen taxpayer money.

How does this happen? Well, the theft occurs when criminals gain access to someone else's personal information, like their name and Social Security number, in order to essentially steal the tax refund that might be owed to them for the tax returns that have been interrupted and sent before the victim's tax return has actually been filed. Often criminals file someone else's tax return before the victim does so the IRS ends up sending tax refund money to criminals instead of the workers who earned the money. When such abuses happen, not only is the IRS unknowingly paying criminals, but the real tax refunds are denied or seriously delayed to the millions of hard-working Americans who are counting on those refunds.

So for families who struggle to make ends meet, annual tax refunds are often seen as a lifeline, but when those families have their tax returns stolen, it can take up to a year or more to rectify this mess.

Sadly, many of these criminals prey on senior citizens and low-income individuals because they know they are more likely to receive a tax refund and less likely to pursue the lengthy and often complicated process of getting the tax return that is due them.

Some hacks have even targeted children under the age of 14, often because parents don't think it is necessary to monitor their children's credit. Unfortunately, this makes children easy targets.

Within the past decade, identity theft-related tax fraud has exploded. In fact, from 2011 to 2014, the Government Accountability Office and the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration, TIGTA, estimates that the IRS paid out \$23 billion in tax refunds to identity thieves instead of the taxpayer who was due the money. Let that sink in—\$23 billion paid out by the Federal Government to criminals in just a 4-year period of time, and that is just the fraud the IRS has discovered. We don't know the number of returns that have not been identified or discovered over that period of time. This is the year 2016, and this is an ever-increasing amount of money in fraud that is occurring.

The continued success of those who are able to hack in and get Social Security numbers of individuals and use that to steal their tax returns is drawing ever more criminal activity. These criminals are getting more sophisticated, making it much harder for the IRS to track down and next to impossible for the government to recover those funds.

There is no silver bullet for addressing identity tax fraud. The IRS has detected and prevented numerous attempts of ID theft-related tax fraud. However, there is more that can and should be done.

First, the IRS data security system needs to be updated to comply with the

Federal Government's own security standards. According to TIGTA, three different Federal agencies have data security requirements for the Federal Government, and the IRS data system doesn't fully comply with any of them. This could be fixed. It should be fixed immediately.

Coordinating between agencies is something I have been talking about over and over again. The left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing. Social Security disability doesn't know about Social Security retirement payments and the unemployment insurance disability being paid. There is a lack of communication between agencies within the Federal Government.

The Government Accountability Office, GAO, testified at the Senate Finance Committee in April that there are nearly 100 recommendations that the GAO has made to the IRS to improve their data security. So the government agency charged with looking at how efficient or inefficient an agency is has the opportunity to make recommendations to that agency, and hopefully they will be complied with, but because of our lack of oversight in the U.S. Congress, we are not following up with enough pressure on those agencies to actually employ those recommendations. As a consequence, we are standing down here on the floor talking about this waste that goes on and on. Yet we don't go after the agencies to get those recommendations in place.

We learned that GAO's 100 recommendations have not been fully implemented, and worse, more than half of these recommendations are over 1 year old.

Imagine how the American people would react if a private company had so many persistent holes in its data system that it wrongfully paid criminals \$23 billion of their money.

Another way to prevent fraud suggested by the IRS watchdogs is to first receive the W-2 forms before issuing refunds. Here is what happens: employers issue the W-2s showing how much you earn and we attach those to our tax returns. The problem is, the tax returns that go to the government and the returns that come in from the taxpayer are not coordinated, and so there is a gap that potentially exists. The 2017 tax-filing season will be the first year this accelerated system is implemented to address this particular issue because the legislation that was passed in 2015, which I supported, has accelerated the issuance of W-2s from the IRS so the IRS can verify the validity of the return.

In the meantime, I will continue to work with my colleagues in the Senate as long as I am here to keep the pressure on the IRS to ensure it meets Federal data security requirements and fulfills the other unimplemented security recommendations.

So adding to our chart, which we thought when we started we might be

able to reach \$100 billion—we weren't sure—but it just keeps coming in. It just keeps pouring in, record after record, examination after examination, by certified nonpartisan government organizations. We added \$23 billion more to the waste of the week thermometer, reaching now well over \$350 billion of waste, fraud, and abuse.

To those who say there are no more cuts we can make in spending to reduce the deficit and the ever-increasing Federal debt or to those who say we need to find ways to address critical needs such as funds to address the spread of the Zika virus or money for cancer research or money to help strengthen our military during this time of conflict and threat to our homeland, I say to them: Let's at least start with what we know are tax dollars that are lost to waste, fraud, and abuse. We owe that to the taxpayers and to future generations. We owe that to our children and grandchildren who will be saddled with this debt. We owe that to our Nation to run an effective, efficient government to retain the trust of the American people that the tax dollars they sent to Washington are wisely spent for necessary purposes that only the Federal Government can accomplish.

We have a duty. We have a duty that rises above politics. We have a duty to make every effort we can to make government efficient and effective on behalf of the taxpayer.

So I am calling on my colleagues to say, yes, we need to look at the long-term impact in our midst. It is critical. It can have negative implications for the future of America. Until we get to that point—and we have made several attempts to do that under this administration, and each one was shut down before it hit the White House or was rejected by the White House—can't we at least look at the \$350 billion of waste, fraud, and abuse that is documented? Can't we at least start there? That is what I am calling on my colleagues to do. We don't have many weeks left in this session, but you can count on me being here each week that we have left, talking yet again about yet another instance of waste, fraud, and abuse.

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

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative 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. LEE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Arizona.

CONTINUING RESOLUTION

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, here we go again. For the eighth consecutive year, Congress has failed to pass an appropriations bill for the Department of Defense on time, leaving our troops operating on a so-called "continuing resolution."

Now, fresh off an election where the American people were clear that they are fed up with business as usual, that is exactly what we are about to get if Congress adopts another continuing resolution that would cut resources to our troops, hamper the war against ISIL, and delay the cutting-edge equipment and reforms they need.

A continuing resolution would also make the job of managing the government's largest agency even more difficult—and at the worst possible time.

The Presidential transition process currently underway is difficult enough on its own, but no incoming President has ever had to inherit a Department of Defense operating under a continuing resolution—no incoming President—but this is not the time for us to break that streak.

As the name suggests, a continuing resolution is supposed to continue funding the government in situations where the Congress fails to pass a regular appropriations bill. So what is the big deal about continuing last year's funding levels?

Our Nation asks a lot of the men and women serving in uniform. We are asking them to defend our Nation and our interests in real time against rapidly changing threats and adaptive adversaries, but a continuing resolution would lock our military into last year's budgets and last year's priorities. Does anybody believe this year isn't greatly dissimilar from last year on the battlefield?

A continuing resolution would place our troops at greater risk by forcing them to operate under an outdated budget that does not recognize the full extent of the threats they face. Worse still, a continuing resolution doesn't quite live up to its name. A continuing resolution would actually cut funds for our troops. The continuing resolution passed by Congress in September to keep funding through the end of this year cut the military's budget by \$9 billion at annualized levels. Under a potential yearlong continuing resolution, our military would be short \$12 billion.

The incoming and elected President of the United States stated time after time that we needed to spend more money on defense; we are not taking care of the defense needs of this Nation; we are not taking care of the equipment, training, and benefits of men and women who are serving in the military; that we have the smallest Army that we have had since World War II; that we have the smallest Air Force that we have had since the end of the Korean war; that we have the smallest Navy since the end of World War I.

So what are we going to do? What are we going to do in response to all that? As the conditions around the world become more chaotic, we are going to cut defense spending by \$12 billion. Not only would a continuing resolution cut resources, it would leave them with the wrong mix of funding among accounts.