

Sioux. Appropriately enough, these people call themselves water protectors. Native Americans from all over America, politicians from all over America, entertainers from all over America, and other celebrities were some of the water protectors, and we must recognize the more than 2,000 veterans who traveled to Standing Rock from across America to protect the protestors from violence.

It is also important to note that speech after speech and demonstration after demonstration were peaceful. All the leaders of this demonstration said time after time after time that it would be peaceful, and it has been. The only aggression has not been from the Indians but from those people who are pushing the pipeline.

It is no surprise that many of these veterans are Native Americans because American Indians serve in our Nation's Armed Forces in greater numbers per capita than any other ethnic group. Going back to World War II, of course, the great Ira Hayes, who was made famous by Johnny Cash—they have a long history of serving in all of our wars and stepping forward.

I am gratified at the strength of the Standing Rock Sioux. Their ancestral burial grounds will remain protected and their water clean.

I thank President Obama and his administration and the Army Corps of Engineers for their action. This victory was the culmination of months and months of analysis and deliberation. I appreciate the conclusion reached.

But everyone should know that this fight isn't over. We know from long experience that our decisionmakers keel over for fossil fuel interests. We must remain vigilant. My only hope is that the Trump administration will not undo the justice the Native Americans have finally received. All of us must support the Standing Rock Sioux and help them protect their history and their land and their water.

As one aside, many decades ago I was the Lieutenant Governor of the State of Nevada, and we had our Lieutenant Governors' conference in Oklahoma. It was a wonderful week that we spent in Oklahoma. One of the highlights of that trip was an education that I received one night of a—I assume it is still going on; I don't know—a wonderful pageant that took place in a place that I believe is called Tahlequah—I believe that was the name of the place—where in such detail and in such magnificence was described how Oklahoma has so many Native Americans who came from Florida. It was a wonderful story. I was very impressed with the Native Americans whom I met and have met since that time in Oklahoma. And a memento I was given there in Oklahoma—frankly, someone stole it from me, but each one of us, each Lieutenant Governor, was given a little painting by a famous Oklahoman—at the time, at least—whose time was Tiger. I don't know what his real name was, but he was a famous artist. It was

a beautiful Indian scene he had painted. We all got one. It was an original. I am sorry someone took it out of my office. But I have fond memories of that convention in Oklahoma where I learned so much about the people of Oklahoma.

Some of us in the West have had over the years kind of a negative impression of Oklahoma—the Okies coming into California, all of these uneducated people causing trouble—but that was a wonderful trip to Oklahoma. I was terribly impressed at the time and have always been impressed with the people of Oklahoma.

Just a little aside here: I have had some good fortune at being able to legislate things here in Washington. One of the things that can be looked at as good or bad—and maybe I won't get a lot of pats on the back for this with the new administration—but a Senator from Oklahoma and I did some very good work. The Congressional Review Act was Reid-Nichols legislation. That was hard to do, but what it basically said is if there is a regulation promulgated by an administration, we as a Congress have an opportunity to look it over again to determine if, in fact, we have the ability, with enough folks, to overturn that regulation.

So, again, as the Presiding Officer is from Oklahoma, I want him to understand my affection for the State of Oklahoma and the people of Oklahoma. I have had some difficult tussles with people from Oklahoma over the years. There is no better example of that than Dr. Coburn. But having said that, I have never found more of a gentleman than Dr. Coburn. Even though we disagreed on some policy issues, he was always a gentleman and I have appreciated the things I learned from him.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

TSUNAMI WARNING, EDUCATION, AND RESEARCH ACT OF 2015

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the House message to accompany H.R. 34, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

House message to accompany H.R. 34, an act to authorize and strengthen the tsunami detection, forecast, warning, research, and mitigation program of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and for other purposes.

Pending:

McConnell motion to concur in the amendment of the House to the amendment of the Senate to the bill.

McConnell motion to concur in the amendment of the House to the amendment of the Senate to the bill, with McConnell amendment No. 5117, to change the enactment date.

McConnell amendment No. 5118 (to amendment No. 5117), of a perfecting nature.

McConnell motion to refer the message of the House on the bill to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, with instructions, McConnell amendment No. 5119, to change the enactment date.

McConnell amendment No. 5120 (to the instructions (amendment No. 5119) of the motion to refer), of a perfecting nature.

McConnell amendment No. 5121 (to amendment No. 5120), of a perfecting nature.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

REMEMBERING JAMES TANCILL LYONS

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Jim Lyons, a longtime staffer on Capitol Hill—my staffer—and a fixture in tax policy here in DC, who passed away on September 29 of this year.

James Tancill Lyons was born on March 7, 1973, to Stephen and Ann Lyons, both natives of the DC-Virginia area with longstanding ties to the local community. Growing up in Springfield, VA, Jim was an accomplished athlete, excelling in both baseball and basketball. Oddly, for a sports fan in the DC area, his favorite football team was the Dallas Cowboys—a decision he made consciously because his older brother, Stephen, was a big Redskins fan.

Jim was also a great student, eventually graduating summa cum laude from James Madison University. He went to law school at the University of Texas, where he made the Editing Committee of the Texas Journal of Business Law and won a scholarship for being the best tax law student in his class after pulling the top grade in his business associations, income tax, international tax, corporate tax, and estate and gift tax classes.

After law school, he earned a clerkship at the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals and then got a job working for Cleary Gottlieb, one of the finest law firms in the country. Of course, you would never guess any of this if you knew Jim. While he was always an incredibly valuable and often brilliant attorney and congressional staffer, he talked about his college and law school days as though he spent most of his time having fun and just barely skating by. That, of course, was vintage Jim Lyons—incredibly outgoing but unbelievably humble.

Jim could have a long conversation with anyone about pretty much anything, but he was never one to spend all that much time touting his own accomplishments. Make no mistake, Jim Lyons was very accomplished. After his time at the law firm in New York, Jim made his way to the House Ways and Means Committee, and, following a brief subsequent and successful stint at the Department of Justice, he was hired by Chairman CHUCK GRASSLEY to serve as tax counsel on the Senate Finance Committee.

In his 8 years on the Finance Committee, he made a mark on every major tax bill, not to mention a number of debt and budget deals that went through the Senate, including many tax-extenders bills, some of which he seemed to be able to cobble together singlehandedly.

Jim was smart as a whip. He was a tremendously valuable congressional staffer because he had both a remarkable understanding of tax policy and an uncanny ability to see all the traps and pitfalls that stood ahead for any particular proposal or piece of legislation. He had an encyclopedic knowledge of the technical aspects of the Tax Code, as well as a clear understanding of the real-world implications, immediately seeing where a particular tax policy or bill would fit in the larger policy and, when necessary, the political landscape. Jim was one of those people who could go into the weeds to discuss, debate, and negotiate tax policy literally with anyone on the planet but also break that same policy down to its essential elements and explain it to lesser mortals, including, I have to say, more than a few of us U.S. Senators.

Of course, like all of us, Jim had his own ideological views and opinions, and he made no secret about the way he saw the world and his beliefs about the best path forward for our country. When necessary, he was a fierce advocate for his own views, but more importantly, for someone in his position, he was able, when necessary, to dispassionately apply his accrued knowledge and expertise to any tax proposal, whether it came from a conservative or liberal or a Republican or Democrat, and then break it down to its essence and give a clear and concise assessment of the policy and its chances for being enacted.

All of this made him an essential and indispensable part of our efforts on the Senate Finance Committee for close to a decade. As I think all of my colleagues will attest, staffers with that kind of knowledge and ability to evaluate policy and lay out its chances for success really can be hard to come by.

However, in the weeks since Jim's passing, it hasn't been his accomplishments or his knowledge of the Tax Code that people have most remembered; instead, most of the focus has been on his friendly demeanor, his mischievous sense of humor, and most of all, his kind heart.

Dozens of Jimmy's friends and colleagues visited Jim and his family in the hospital during his final days, and during the October recess, hundreds attended a memorial service held here in the Capitol. Each one of these people had at least one personal story to share about Jim. Sure, some of the stories did touch on his successes as a staffer and his professional disposition, but far more often the stories were about Jim's kindness, even to strangers, or his ability to make people feel at ease—and sometimes laugh uncontrollably—even in tense situations.

Jim was always quick to offer assistance and comfort to those in need and to provide a much needed laugh when things got really tough. He is one of very few people I have come across on Capitol Hill—and keep in mind I have been here a while—who will be remembered more or less equally for the bills

he successfully drafted and negotiated and for the way he cracked everyone up at the negotiating table.

I think my favorite story I have heard about Jim came from his mother Ann. In 2003, Jim was living in New York City when much of that part of the country suffered a massive blackout. It is difficult to be in a place like New York without power, and Jim noticed many people on his way home who were stranded and in need of assistance. Rather than look down at the ground and head quickly for home, as many would probably want to do in that situation, Jim offered help to a dozen or so people, bringing them all home to his apartment, giving them both food and a comfortable space to ride out the power outage. Most of these people were strangers. Yet Jim, ever the kind soul, offered his time and his home to help them through a difficult evening.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that a copy of pages 14 and 15 from the August 2003 edition of *Cleargolaw News*, a newsletter for the law firm where Jim worked at that time, be printed in the RECORD following my remarks.

The article tells the story of Jim's efforts during the power blackout.

These are the types of stories that have constantly been shared since Jim's passing, and I know these memories and stories from people who knew and worked with Jim have been helpful to his family during this difficult time.

When I hear these accounts of people's interactions with Jim, I am reminded of a popular hymn in my church, which reads:

Each life that touches ours for good
Reflects thine own great mercy, Lord;
Thou sendest blessings from above
Thru words and deeds of those who love.
What greater gift dost thou bestow,
What greater goodness can we know
Than Christ-like friends, whose gentle ways
Strengthen our faith, enrich our days.
When such a friend from us departs,
We hold forever in our hearts
A sweet and hallowed memory,
Bringing us nearer, Lord, to thee.

Jim Lyons led a life which touched many others for the better. His positive influence has been felt by countless people, pretty much anyone who had the opportunity to interact with him. I personally already miss Jim's stalwart presence on the Finance Committee. I miss his wise and plain-spoken advice and unequalled knowledge of tax policy. More than that, I miss the kind and humorous manner that endeared Jim to so many of us working in and around the Senate.

There is a simple quote—an anonymous proverb of sorts—that has often been attributed to Dr. Seuss, though its origin is ultimately in dispute: "Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened."

Over the past couple of months, I think that has been the prevailing sentiment among those of us who were lucky enough to know Jim Lyons. While tears have been shed and great

sadness has been felt, the remembrances we have had of Jim's life and our interactions with him have given all of us reason to smile and even laugh.

I want to once again express my condolences to Jim's family, his parents Stephen and Ann, his brother Steve, his two nephews, Tyler and Blake, and of course his beloved dog Buddy. Recently, I have had the opportunity to spend time with and get to know Jim's wonderful family. They are truly extraordinary people, and my prayers continue to go out to them. I know I am not alone in that regard. I care for them. Everybody who knew Jim and has now known them cares for them. Our sympathy and our heartfelt thanks go out to them for allowing their son to become the great person he became, and, of course, allowing him to come and work with us on Capitol Hill.

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

THANK YOU FOR TAKING CARE OF US

(By Alice Steinert)

Here is a wonderfully refreshing story about a truly good, kind person.

The day of the blackout was scary for some, devastating for others, and just plain inconvenient for many. There are those of us who still have thighs and calves that ache from all those flights of stairs! Many people could not get home that night for a number of reasons—1) after walking down that many flights of stairs, some people were a bit lame and therefore could not walk the distance to their homes, or their homes were too far to walk to; 2) there were few, if any, buses, taxi cabs, cars, trains, ferries, no subways, and no hotel vacancies; 3) etc., etc., etc.

But, for those of us fortunate enough to know Jim Lyons, CGSH Associate extraordinaire, we certainly know the meaning of the true human spirit.

Jim invited many people to his home that day when we had to evacuate OLP. He provided an immediate "base" for people to relax, calm down, regroup, make contact with family/friends, eat, drink, whatever they needed. But, for nine of us (Ron Becton, Robert Franklin, Monica Gagnon, Glenville Hunter, Amy Menendez, Alice Steinert, Jason Steinert, Naj-Lah Toussaint and Carol Whatley), he provided much, much more. He provided a safe haven for the night.

At about 7:45 P.M. Jim walked from his home to OLP to see if there was anyone else in need of assistance. Well, he found nine of us who were seriously thinking about bunking down for the night in front of the lobby doors. Without hesitation Jim invited all of us to his home (he had never even met some of us before). Not only did he provide us with a roof over our heads, he also offered food and beverage, the use of his cell phone, pillows and blankets, and even gave up his bed to two of us ladies. Not only that, he bought toothbrushes for us; What ensued was a night we will all remember—good people, stimulating conversation, a lot of fun, and a great deal of bonding and camaraderie.

While we will individually, and as a group, thank Jim, I think everyone in the firm should recognize what an exceptional person Jim is. If there were more "Jim's" in the world, what a different place it would be. God Bless You Jim.

REMEMBERING KING BHUMIBOL ADULYADEJ OF THAILAND

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I rise today, December 5, 2016, in commemoration of the 89th birthday of the late

King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand and in recognition of the National Day of Thailand. In remembrance of the extraordinary life, steady leadership, and remarkable 70-year reign of the beloved King Bhumibol, I have introduced S. Con. Res. 57, along with Representative MATT SALMON in the House. This resolution honors the late King's lasting legacy, extends our collective condolences to the royal family and the people of Thailand, and celebrates the alliance and friendship between our two nations. I would like to thank the cosponsors of this resolution, Senators WHITEHOUSE, ROBERTS, MARKEY, FLAKE, COTTON, and GARDNER. Additionally, I express my appreciation to Chairman BOB CORKER for his assistance in receiving timely consideration of this bipartisan effort in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

His Majesty, King Bhumibol Adulyadej, enjoyed a special relationship with the United States, having been born in Cambridge, MA, in 1927, while his father was completing his medical studies at Harvard University. He was always a trusted friend of the United States in advancing a strong and enduring alliance and partnership between our two countries.

At the time of his death on October 13, 2016, King Bhumibol Adulyadej was the longest serving head of state in the world and the longest serving in the history of Thailand. He dedicated his life to the well-being of the Thai people and the sustainable development of his country. His Majesty was an anchor of peace and stability for Thailand and for the region, earning him the deep reverence of the Thai people and the respect of leaders around the world.

I hope my colleagues will join me tomorrow in passing S. Con. Res. 57 as a gesture of respect and appreciation for the life of this great leader and as a symbol of our continued commitment to and friendship with Thailand. Additionally, I am sure my colleagues in the Senate will join me in offering our warmest congratulations and best wishes to the new King of Thailand, His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn.

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. 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.

PASSAGE VITIATED—H.R. 5602, S. 3336, AND CALENDAR NOS. 675 THROUGH 683

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to vitiate passage of H.R. 5602, S. 3336, and Calendar Nos. 675 through 683.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. 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.

FAREWELL TO THE SENATE

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, I rise today to speak on the Senate floor for the last time. I am not generally big on nostalgic reminiscences, but I would like to briefly reflect on what is clearly the greatest honor of my professional life—my 12 years in the U.S. Senate and 5½ years in the U.S. House of Representatives and the enormous honor of serving the people of Louisiana to whom I will always be so deeply indebted.

In some ways it seems like just yesterday that I was on the floor of the U.S. House being sworn in, surrounded by our very young children, except for Jack, who wasn't born yet. I said then: "I am honored, humbled, awestruck to stand before you today." I stated my simple goal: to become at ease and comfortable as I learn the ways of Congress, as I hopefully become an effective representative and respected colleague and friend, but never to become so at ease and comfortable that I lose these feelings of honor, of humility, of awe, and, believe me, I haven't.

My very first year in the Senate was a very memorable one. That year Louisiana was struck by Hurricanes Rita and Katrina. After the initial shock of those cataclysmic events, I realized that for quite some time, my priorities as Louisiana Senator would be dominated by the desperate need to rebuild our State, including dramatically improving our hurricane and flood protection and restoring our coastline.

Katrina's devastation was hard to imagine, destroying much of Southeast Louisiana and Coastal Mississippi. Less than 1 month later, Hurricane Rita slammed into Southwest Louisiana as another one of the most intense hurricanes in history. I immediately went to work with Senator Landrieu and the rest of our Louisiana delegation as well as my good friends THAD COCHRAN, Trent Lott, and others to secure the necessary disaster recovery assistance and also to make reforms to the Army Corps of Engineers to better protect our families and communities from future natural disasters.

Louisiana has continued to face and survive other major disasters, including Hurricane Gustav in August and September 2008, Hurricane Ike in September of that same year, Hurricane Isaac in 2012, the Red River flooding in Northern and Central Louisiana, and the 1,000-year-flood event in greater Baton Rouge and Acadiana this past August.

As if all of that weren't enough, in April of 2010, the Deepwater Horizon oil rig exploded off the coast of Louisiana, killing 11 men and devastating our

coastline. The disaster, followed by the horribly misguided offshore drilling moratorium President Obama put in place, caused economic and environmental chaos in Louisiana.

Once again, I immediately went to work with so many others to increase and improve safety measures and reopen the Gulf of Mexico to energy exploration and put people back to work. We introduced legislation to dedicate a majority of the BP penalties toward restoring coastal ecosystems and economies damaged by the spill. It was an uphill battle to ensure Louisiana was fairly compensated, but we did, and we achieved substantial wins, including passage of that critical RESTORE Act that I described.

During the recovery fight following each of these disasters, I found that the most effective leadership involved communicating clearly and employing solutions based on Louisiana common sense, and what always inspired me and kept me going was the unbelievable resilience, faith, and determination of my fellow Louisianans. Their strength and optimism have been oh so powerful reminders of how blessed I have been to serve them.

On a host of other important issues, I always sought to further two sets of political values, really modeled after my two favorite Presidents, Ronald Reagan and Teddy Roosevelt. I always strove to further the central American tradition of limited government and individual freedom, and I was never afraid to shake things up, to demand needed reforms to ensure that leaders in Washington served the American people and not the other way around.

I have had the honor of protecting Louisiana's traditions and proud heritage while here in the Senate. Louisianans love the outdoors and want strong environmental conservation and sportsmen's policies to maintain that culture, and that certainly includes securing the rights afforded to each American by the Second Amendment, which I have fought to do.

Louisianans respect the sanctity of life, which has been one of my top priorities while serving in Congress. I have introduced many bills that end taxpayer funding of abortion and abortion mills and have proudly stood in the defense of life.

When it comes to our Nation's immigration policies, I have been an advocate for targeted reforms that fix the immigration crisis, starting with border security and enforcing the immigration laws already on the books. I fought President Obama's unconstitutional attempts to implement Executive amnesty, which only encourages more immigrants to come here illegally and insults the millions of fine immigrants who do follow U.S. law.

I was also the first to introduce legislation in 2007 to end dangerous sanctuary city policies and have continued to do so each Congress since. I have also been critical of too big to fail in the banking sector and have found

banking reform to be an area in which Republicans can absolutely find common ground with Democrats. That is where I found success in passing into law specific measures that restrict too-big-to-fail and tax-funded bailouts. Also during my time in Congress, I have introduced several important government reform bills so we can get back to the best traditions of our democracy, which includes electing citizen legislators, making sure they don't make themselves into a separate ruling class, and advocating for term limits so individuals don't remain in office for an eternity.

Americans of all backgrounds think Washington is on a different planet and Members of Congress just don't get it. That is why I fought to end Congress's automatic pay raises each year. I first introduced that language in 2009, and the raises have been successfully blocked each year since. Congress can be an effective representative body only when it lives under the same laws it imposes on the rest of the country, and one major way to support that is through term limits. When I was a member of the Louisiana State legislature, I was successful in establishing legislative term limits there, and I have offered the leading term limits measure for Congress here, as well as imposing it on myself.

I fought for commonsense legislation that helps all Americans have access to high-quality and affordable health care. That includes the work to dismantle ObamaCare and replace it with patient-centered health care reform, which I am very hopeful the incoming Trump administration will achieve. In the meantime, I have been fighting to end Washington's exemption from ObamaCare, an illegal Obama administration Executive order that allows Washington elites to avoid the most inconvenient, expensive aspects of the Affordable Care Act by giving themselves taxpayer subsidized health care through an exchange meant solely for small businesses. Also in the health care arena, I was able to pass into law the bipartisan Steve Gleason Act of 2015. It provided immediate relief for patients who have been denied access to lifesaving and life-altering medical equipment. It was about a 2014 Medicare policy change that we had to reverse. Our bill allowed these patients to have access to medical equipment that truly empowers them, that is a true lifeline, and it changes their lives absolutely for the better.

I have also fought against large drug manufacturing lobbies to allow for reimportation of safe and approved prescription medicine from other countries, which gives patients, especially our seniors, relief from rising health care costs.

I have been honored to serve in the Senate in additional ways as well, including as a top Republican on the Environment and Public Works Committee and most recently as chair of the Senate Committee on Small Busi-

ness and Entrepreneurship. I am very proud to say that we have accomplished so many of our goals in those two roles.

We worked in a bipartisan fashion on EPW to pass several major pieces of legislation, including the Water Resources and Development Act of 2007 and the even more significant WRDA of 2014, several reauthorizations of the highway bill, the bipartisan and historic rewrite of the 40-year-old Toxic Substances Control Act, which began as conversations between Senator Frank Lautenberg and myself, a partnership which Senator TOM UDALL continued after Frank's unfortunate passing.

We were also able to hold the administration accountable by conducting investigations into some outright corruption within the Obama EPA, and we advanced key transparency initiatives that shed light on government's attempts to implement policies that were not based on sound science or strategic needs.

As chair of the Small Business Committee, I have been advocating to make sure the voices and concerns of small business owners across the country are heard in Washington. We have held 23 hearings here, 18 field hearings, numerous roundtable discussions. We have heard testimony from over 175 witnesses, usually about the disastrous negative effects of Obama policies like the new waters of the United States rule, key and disastrous effects on small businesses and job creators and their employees.

At the very same time, we found common ground with Ranking Member SHAHEEN and other Democrats on the committee. During my tenure as chair, we passed 32 bipartisan bills out of the committee, which is 22 more than my predecessors did over a much longer period, and 8 of our bills have passed through the entire legislative process and have been signed into law.

These accomplishments are but a fraction of the years of hard work my staff and I have dedicated to the people of Louisiana and, indeed, the American people. I have worked hard to be a champion for them because the government should serve the taxpayer and not the other way around, and that includes by working hard to stay in touch through 398 townhall meetings, at least 5 in each parish of Louisiana, through 231 telephone townhalls, and through active, energetic casework and constituent service.

Clearly what I will treasure most about my service here is the people with whom I have been honored to serve; my colleagues, including my fellow Louisianian Senator BILL CASSIDY, mentors like former Senator Rick Santorum and Senator JEFF SESSIONS, and most especially each of the dedicated people who have been part of Team Vitter. I have come to the Senate floor several times this year to thank key departing staff members.

That is for a very simple reason. My staff has been the key ingredient—the

key—to every success we have enjoyed together in public service. Wendy and I consider them a part of the family. I truly thank my staff again for their tireless, dedicated service to Louisiana. I am so very grateful. Wendy joins me in that.

I want to specifically recognize some of our leaders: my chief of staff, Luke Bolar; my legislative director, Chris Stanley; my wonderful finance director, Courtney Guastela; our state director, Chip Layton; and committee staff director, Meredith West; our grants coordinator, Brenda Moore; my media head, John Brabender; and senior infrastructure policy advisor, Charles Brittingham; my senior economic adviser, David Stokes; campaign treasurer Bill Vanderbrook; and communications director, Cheyenne Klotz.

I know a few of our other former senior staff members are here or are watching, like Mac Abrams, Joel DiGrado, Bryan Zumwalt, Travis Johnson, and Michael Long. Last, and obviously not least, is my beloved family. My five wonderful brothers and sisters, our children, their children, the extended family, led by the ultimate leader of Team Vitter, my wife Wendy.

I can never thank them enough, and certainly I can never ever thank Wendy enough. Through it all, Wendy has been so enormously patient and supportive and understanding, not to mention being the life of every Team Vitter party, leading the rounds—rounds plural—of Fireball shots. She and our daughter Lise are in the Gallery today. I thank them and Sophie, Airey, and Jack for decades of love and support. Lise, up there, was in my arms as a 2-year-old when I was first sworn into the House of Representatives and made those previously quoted remarks: "I am honored, humbled, awestruck to stand before you." She has changed some, but as I said at the beginning of my reflections, those feelings certainly have not.

I would like to close as I did that day in the House over 17 years ago; that is, simply by recognizing the wonderful, loving forces that have brought me here today: God, family, led by my parents up above, and my wife Wendy, staff and friends, and of course the wonderful, wonderful people of Louisiana. They are here with me today. They are here with me always. I thank them from the depths of my heart.

For the last time, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

TRIBUTE TO DAVID VITTER

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, I have the honor to recognize and thank my colleague and friend, the Honorable Senator DAVID VITTER, for his 25 years of service to Louisiana. Our State has been fortunate to have him as its voice and advocate in this Chamber for the past 12 years.

On a personal note, when I arrived at the Senate, DAVID worked with me, sharing with me some of the privileges that normally he, as a senior Senator,

could have kept all to himself. With great graciousness, he worked with me and said: Listen, this is how I think the process should be set up. I would like you to have some of this privilege as well. I will do the same with whoever replaces DAVID. He has set a pattern that, again, by his graciousness and magnanimity, deserves repetition.

As a new Senator, I was fortunate to have him as a resource for advice and knowledge that comes from time and experience in this body. There are some things that happen here that you have to kind of have experience to follow. DAVID had both the experience, the sharpness, and the insight to recognize.

I again look forward to sharing what he has taught me with whoever takes his place. I will note, as DAVID did, he helped lead our State through some of our worst times. From Hurricane Katrina in 2005 to the great flood of 2016, all of the way in between, DAVID has worked hard to make sure Louisiana and the people of Louisiana have what they need to recover.

The hallmark of Senator VITTER's tenure is that he has always cared deeply about our State, constantly looking for what he could do that would benefit our State, not just in the short term but doing that which is consistent with his principles to help Louisiana and the United States thrive in the long term.

He has been on the side of that family whose father goes for 2 weeks, works on an oil rig in the middle of the Gulf of Mexico, working hard so his family has a better future. DAVID has been on the side of that mom juggling two jobs to earn enough to make sure her children's needs are met.

A recent example—again for the short-term and long-term perspective DAVID handled so well—he stayed persistent for years working across the aisle, first with Senator Frank Lautenberg, then Senator UDALL, to pass the much needed reform of the Toxic Substances Control Act, the first reform of its kind in 40 years.

This reform protects both the workers—those people on that rig, perhaps, at least the people who would be processing the products of that rig—but also gives the manufacturers of Louisiana and across the country the certainty they need to expand their businesses and create more jobs.

On a lighter note, DAVID is a great Saints fan. We in Louisiana kind of liked the fact that when the slogan “Who Dat” came up spontaneously, and people started to put it on their shirts and the NFL was going to go court to stop this from happening, DAVID wrote a letter to Roger Goddell. The letter started off by saying: “Who Dat.” So speaking truth to power on behalf of the “Who Dat Nation” is one credit of his.

Similarly, DAVID was tweeting before our President-elect made it perhaps as high profile. I remember during the 2013 Super Bowl in New Orleans—and again the context of this is, the Saints

had just been punished—of course Saints fans think unfairly—by Roger Goddell. So during the 2013 Super Bowl in New Orleans, when the power went out, DAVID's tweet, without missing a beat said: “Like most Saints fans, I am immediately assuming Roger Goddell is the chief suspect for the power outage.” The quick-witted quip cut to the emotion of the “Who Dat Nation.”

As the 114th Congress comes to a close, the Senate will be losing an important Member. DAVID brings a sound, strategic mind to this Chamber that will be missed. I wish him, Wendy, their children, Lise, Sophie, Airey, and Jack, the best of luck in their journey forward. On behalf of all Louisiana, I say thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Louisiana for his very kind remarks. More importantly, I want to thank him for years of great partnership, great work on behalf of Louisiana. I know he will make an outstanding senior Senator. Thank you.

I yield the floor.

Mr. CASSIDY. 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.

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

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

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise in strong support of the 21st Century Cures Act, and I commend the chairman and ranking member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER and Senator PATTY MURRAY, for their unwavering commitment to this very significant bipartisan legislation.

The Senate HELP Committee, on which I am privileged to serve, has devoted considerable time and effort to this comprehensive legislation. It includes many reforms and priorities that will benefit so many families across our great country. The 21st Century Cures Act will support the research and development of safe treatments and cures for millions of Americans and their families who are coping with devastating diseases. It will improve the process of moving new discoveries from laboratory benches to patient bedsides.

I doubt that there is a family in America who will not be touched by this important legislation in some way. All of us have a family member, a co-worker, or a friend who has courageously faced the struggles of living with a debilitating chronic illness or a rare disease or who has received a devastating diagnosis and has passed away far too soon, leaving a hole in our hearts. Imagine how this could change with the passage of the 21st Century

Cures Act and strong support of the research and development that will lead to new treatments and therapies that can help us achieve our dream of conquering so many devastating diseases.

Simply put, this legislation matters. It matters to the children who know firsthand the burden of living with type 1 diabetes and who beg their parents for just one day off—their birthday or Christmas—from having to deal with the consequences of their juvenile diabetes. It matters to the family members who know the agonizing experience of looking into the eyes of a loved one suffering from Alzheimer's disease, only to receive a confused look in return. It matters to the parents of young boys who have Duchenne muscular dystrophy, who know what it is like to give their all in an effort to help their sons achieve their dreams, whether it is finishing college or driving a car, even as every day their children battle the progression of this debilitating and ultimately terminal illness. The 21st Century Cures Act will drive progress in medical innovation so that we can prevail against these diseases and many more that cause so much pain and suffering, so much fear and uncertainty, and so much heartbreak.

There simply is no investment that we can make that provides greater return for Americans than our investment in biomedical research. It not only leads to new discoveries and the development of better treatments and even cures but also can have a dramatic effect on the budgets of families, States, and the Federal Government. The bill before us will help direct \$4.8 billion to the National Institutes of Health, including \$1.6 billion for the BRAIN Initiative to improve our understanding of diseases such as ALS, Parkinson's, and Alzheimer's, our Nation's most costly disease.

We spend \$263 billion a year caring for people with Alzheimer's disease. Of that amount, approximately \$160 billion comes from the Medicare and Medicaid Programs. If the current trajectory continues as our population grows older, this disease will bankrupt the Medicare and Medicaid Programs. That is why I am so pleased to see the BRAIN Initiative funded in this bill and also the work we are doing in the Appropriations Committee to boost funding for Alzheimer's disease and other dementias so that we can finally find effective treatments, a means of prevention, or perhaps even a cure for this disease that brings so much heartache not only to those suffering from it but to their families as well.

Our bill will also help provide \$1.8 billion for the Vice President's Cancer Moonshot. We all know that Vice President BIDEN has taken on this cause—a very personal one for him—because he lost his beloved son Beau to cancer.

Another exciting field that will be funded by this bill is \$30 million for regenerative medicine, using adult stem

cells. How exciting it was to have an individual come before our policy lunch whose sight had been restored due to innovative stem cell surgery. This individual lives in Tennessee now but happens to be from Presque Isle, ME, just 13 miles from where I was born and grew up. How I wish so many older people in this country who are losing their vision to macular degeneration and glaucoma—in some cases, a combination of both—or injuries to their eyes could benefit from this exciting development with adult stem cells, which has restored the sight of someone who was legally blind. He now can drive. That is so exciting, and that is the promise of researching regenerative medicine.

In addition to support for NIH, the 21st Century Cures Act will help direct \$1 billion in much needed funding to address the horrendous heroin and opioid abuse problem in this country. Maine has been particularly hard hit by this epidemic. In just the first 9 months of this year, Maine experienced a record 286 overdose deaths. That is more than one a day. Tragically, that number already exceeds the 272 overdose deaths in Maine during all of 2015.

I am distressed when I hear about the lack of treatment options for Mainers who are struggling with drug addiction, particularly in rural areas. As a result of the shortage of treatment alternatives, this epidemic is playing out in emergency rooms, county jails, and on the main streets of my State. I can't tell you how many sheriffs have come to me pleading for help, telling me that the intake area of their jail looks like a detox center or an emergency room of a hospital. They are overwhelmed by these cases.

We can and must do more to support access to treatment and to alert people of all ages to the risks of opioid abuse and heroin use. The 21st Century Cures Act will provide a vital infusion of \$1 billion over 2 years to support grants to States to supplement treatment and prevention efforts.

I was talking with one of my colleagues earlier today. Both of us remember when we were in school hearing lectures from recovering heroin addicts who came into the schools, and I can state that it was highly effective. We would never have tried heroin. I can't even think of a proper analogy.

We know, unfortunately, that many of the people who are using heroin started with prescription opioids, and that is why I am encouraged by movements across our country and by actions taken, at my request and the request of other Senators, by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to make sure we are not putting pressure on providers to overprescribe opioids. Surely they are appropriate in certain cases, but the number of prescriptions has soared in this country and is twice the number prescribed on a per capita basis as in our neighboring country of Canada.

The 21st Century Cures Act also includes a bill that I introduced with sev-

eral of my colleagues—Senators WARREN, KIRK, BALDWIN, ALEXANDER, and MURRAY—that is called the Advancing NIH Strategic Planning and Improving Representation in Medical Research Act. Despite its extremely cumbersome name, it is an important bill that has been incorporated into this legislation. It will require the NIH to release periodically a strategic plan outlining how the agency will meet its mission statement, and it will provide us with important guidance and metrics as we continue to work together to increase this vital funding.

It will also help to ensure that study populations in clinical research are more representative of the diverse population in our country. For example, women face many of the same health threats as men, such as heart disease and cancer, but they react differently to various treatments.

I remember years ago an infamous study that was called MRFIT. It had only men enrolled in it. I believe, if memory serves me correctly, it was to look at heart disease. Well, women often have different symptoms of heart disease than do men, and they respond differently to different medications, therapies, and treatments. We also know that women are at higher risk for certain chronic health conditions, such as Alzheimer's disease and osteoporosis. They suffer from those diseases in far greater numbers than do men. With Alzheimer's disease, I am wondering whether it is simply a matter that the biggest risk factor is age and women live longer than men, but perhaps there are other factors at play.

My point is that by helping to ensure that women, African Americans, Latinos, and other demographic groups are appropriately represented in clinical research, we can increase our scientific understanding of the causes, risk factors, prevention strategies, and effects of treatments for diseases that commonly or disproportionately affect these populations.

The bill before us also includes legislation that I introduced with my colleague from Wisconsin, Senator BALDWIN, to help address the educational debt burden that many young researchers face. This is so important to help ensure that America's finest, up-and-coming young researchers continue to help lead the world in biomedical discovery in this country. I don't want to lose these young talented people to other countries. I want them to stay right here. If they come to work for the NIH or the CDC or other federally funded institutions and agencies and we can get them help with their medical school, college, their advanced degrees, and their debt, that is a very good agreement for us to be making.

It is also of tremendous importance that we were able to add mental health legislation to the 21st Century Cures Act. The reforms in this bill will enhance coordination, address a lack of resources, and develop real solutions to improve outcomes for individuals with

serious mental illness and to help their families, who are often desperate to get them the help they need.

I am pleased that the bill also includes the Mental Health on Campus Improvement Act, which I offered as an amendment when we considered the mental health legislation in committee. My colleague, Senator DICK DURBIN, and I introduced this legislation for the first time in 2009. I commend him for his leadership.

College students in Maine and across the country must have access to critical and often lifesaving mental health services. Despite growing demand for these critical services, far too many students still lack access. Without these services, students may experience detrimental effects that range from declining academic performance to drug dependence and to being at greater risk of suicide.

While millions of Americans suffer from mental illness, only a statistical few engage in unspeakable acts of violence against themselves or others. Suicide, however, is the leading cause of death among Americans between the ages of 15 and 34. In addition, recent tragedies on college campuses, such as the shooting at a community college in Roseburg, OR, or at Northern Illinois University, highlight the dire need for mental health outreach and counseling services on college campuses.

Perhaps some of the tragedies that we have witnessed might have been prevented had the resources been in place to support timely diagnosis, early intervention, and effective treatment for those struggling with severe mental illness.

One of the saddest meetings I have had in the last year was with a group of families from Maine who had adult children who were suffering from severe mental illness, yet these families felt powerless in getting them the help they needed. These adult children were not compliant with the medication they had been prescribed, and in many cases their families felt powerless to be able to get them the help they needed.

In one terrible case, a man's son was released from a hospital in the State of Maine—from a hospital for people with mental illness—and he killed his mother, thinking she was Al Qaeda. Only then could his father get his son the institutionalized help his son so desperately needed.

It was just such a painful, painful story to hear from this anguished father and husband. I believe the language in this bill will help to change that.

The 21st Century Cures Act passed the House last week by an overwhelming vote of 392 to 26. Think how few bills pass with that kind of strong, bipartisan support. It is supported by President Obama, who had an op-ed in Maine newspapers this weekend endorsing the bill. It is the product of years of bipartisan work on the Senate HELP Committee, and it has earned the support of more than 300 organizations.

Frankly, I am surprised that we are having a rollcall vote—a cloture vote on this bill. I am surprised because, while this bill may not be perfect—and no bill is—there is so much that is worthwhile, good, and significant in it that will make such a difference to so many American families.

I urge all of our colleagues to vote in support of this bill so that we can quickly send it to the President's desk, where he is eager to sign it into law. It may well be the most important, far-reaching legislation that we pass this year in terms of its benefits for families across this great Nation.

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

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

SUPPORTING OUR VETERANS

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I rise today on behalf of nearly 100,000 veterans who live in Montana. These are folks who have earned our deep respect and gratitude.

I have traveled the State many times, listened to their ideas, and I have listened to their concerns. Montana's veterans have not been shy about expressing their views.

What I have heard is this. There is no doubt that we must hold the VA accountable and work to improve access to health care, jobs, education, transportation, and housing for veterans.

That is why it is critically important that we are taking marching orders from veterans and the advocacy organizations that are led by veterans, because we know that their top priority is to do right by the folks who they serve.

Veterans in Montana also tell me that when it comes to solving the problems facing veterans, they expect folks in Washington, DC, to check their politics at the door and go to work.

Unfortunately, there are groups out there that are funded by dark money. They hide their out-of-touch political agenda behind the veil of our Nation's veterans.

As the incoming ranking member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, I have serious concerns about who President-Elect Trump is listening to when it comes to honoring our veterans and this Nation's commitment to those who have worn the uniform. That is why it is so troubling that recent news reports have indicated that the Trump administration is relying heavily on guidance from Concerned Veterans for America. Concerned Veterans for America is a political advocacy group funded by the Koch brothers, who want to dump unlimited amounts of dark money to push dangerous policies that would privatize the VA or to convert the Veterans Health Administration

into an independent, nongovernment-chartered, for-profit corporation. CVA also wants to divert funds from the VA and cripple its ability to plan for the long term to recruit doctors and nurses and to invest in the information technology that can improve veterans' experiences at the VA. These cuts will undermine the quality of care at the VA.

There is nothing wrong with helping veterans get specialty care in the community in a timely fashion when the VA cannot do it. That often happens in rural communities, but CVA's push for wholesale dismantling of the VA is not what we want, and that is not what the veterans need.

We need to talk to the veterans—the veterans I have spoken to—and this is what we will see.

When folks volunteer to serve in the Armed Forces, this Nation is indebted to them. We must ensure that we deliver on those promises that are made. Privatizing the VA will fail our veterans and their families. It will reduce the quality of care that our veterans receive, and it will be more expensive for taxpayers. Privatizing the VA will ultimately mean that veterans will wait longer for doctors' appointments and the cost of care will go up.

All we have to do is take a look at the Veterans Choice Program, which allows veterans to access care at private facilities. It has resulted in longer wait times, and this is unacceptable.

Under this program, veterans are actually waiting longer to see doctors. Hospitals are increasingly frustrated and refusing to see veterans, and costs are going through the roof. Imagine this program on steroids. That is what the CVA wants to do—all while starving the VA's existing workforce and infrastructure. In fact, what CVA is pushing for is similar to what Speaker RYAN wants to do with Medicare, and we have seen the backlash to that proposal by seniors across this Nation.

The same is true with the veterans and proposals to privatize the VA. It is simply bad policy. Groups such as the VFW, the American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, and many others oppose privatization, and they oppose it for good reason.

The American Legion national commander, Dale Barnett, said it best:

The private sector didn't send our heroes to war. Uncle Sam did.

Barnett is right. The Federal Government has an obligation to honor those incredible sacrifices. When we shirk that responsibility, it dishonors those brave men and women. We need to listen to the American Legion and countless other veterans groups, whose mission is to help the veterans, not unravel the VA. Veterans service organizations are very different and have a very different mission and tax structure than Concerned Veterans for America, the first being that VSOs take their cues from the veterans they represent, not from billionaire political

activists who fund their operation. Groups such as the Legion, the VFW, and Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America are organized as nonprofit groups whose missions are simply to help veterans.

Concerned Veterans for America is an issue advocacy group with a political mission. VSOs disclose their donors. CVA doesn't have to. Yet CVA has incredible influence and the ear of the President-elect. This is deeply concerning to me and, more importantly, it is deeply concerning to the veterans across this Nation.

I talk to veterans every week when I am home in Montana. They universally tell me that they like the care they receive from the VA once they get in the door; the problem is getting in the door. They don't want to see a private doc; they want to be seen by a VA doc. They know that the VA understands their unique issues. They know that doctors and nurses at the VA are attentive to the wounds of war.

My hope is that President-elect Donald Trump starts talking with the folks who want to help veterans and not to organizations with a political agenda. My hope is that he will work with Chairman ISAKSON and me and countless other reputable veterans groups to hold the VA accountable while increasing access to care. My hope is that he will work with Democrats, Republicans, and Independents to reform our campaign finance laws so that we can increase transparency and know who is trying to influence this government. My hope is that he will put veterans first as he chooses the next VA Secretary.

I remain hopeful that we can find common ground to work together to hold the VA accountable, to improve care, and to ensure that we are all delivering for veterans. When our brothers and sisters and sons and daughters are sent to war, we make promises to them—promises we must keep. When they come home, they are changed people, and we cannot expect the private sector to address these seen and unseen wounds of war.

In this upcoming Congress, there will be incredible opportunities to make progress, and I am fully committed to Montana's veterans and veterans across this country and their families, and I will push back against those who attempt to undermine the noble mission of the Veterans' Administration.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I wish to support the 21st Century Cures Act, which would make vital investments in research to develop new treatments for deadly diseases, including cancer. The bill would also dedicate desperately needed funding to address some of our country's most pressing public health problems—opioid addiction and mental illness.

First, I would like to speak about the bill's provisions for cancer and rare diseases. Cancer touches the lives of all Americans; it doesn't discriminate. We

have all experienced the grief and pain that comes with losing a loved one, friend, or colleague to this terrible disease.

Cancer is the second leading cause of death in our country. Nearly 40 percent of Americans will be diagnosed with cancer at some point in their lives, according to the National Cancer Institute. We have made great strides in improving detection, treatment, and survival rates for many cancers, including early-stage breast cancer, prostate cancer, and melanoma.

Despite this progress, other cancers like pancreatic and certain brain cancers remain extremely deadly, with very low 5-year survival rates. These cancers are typically detected in late stages, and even the most cutting-edge treatments may result in just a few more months of life.

The Cures Act designates nearly \$4.8 billion in additional funds for medical research through the National Institutes of Health, \$1.8 billion of which will expand and accelerate cancer research, in line with Vice President BIDEN's Cancer Moonshot Initiative. This research funding also supports important initiatives focused on precision medicine and neurological research.

Next, I would like to talk about the bill's funding to combat opioid addiction, which is an epidemic in this country. Nearly 2 million Americans are addicted to opioids, and 19,000 Americans overdosed and died in 2014. This epidemic stems from a surge in the use of prescription drugs. It is not a coincidence that prescription overdose deaths quadrupled during the same period that opioid prescriptions quadrupled.

In 2012, 259 million prescriptions for opioids were written. That means 80 percent of Americans could have a bottle of pills. Prescription drug abuse frequently leads to heroin addiction because these drugs affect the brain in the same way. This problem is exacerbated because heroin is significantly cheaper than prescription opioids like OxyContin or fentanyl.

This crisis demands an immediate, comprehensive, national response. Congress took a first step earlier this year, passing the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act in May. This bill authorizes grants to expand access to substance use disorder treatment, strengthen prescription drug monitoring programs, and supply first responders with naloxone, which can reverse the effects of an overdose. However, this bill didn't include any funding for the initiatives it authorized. The Cures Act takes that step, providing \$1 billion for the Department of Health and Human Services to fund many of the prevention and treatment programs authorized by Congress earlier this year.

Lastly, I would like to highlight the bill's provisions to improve our country's mental health system. This is an area where we fall far short. We don't do nearly enough to ensure those with

mental illness are able to access appropriate treatment and this has ripple effects throughout society.

In October, I was briefed on the homelessness crisis in Los Angeles and toured a shelter for homeless women. A significant percentage of the city's homeless population is battling mental illness. So, by improving our mental health system, we are also going to address connected issues like homelessness.

Under the bill, Health and Human Services will develop a strategic plan to address mental health priorities. There is increased funding to train our doctors and nurses to better integrate substance abuse and mental health treatment into primary care visits.

The bill also reauthorizes many important existing programs, including the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, and increases support for mental health and drug courts. These innovative approaches to criminal justice provide an alternative process for individuals to receive and comply with needed treatment and are supported by the law enforcement community.

The bill further provides for police training when police officers encounter individuals who exhibit mental illness. I recently convened meetings in Los Angeles and San Francisco with law enforcement and community leaders, and they all stressed the importance of deescalating situations with mentally ill individuals to make sure that situations do not end with violent encounters.

In closing, I reiterate my support for the 21 Century Cures Act and urge its swift passage. This is a great opportunity to spur this century's medical innovation, improve access to needed treatments, and strengthen public health.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COATS). The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator KIRK be recognized next and then Senator MURPHY following him and that after that, I be recognized. We will be voting at 5:30.

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

The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. KIRK. Mr. President, 4 years ago I climbed the Capitol steps for those who could not. I vowed to return to the Senate to create and establish a standard of care for rehabilitation in this legislation to make sure many people can have access to the best rehab, as I did. With the passage of the Cures Act tomorrow, we will achieve this lofty goal.

The Cures Act also contains bipartisan provisions to provide accelerated approval of regenerative medicines and therapies. The Regrow Act, which is also in this bill, is a major step forward so that Americans will not have to go to other countries for their own stem cells to be used in their own therapy.

Making sure this faster approval process happens in this bill means that many more people will be able to receive advanced stem cell therapies that are also available overseas, right here at home.

I would like to thank everybody. We have made progress with the FDA. I championed with Senators COLLINS and MANCHIN on this. I thank my senior colleague from Tennessee for all of his action on the Regrow Act so we can make the fundamental point of using your own stem cells to accelerate healing. In the case of using your own stem cells, they already have your exact DNA match. I think it is wise that we go through a shorter process. I thank the Senator for putting the Kirk language in the Regrow Act.

I yield the floor.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, while we are waiting for Senator MURPHY, let me salute Senator KIRK for his leadership from the very beginning. He has pointed out to the committee and the Senate that, as the Mayo Clinic has said, regenerative medicine is a game changer for stroke victims, for heart disease, and for people with retinal disease.

Thanks to Senator KIRK, Senator COLLINS, Senator MANCHIN, and Senator MCCONNELL, we have legislation that takes an important and responsible step forward to recognize the promise of regenerative medicine.

This bill includes \$30 million to the National Institutes of Health for clinical trials to support regenerative medicine. Then there are two other provisions in the bill. One of them allows the Food and Drug Administration to make regenerative therapeutic products eligible for the FDA's existing accelerated drug approval pathway. We have had great success over the last 4 or 5 years with an accelerated pathway for drugs, similar to what Senators BURR and BENNET and others got enacted into law. We are doing the same thing with combination drugs and devices in this legislation. Now Senator KIRK has added regenerative medicine to the accelerated pathway, and I salute him for that leadership.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. KIRK. Mr. President, I wish to remind my colleague, who is also the chairman of the Appropriations Energy Subcommittee that controls the exascale funding, one of the most complicated things we can face in our world is biological systems when we look at the new Aurora computer that is going to be built in the Argonne National Laboratories. I know that at Oak Ridge, we have exascale computers. My goal is to make sure we are always way ahead of the Chinese. In the case of Aurora, we now have \$165 million to make sure that we have a computer that is far faster than the computer in China. With that, we will be able to model proteins themselves to make sure we make these advances much faster. My hope is that we will be

stunned at how much biological work is being done at the Oak Ridge lab with their leading computer to make sure we accelerate progress on this.

Let me say one thing about the work of the Senator. Every piece of legislation that he touches goes through by a couple hundred votes. When we see LAMAR take over a bill, we know it is going to be going through on a big wall-opping. He got a huge vote in the Senate, and I hope he gets a big vote again. Everything he touches turns to gold, and we cannot have a better friend in medical care than we have in LAMAR ALEXANDER.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, the Senator from Illinois is very generous, and I thank him, but I would remind him that he was the persistent agent for the change in support for regenerative medicine. That wasn't easy to do, and he has been the leader, along with others of us who cared about the same thing, in making sure the United States maintains its lead in supercomputing competition around the world.

Senator MURPHY, the Senator from Connecticut, is coming. I think what I will do is begin, and when he comes I will stop and let him make his 5 minutes of remarks and then resume so I don't delay the vote because I know everyone is looking forward to casting a great big "yes" vote in a few minutes.

The U.S. Senate majority leader, whose position in the Senate this is, has said more than once in private meetings I attended and on the floor of this body that the 21st Century Cures bill on which we will be voting in a few minutes is the most important legislation Congress will pass this year.

In his address to the Nation this past weekend, President Obama urged us to vote for the bill today and tomorrow. "It could help us find a cure for Alzheimer's," the President said. "It could end cancer as we know it and help those seeking treatment for opioid addiction." The President continued: "It's an opportunity to save lives and an opportunity we just can't miss."

Vice President BIDEN has been telephoning Senators urging support for 21st Century Cures because, in the Vice President's words, it is a big step for cancer research and the Cancer Moonshot that is so close to his heart.

Speaker PAUL RYAN in the House of Representatives has made 21st Century Cures explicitly a centerpiece of his vision for our country's future, describing it as "bipartisan legislation that would accelerate the discovery, development, and delivery of lifesaving treatments."

With such bipartisan support from the President of the United States, the Vice President of the United States, the Speaker of the House, the Senate majority leader—two Democrats, two Republicans—it is no wonder that on last Wednesday, the House of Representatives approved 21st Century Cures by the overwhelming vote of 392 to 26.

This legislation holds the promise of improving the life and health of virtually every family in the country.

It will provide \$4.8 billion in a one-time surge of funding for biomedical research in a time of breathtaking opportunity.

It will advance Vice President BIDEN's Cancer Moonshot to find cures for cancer and President Obama's Precision Medicine Initiative, as well as the BRAIN Initiative.

It will help move safe and effective treatments and cures through the development and regulatory process more rapidly, and it will lower costs, making medicines available sooner and hopefully also at lower costs to patients.

It will provide \$1 billion in grants to help deal with the raging opioid epidemic.

It includes legislation to help the one in five adults in this country suffering from a mental illness, help them receive treatment by updating many of our country's mental health programs for the first time in a decade.

It will improve health information technology for doctors who are eager to get rid of the overdocumentation of hospitals and their patients and help get the Nation's electronic health records system out of the ditch.

From a taxpayer's point of view, it does all of these things in a fiscally responsible way by reducing other spending to pay for every penny of the \$6.3 billion cost.

I see the Senator from Connecticut on the floor, so I would like to suspend my remarks for 5 minutes so that he can make his, and then I would ask unanimous consent that the totality of my remarks follow his remarks.

Before he speaks, let me just say once again how much I appreciate his leadership and that of Senator CASSIDY and Senator CORNYN. One reason the majority leader calls this the most important piece of legislation Congress will act on this year is because it includes the mental health legislation that these Senators, including Senator MURPHY, Senator CORNYN, and Senator CASSIDY, have offered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I appreciate Senator ALEXANDER's kindness in allowing me to say a few words in support of this bill on behalf of myself and Senator MURRAY. I wish to congratulate Senator ALEXANDER for once again showing how the Senate can work properly, how we can bring together Republicans and Democrats for a priority that really has nothing to do with whether one is a Republican or a Democrat or whether one voted for Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump. If people are out there suffering from a life-altering or potentially terminal disease or suffering from mental illness or addiction, they need help, and we are coming together in maybe one of the most important pieces of health legislation that has passed this Congress in a very long time to deliver that help.

So I am not going to endeavor to recreate the remarks of Senator ALEXANDER when it comes to describing the important aspects of this bill except to say that after passage of this bill, it is going to be a whole heck of a lot more likely that a life-changing, lifesaving drug is going to be able to make it to market in time to save a life.

Every single one of the underlying reforms in this bill to the drug discovery process is bipartisan. I think about Senators BENNET and HATCH's bill, the promise for antibiotics and therapeutics for health, which establishes a new pathway for antibacterial and antifungal drugs that will treat serious, life-threatening infections for patients. I think about Senator CASEY and Senator ISAKSON working on the Advancing Hope Act, which will extend the pediatric priority review voucher program until 2020. It incentivizes drug companies to research treatment for life-altering diseases that impact pediatric patients.

Inside this bill are all sorts of good, important, bipartisan achievements. As Senator ALEXANDER noted, there is also help on the way for people suffering from addiction. In my tiny little State—only 1 percent of the Nation's population—we are going to have over 800 people die this year from drug overdoses. Yes, we need to get to the source of that epidemic and stop people from getting addicted to pain medications in the first place, but, boy, we have an awful lot of people showing up with overdoses in our emergency rooms who have no place to go, have no detox programs, no long-term residential programs. The \$1 billion authorized in this legislation to fight the opioid epidemic is going to save lives in my little State.

Finally, when it comes to the issue of mental health—Senator ALEXANDER, Senator CASSIDY, and I were on the floor last week talking about this legislation; the focus on funding prevention, the focus on making sure parents are part of the care for their adult children, the focus on ensuring that insurance companies really do pay attention to the Parity Act we passed 10 years ago in this Congress to assure that you get covered for mental illness just like physical illness. A broken leg really isn't any different than a broken brain when we think about it. We can treat both. These are important advances in mental health as well.

I know this place has a bad reputation; that people pay attention to the fights here more often than they do to the moments where we get together and cooperate. The 21st Century Cures Act that Senator MURRAY and Senator ALEXANDER, with help from Senator CORNYN, me, Senator CASSIDY, and in the House Congressmen UPTON, PALLONE, TIM MURPHY, and EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON—this is an example of how this place can work better.

As we head in to what may be a very charged atmosphere in January, I hope we remember this moment. I wanted to

come down on behalf of Senator MURRAY, who has helped shepherd this process, to congratulate Senator ALEXANDER on it and recommend its passage to all of my colleagues.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I thank the Senator for his words, support, and his leadership this year. I thank also Senator MURRAY from Washington. She would be here, except her plane is delayed. The vote will be held open to make sure she can be here, but Senator MURRAY is a Member of the Democratic leadership and well respected on that side of the aisle but also on this side of the aisle because, when she can, she creates an environment where we can do today exactly what we are doing today. I think the American people appreciate that, and Senator MURPHY and I both benefit from that. I thank the Senator for those remarks and will now continue my remarks.

At a Senate hearing earlier this year, Dr. Francis Collins, the distinguished head of the National Institutes of Health—an agency he calls the “National Institutes of Hope”—offered “bold predictions” about major advances to expect in the next 10 years from sustained investments in biomedical research, such as we are doing with this bill.

One prediction is that scientists will find ways to identify individuals at risk for Alzheimer’s even before symptoms appear, as well as how to slow or even prevent the disease. Today, Alzheimer’s causes untold family grief and costs \$236 billion a year. Left unchecked, the cost in 2050 would be more than our Nation spends on national defense.

Dr. Collins’ other predictions are equally breathtaking. Using stem cells, doctors could use a patient’s own cells to rebuild his or her heart. This personalized rebuilt heart, Dr. Collins says, would make transplant waiting lists and anti-rejection drugs obsolete. He expects development of an artificial pancreas to help diabetes patients by tracking blood glucose levels and creating precise doses of insulin. He says a Zika vaccine should be widely available by 2018, with universal flu vaccine and HIV/AIDS vaccine available within the decade. To relieve suffering and deal with the epidemic of opioid addiction that led to 28,000 overdose deaths in America in 2014, he predicts new nonaddictive medicines to manage pain, an even more effective antidote than the \$1 billion we would be authorizing by our votes today. These truly would be miracles.

The bill has taken more than 2 years to assemble both in the Senate and the House. There have been major differences of opinion, but the resolution of those differences—thanks to Senator MURRAY and many other Senators—has been bipartisan every step of the way. We saw that on display in the work of

the President, the Vice President, the Speaker of the House, and the Senate majority leader. We saw it in the House with its vote of 392 to 26 last week, thanks especially to the leadership of Chairman UPTON, Ranking Member PALLONE, and Representative DEGETTE. We saw it in our Senate Health Committee, where we approved 19 bills that include 50 proposals, and every one with both a Democratic and Republican sponsor, except for 1 bill offered solely by Senator MURRAY, who is the ranking Democratic member of our committee.

We have a diverse committee of 22 Members—that would be an understatement, actually—some of the most liberal Members and some of the most conservative Members, but when our committee considered these 19 bills during our 3 markups held over several months, the largest number of votes against any one of these 19 bipartisan bills was 2. Let me say that again. The largest number of votes—recorded votes—against any one of these 19 bipartisan bills was 2 in our committee of 22.

Here is what some of those 19 bipartisan bills—again, approved unanimously or by a wide margin—would do to help move safe and effective treatments and cures more rapidly through the regulatory process and into patients’ medicine cabinets and into doctors’ offices.

For example, Senators BENNET, WARREN, BURR, and HATCH’s act would allow researchers to use their own data from previously approved therapies when they submit for review a treatment or cure for serious rare genetic diseases, like Duchenne’s, a rare kind of muscular dystrophy that could impact children as young as 3.

Senators BURR and FRANKEN’s legislation will help to bring innovative medical devices—such as artificial knees, insulin pumps, and heart stents—to patients more quickly by getting rid of unnecessary burdens in medical device evaluations and streamlining the review process for clinical trials.

Senators BALDWIN and COLLINS have a bill to improve opportunities for our young researchers, essential to advancing biomedical research.

Senator KIRK just talked about his legislation with BENNET, HATCH, MURKOWSKI, ISAKSON, and COLLINS to improve rehabilitation research and help the approximately 800,000 Americans who suffer a stroke each year.

Senators ISAKSON, MURPHY, CASEY, WICKER, and VITTER will help advance our understanding of neurological diseases.

Senator MURRAY, as I mentioned earlier, will clarify that the FDA requires cleaning and validation data for reusable medical devices.

Senators MURRAY, HATCH, BENNET, CASSIDY and WHITEHOUSE’s bill will improve health information technology for doctors and their patients. We had six hearings on medical information

technology programs in a ditch. We think we are helping to get them out of the ditch. We have been working with the Obama administration to do that, and I look forward to working with the Trump administration to continue that.

Senators BURR, BENNET, HATCH, and DONNELLY would speed safe breakthrough devices, putting senior people in charge of the review process.

CASEY, ISAKSON, BROWN, and KIRK’s legislation. If you are the parent of a child with a rare disease like brain cancer, their bill would increase the likelihood that your child will be able to take a drug that will help by giving a drug company that develops a drug for such a disease a voucher they could keep or sell that would speed up the review of another drug.

One may say this is getting boring. This is too long. It is not boring to the millions of Americans who stand to benefit from this, and it is exactly the kind of work we ought to be doing in the United States Senate and what the American people would like to see us do more of.

The Medical Electronic Data Technology Enhancement Act, with Senators BENNET and HATCH and many others interested in that.

Senators BURR and CASEY and ISAKSON and ROBERTS have important legislation for planning ahead for events like bioterror attacks, to help protect against anthrax, for example, or smallpox.

The Combination Products Innovation Act, with a number of Senators involved on the committee, will help prevent the growing field of combination products—like bandaids with Neosporin built in or a heart stent that can be implanted to deliver blood thinners to prevent clots—from being caught in redtape.

Then there is legislation that will give patients and their families a voice in drug development. There is one that is a top priority for the heads of FDA and NIH which will help those agencies attract and keep the kind of talent they need to approve all these exciting advances that are coming.

There is legislation to shorten the development of new treatments to help those affected with life-threatening superbugs.

The Advancing Precision Medicine Act, which Senator MURRAY and I co-sponsored, is in direct support of President Obama’s initiative to map 1 million genomes so researchers can develop treatments and cures tailored to a patient’s genome.

There are five or six other major pieces of legislation that I will include in the RECORD but not read at this time because we are approaching the time for a vote, but let me conclude by saying that in addition to these bipartisan policies, the 21st Century Cures bill includes \$6.3 billion in funding. We usually don’t attach such funding to a bill authorizing programs. We usually work

along two tracks; one track for authorizing programs and one deciding how much to spend on those programs.

During the last 2 years, while we have been working on our authorizing legislation, our appropriations committees have recommended major increases in support for biomedical research, and it is important that every Senator know this. In the current year, at the urging of Senators BLUNT and Senator MURRAY, Congress added \$2 billion a year to the \$32 billion budget of the National Institutes of Health, which could total \$20 billion over 10 years. Then, the Senate Appropriations Committee recommended another \$2 billion increase for the next fiscal year, 2017, which could total another \$20 billion over 10 years. This 21st Century Cures legislation adds \$4.8 billion in a surge of one-time spending for the National Institutes of Health on top of the regular appropriated money toward key objectives: \$1.8 billion for the Cancer Moonshot, \$1.4 billion for precision medicine, \$1.6 for the BRAIN Initiative, and it adds \$1 billion for State grants to help States fight the opioid abuse epidemic. I believe that for every State represented by a Senator here tonight, the opioid epidemic is on the front pages of the newspapers. It adds \$500 million for the Food and Drug Administration, and 21st Century Cures also gives the National Institutes of Health \$30 million for clinical trials to support regenerative medicine, which the Mayo Clinic has described as a “game-changing area of medicine with the potential to fully heal damaged tissues and organs, offering solutions and hope for people who have conditions that are beyond repair.” It gives the FDA authority to allow regenerative therapeutic products to be eligible for FDA’s existing accelerated drug approval pathway.

I wish to acknowledge the work of Speaker RYAN and Leader MCCONNELL in designing a way to secure funding that both Democrats and Republicans can accept. That is not always easy. For those concerned about additional spending—often on our side of the aisle—Speaker RYAN and House Budget Chairman TOM PRICE made sure the funding is one time, not mandatory, paid for, and approved each year by Appropriations Committees. It doesn’t add one penny to the overall budget because for every increase in the discretionary budget, we reduce the same amount in the mandatory ledger.

For those who worry that Congress might not approve the \$6.3 billion in additional spending in later years—I have heard a little of that from the other side of the aisle—my answer is that the best way to ensure the money is spent in the following years is a big vote today and tomorrow when we finally pass the bill, just as the House did last week.

In conclusion, it will be hard to explain why you voted to spend \$6.3 billion for cancer, the Precision Medicine Initiative, and opioids this year but then voted not to spend it next year,

and the legislation provides that the money cannot be diverted for any other purpose than what we vote for today and tomorrow.

In addition, this year’s portion of Cures funding—including one-half billion for opioid grants—is included in the continuing resolution that we will vote on later this week.

This is the kind of lasting legacy the President of the United States and our Congress can be proud of. The next administration or the next Congress will not be repealing this law because we have taken the time to work out our differences and create a consensus of support. We did this at this time last year with an equally complicated bill to fix No Child Left Behind, which, despite its complexities, received 85 votes in this body. When he signed it, the President called it a “Christmas miracle.”

The 21st Century Cures bill will present President Obama with another Christmas miracle, one that will help virtually every family. When we pass this legislation, the real winners will be the American families whose lives will be improved by this bipartisan legislation.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. 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. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, with the permission of my distinguished chairman, who has worked very hard on this bill and whose efforts I appreciate very much, I wanted to add, very briefly, that I hope very much and look forward to working with my colleagues to assure that the second tranche of the opioid funding is aligned with the CARA bill, or the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, which we just passed in such bipartisan fashion a few months ago.

We have not achieved that alignment yet, and I hope that we do very soon. I appreciate the terrific efforts of my chairman.

With that, I yield.

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

The VICE PRESIDENT. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DIRECTING THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO MAKE A CORRECTION IN THE ENROLLMENT OF H.R. 34

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, it is a rare day when we see the Vice Presi-

dent presiding. We welcome him here today. We look forward to welcoming him back later in the week. I know Members will have plenty to say about his life and his legacy later in the week, but today the Senate would like to specifically acknowledge his efforts to help Americans struggling with cancer.

He has known the cruel toll this disease can take, but he hasn’t let it defeat him. He has chosen to fight back. He has taken a leading role, and the Senate will soon pass the 21st Century Cures Act as a testament to his tremendous effort.

I think it is fitting to dedicate this bill’s critical cancer initiatives in honor of someone who would be proud of the Presiding Officer today, and that is his son Beau. In just a moment, that is exactly what the Senate will do—renaming the NIH’s cancer initiatives in this bill after Beau Biden.

Mr. REID. Will the Senator yield for a brief statement?

Mr. MCCONNELL. If I could say to my friend the Democratic leader, I have one more thing here.

Therefore, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of H. Con. Res. 174, which is at the desk.

The VICE PRESIDENT. The clerk will report the concurrent resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 174) directing the Clerk of the House of Representatives to make a correction in the enrollment of H.R. 34.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the concurrent resolution.

AMENDMENT NO. 5137

(Purpose: To make additional corrections in the enrollment of H.R. 34)

Mr. MCCONNELL. I call up an amendment, which would rename a title of the bill.

I would say to the clerk that I would like for her to read it in its entirety.

The VICE PRESIDENT. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. MCCONNELL] proposes an amendment numbered 5137.

Beginning on page 1, line 7, strike “following correction:” and all that follows and insert the following: “following corrections:

“(1) Amend the long title so as to read: ‘An Act to accelerate the discovery, development, and delivery of 21st century cures, and for other purposes.’

“(2) Amend the section heading for section 1001 so as to read: ‘BEAU BIDEN CANCER MOONSHOT AND NIH INNOVATION PROJECTS’.

“(3) Amend the table of contents in section 1 so that the item relating to section 1001 reads as follows:

“‘1001. Beau Biden Cancer Moonshot and NIH innovation projects.’”

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the amendment be agreed to, the concurrent resolution, as amended, be agreed