

able to say that the sentencing reform is a bipartisan issue, and I look forward to working with any member who is willing to ensure that all Americans are treated equitably under the law. I hope the Senate will take up legislation to address some of these disparities in the very near future. Finally, the BALTIMORE Act addresses reentry and employment law reforms. I think this section is especially important because once someone has served his or her sentence, that person should be able to start anew and should get a fair shot to reenter the workforce.

I would be remiss if I did not mention Second Chance, Inc., a Baltimore non-profit that trains returning citizens in deconstruction, architectural salvage, and much more. I have had a chance to meet with the staff of Second Chance, and I can tell you that their reentry and job program should be a national model. I invite my colleagues to learn more about the good work that is being done only a short drive north of here.

I am pleased the administration has “banned the box” when it comes to the hiring of Federal contractors, so that ex-offenders get the second chance to rejoin our communities as productive and working members of society.

I am pleased the State of Maryland as well as Baltimore City, Montgomery County, and Prince George’s County have all “banned the box” in various forms, and I urge the private sector to follow suit. Helping ex-offenders find gainful employment is a win-win by reducing social services costs, increasing tax revenues, and making our communities safer.

Eliminating disparities in our justice system is critically important. It is just as important to eliminate disparities in the quality of health care available between groups of Americans. In Baltimore, living in certain African-American neighborhoods instead of a White neighborhood, separated by only a few miles, can shorten life expectancy by as much as 30 years—a full generation. That is unacceptable. As a Senator with a longstanding record of working to promote health equity, including my legislation establishing Offices of Minority Health throughout the Department of Health and Human Services and elevating the National Institutes of Health’s National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities to an Institute, I will say we have made progress in shrinking disparities, but I am far from satisfied.

I am very encouraged to see that NIH received a \$2 billion increase in the fiscal year 2016 omnibus spending bill. That is very important. That is the largest increase NIH has received since 2003. The National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities received \$278 million. This is an increase of \$8.7 million over its fiscal year 2016 enacted level. Make no mistake, that money will help save lives.

Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, we have recently made health care coverage more accessible and affordable

than it has been in decades. By reducing the number of uninsured Americans across the country, the ACA is working to address health inequalities. For instance, between 2013 and 2014, the percentage of uninsured African Americans fell by 6.8 percent. Also, because of the ACA, there is increased funding available for community health clinics, and 300,000 Marylanders, including more than 140,000 African Americans, are served by these clinics. Under the ACA preventive services, which are critical to the early detection and treatment of many diseases that disproportionately affect minorities, are now free for 76 million Americans, including 1.5 million Marylanders.

Some of what Congress can do to shrink disparities is not limited to health care policymaking. Recent events in Flint, MI, have brought to light the need to focus on environmental justice issues. Flint is a case study in what happens when environmental stewardship and water infrastructure needs are ignored. It is also an example of how pollution can hurt minority populations in a severe way. Flint’s population is about 100,000 people. Roughly 56 percent are African American. The residents of Flint will have to live with the complications of lead poisoning for the rest of their lives.

What disturbs me the most—both as a grandfather and a member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee—is the very real possibility that children may have suffered irreversible damage to their developing brains from exposure to lead in drinking water. Exposure even to low levels of lead can profoundly affect children’s behavior, growth rates, and their intelligence over time. I might point out that Freddie Gray, the person who was killed in Baltimore, had high levels of lead in his blood. Elevated levels in the bloodstream may cause learning disabilities and other developmental issues.

I wish to quote from an article in the New York Times, January 29 of this year:

Emails released by the office of [Michigan] Governor Rick Snyder last week referred to a resident who said she was told by a state nurse in January 2015, regarding her son’s elevated blood level, “It is just a few IQ points. . . . It is not the end of the world.”

It is a crisis when we deny a child his or her full potential by exposing them to lead. This crisis could have been avoided. It is going to affect an entire generation of children in Flint to varying degrees.

Sadly, Flint is not alone among the cities in which pollution is harming African Americans at disproportionately alarming rates. Nationally, African Americans are 20 percent more likely to have asthma versus non-Hispanic Whites. According to a study in the Annual Review of Public Health, many African-American children live in more heavily polluted areas. Living in urban centers increases one’s exposure to

traffic and industrial pollution, which promotes a greater sensitivity to allergens.

As I said at the beginning of my remarks, Black History Month is about reflecting on a rich path but also a time for all Americans to contemplate how to create a better future. The Senate is capable of great things. Landmark bills like the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968 all passed through this Chamber. I call on my colleagues on both sides of the aisle and in both Houses of Congress to transfer the good will and kind words of Black History Month into meaningful legislation to help African Americans and all Americans.

I presented only a small portion of my legislative priorities today. I know other Senators may have different ways of approaching some of these same challenges. In honor of the countless men and women who have contributed to making this country great, let us work together to get something done for the American people.

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

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 443, Robert McKinnon Califf, to be Commissioner of Food and Drugs, Department of Health and Human Services.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion to proceed.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Robert McKinnon Califf, of South Carolina, to be Commissioner of Food and Drugs, Department of Health and Human Services.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nomination.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Robert McKinnon Califf, to be

Commissioner of Food and Drugs, Department of Health and Human Services.

Mitch McConnell, John Cornyn, Lamar Alexander, Bill Cassidy, Chuck Grassley, Pat Roberts, John Barrasso, Richard Burr, Tim Scott, Orrin G. Hatch, Michael B. Enzi, Johnny Isakson, John Boozman, Cory Gardner, Roger F. Wicker, Thom Tillis, Roy Blunt.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call with respect to the cloture motion be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, at 5:30 p.m., on February 22, the Senate vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the Califf nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

REMEMBERING PETTY OFFICER JOHN BALDWIN

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, today I wish to pay tribute to a World War II veteran and an American hero—PO3 John B. Baldwin. Petty Officer Baldwin was a member of the United States Navy Reserve and sailed on the USS *St. Louis*. Tragically, on February 14, 1944, he died as a result of enemy fire during the Battle of the Green Islands.

Petty Officer Baldwin's sister—Ms. Irene Baldwin Cox of Beaver, UT—recently informed me that her brother had earned prestigious military medals, which neither he nor his family ever received. As a result of John's dedicated service during the battle that besieged the USS *St. Louis*, he earned the Purple Heart, the World War II Victory Medal, the American Campaign Medal, the Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal with two Bronze Star apurtenances, and a Combat Action Ribbon. Thankfully, the military has since verified John's medals and will soon present them to the Baldwin family.

As we approach the anniversary of this historic battle, we should remember the challenges Petty Officer Baldwin and his fellow soldiers faced on that fateful day. At dawn, American fighters sighted six Aichi D3A dive bombers, which approached the *St. Louis* and dropped six bombs, killing 23 sailors and wounding 20 more. Petty Officer Baldwin was among the fallen.

The Baldwin family has always been proud of John's service. We owe this family a debt of gratitude that can never be repaid. It is only fitting that we present John's siblings with the medals he earned for his heroism. I am grateful for the assistance of the USS *St. Louis* CL-49 Association and the National Personnel Records Center for helping me secure these medals for the Baldwin family.

I hold our Nation's veterans in the highest regard. Because of men and

women like Petty Officer Baldwin, our Nation enjoys the full blessings of liberty. I am pleased that these medals have finally found their rightful home. May they ever serve as a testament to John's valor and his love of freedom.

This Valentine's Day, I intend to spend a moment reflecting on the bravery of our sailors who served aboard the USS *St. Louis*. Today I honor them for their courage, their selflessness, and their sacrifice.

TRIBUTE TO JUDGE EUGENE SILER, JR.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to recognize a celebrated Kentuckian who has received a great honor. Federal appeals court judge Eugene Siler, Jr., a fixture in his community, who has served on the bench for over 40 years, has received the "Tri-County 2016 Leader of the Year" award from the Leadership Tri-County organization in Kentucky.

Leadership Tri-County focuses on civic, business, and community leadership in Laurel, Knox, and Whitley Counties in southeastern Kentucky. A nonprofit organization founded in 1987, it identifies potential, emerging, and current leaders from the three counties and nurtures their continued development.

Judge Siler is a native of Williamsburg and earned his bachelor of arts at Vanderbilt University. He has a law degree from the University of Virginia and has two graduate law degrees from the University of Virginia and Georgetown University.

Judge Siler served as an Active-Duty officer in the U.S. Navy from 1958 to 1960 and later retired as a commander in the U.S. Naval Reserve.

Judge Siler practiced law privately alongside his father in Williamsburg and was then elected Whitley County attorney, an office he held from 1965 to 1970. In 1970, he was appointed U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Kentucky by President Richard Nixon.

In 1975, he was appointed as a judge for the U.S. District Court for the Eastern and Western Districts of Kentucky by President Gerald Ford. In 1991, he was appointed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the sixth circuit by President George H.W. Bush.

Today Judge Siler is a senior judge on that court. He was awarded the "1992 Outstanding Judge of the Year Award" by the Kentucky Bar Association, and that same year, he was sent to Lithuania by the U.S. State Department to advise and assist the judiciary in that country as they transitioned from a communist to a democratic system. He also traveled to Albania at the behest of the U.S. Justice Department to advise that country's judges on ethics and discipline.

Judge Siler is married to the former Chris Minnich. They have two sons, Gene Siler III and Adam T. Siler. I am sure Judge Siler's family is proud of him for receiving this award and for all

that he has accomplished. I want to thank him for his many years of public service, and I know my colleagues join me in congratulating Judge Siler on his receipt of the "Tri-County 2016 Leader of the Year" award.

An area newspaper, the News Journal, published an article about Judge Siler receiving his award.

I ask unanimous consent that the article be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the News Journal, Feb. 10, 2016]

WILLIAMSBURG NATIVE EUGENE SILER PICKED
AS LEADER OF THE YEAR

(By Mark White)

A federal judge and U.S. Navy veteran has been selected as Leadership Tri-County's 2016 Leader of the Year.

Eugene Siler Jr., a senior judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, said he was notified about a month ago that he was receiving the award.

"I was honored by it and humbled by it," Siler said Monday afternoon.

Leadership Tri-County is a non-profit organization established in 1987 as an educational program designed to identify potential, emerging, and current leaders from Knox, Laurel and Whitley counties and to nurture their continued development into the leaders our area needs now and in the future.

Past recipients of the Leader of the Year Award have included: Dr. James Taylor, U.S. Rep. Hal Rogers, U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell, Terry Forcht, Nelda Barton-Collings, Gene Huff and last year's winner Dr. Michael Colegrove.

"I know a lot of people who have gotten it before. I feel like I am in very good company, am pleased that they are giving it to me and I will do my best to live up to it," Siler said.

Siler, a Williamsburg native, served in the U.S. Navy on active duty from 1958 to 1960, and later retired as a commander in the U.S. Naval Reserves after 26 years of service.

He began his law practice in 1964 alongside his father. He served as Whitley County Attorney from 1965 until 1970 when President Richard Nixon appointed him as United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Kentucky.

In 1975, President Gerald R. Ford appointed Siler as a United States District Judge for the Eastern and Western Districts of Kentucky.

In September 1991, President George Bush appointed Siler to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit.

Siler will be honored during Leadership Tri-County's Leader of the Year Banquet, which will be held on Feb. 23 at the London Community Center.

There will be a reception at 5:30 p.m. followed by a dinner at 6 p.m.

During the banquet, there will be a memorial tribute to G.W. Griffin and Bill Brooks.

FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, last Friday, America celebrated the 23rd anniversary of the Family and Medical Leave Act—landmark legislation that transformed American workplaces for the better.

I am deeply proud to have voted for this bill in 1993 when I served in the House of Representatives. This bipartisan legislation was a major victory