

highs. I think there is a lot of anticipation, a growing confidence not only in our economy but that America is now back in a leadership role and that the whole world will end up benefiting—most importantly, the American people.

I am eager to learn about how Congress can continue to partner with our new President to make his administration a success, so that America can remain a success, and to make the rest of his campaign promises a reality.

ORDER FOR RECESS

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate recess from 12 noon until 2:15 p.m. today.

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

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12 noon, recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PORTMAN).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

REMEMBERING INA BOON

Mrs. McCASKILL. Mr. President, I want to begin my remarks today by paying tribute to a strong, wonderful civil rights leader, Ina Boon, who passed away a few days ago. She was 90 years old, and she really was the strength and heart of so much of the civil rights work that went on in the St. Louis area.

She began working for the NAACP during the 1950s, and she will be sorely missed. She was an extraordinary woman. I think it is important to put a tribute to her in the record of the Senate.

Because of the other thing I want to talk about today, I want to mention that Ms. Boon, after graduating from Sumner High School in St. Louis, attended Oakwood University in Alabama, which is one of the special historically Black colleges and universities in our country.

SECRETARY DEVOS

Mr. President, that brings me to what I want to talk to the Senate about today and what I want to try to emphasize. Betsy DeVos has been given one of the most important positions in education in this country. Call me old-fashioned, but I think it is pretty important that the Secretary of Education have a basic working knowledge of history. It is one thing to appear for your confirmation and have no idea what the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is or not have a working understanding of the Federal laws as they relate to education in this country, but it takes it to a whole new level that someone who is Secretary of Education would make the kind of state-

ment that Secretary DeVos made in the last few days.

I want to read it aloud. This is the statement from the Secretary of Education following a listening session with historically Black college and university leaders. I want to pull out the quote that I think is important for us to dwell on today. The quote is as follows: ‘Historically black colleges and universities are real pioneers when it comes to school choice.’

Now, let's be clear about what historically Black colleges and universities were. It wasn't about a choice. It was about racism. That is where these colleges came from. It wasn't that a young Black student looked at the State university and said: Well, I have to decide; do I want to go to the University of Alabama or do I want to go to a historically Black college and university? It may be that way today, but it was not when they began. They were established because do you know what the University of Alabama said to African-American students?

You can't come here. You are not welcome. You are not allowed to darken our doors. There was no choice.

This was the Jim Crow era of racism and segregation.

In 1862, President Lincoln signed the Morrill Act which provided land for the purposes of colleges in each State. In 17 of those States, mainly in the South, Black students were prohibited by law from attending these land grant colleges. The second Morrill Act of 1890 required States to establish a separate land grant college for Blacks if Blacks were excluded from existing land grant colleges. Many of our great HBCU's, like Alabama A&M, Florida A&M, and Lincoln University, in my home State of Missouri, became public land grant colleges after the second Morrill Act of 1890. These schools were not established because someone thought there should be school choice. These schools were established because racism left Blacks without any choice. When Blacks tried to attend schools like the University of Alabama and the University of Mississippi, they were blocked and there were riots. The fact that Secretary DeVos doesn't understand this basic fact is appalling.

Her statement was wrong. It was offensive, and it should be corrected. We need the Secretary of Education to have a basic fundamental understanding of history in the United States of America, especially as it relates to education. Is there anything that was more important in the history of our country than the struggle for equality in education? Is there anything that is more important than recognizing and understanding that for years in this country, young Black people could be punished for learning how to read? They would be told: You are not welcome, even if the universities were public universities.

So shame on Secretary DeVos. Shame on her for not understanding history, for trying to shoehorn the rac-

ist history in our country into her talking points about school choice. That is wrong, and it should be corrected.

I hope it was an oversight. If it was, I hope she will admit her mistake and acknowledge that historically Black colleges and universities in the United States of America were not about choice. They were about racism. They were about trying to provide an opportunity. They were mostly a movement that was largely led by ministers and academicians from other parts of the country, trying to make sure that in a land that professes equality and justice for all, education is the most fundamental of opportunities that must be afforded to every single citizen.

So no, it wasn't about choice, Secretary DeVos. It was about something else. It is important that as the leader of education in this country, you acknowledge the history that is the underpinning of the importance of historically Black colleges and universities in our country.

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. CARPER. 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. CARPER. Mr. President, I rise in opposition to the nomination of Representative ZINKE to become Secretary of the Interior.

As is always the case, I take this opposing position with some trepidation. Having served as the Governor of my State, I appreciate the importance of deference to a chief executive's decisions to build his or her team, but at the same time, I think we in the Senate have a constitutional obligation to provide our advice and to provide our consent because in the end not all nominees are best for the country we are pledged to protect.

Some of my western colleagues may wonder what stake a small State like Delaware on the east coast would have in the selection of a Secretary of the Interior. It turns out, there is plenty.

As the chief land steward of our great Nation, the Secretary of the Interior will be asked to manage our collective interests in the conservation, use, and appropriate management of the abundant land, wildlife, mineral and other resources found on our public lands. For that reason alone, we should expect a firm commitment from such a leader that the American taxpayer will receive full value for private use and profit from the use of our Nation's resources, and we need assurances that the use of those resources will not abuse the quality of life for Americans while enhancing the profits of a very limited few.

That, I am very sad to say, does not appear to be Mr. ZINKE's track record.

For example, as a Congressman, I am told he opposed the Federal coal leasing moratorium ordered by his predecessor, Secretary Jewell. Some would call this an appropriate reaction to an alleged War on Coal, but let's just take a moment to take a closer look.

As you know, I live in a small State, Delaware, that is, as it turns out, getting smaller almost every day. With each passing tide and every coastal storm, a part of us—our land—disappears forever. We are fighting a valiant and, some would say, futile war against an encroaching sea. This is not a result of variability in weather patterns or long-term trends in ocean dynamics, this is climate change at work.

We are not alone in feeling the effects of our Nation's dependence on and robust use of carbon-based fuels—like coal—over the past couple of centuries.

There are Native Alaskan communities that have to move in their entirety. Think of that. They have to move in their entirety because tides, storms, and waves—assisted by the absence of ice that used to protect them from fierce winter storm surges—are literally eating away at their communities. I am trying to imagine what it would be like as a family to get the news that you have to leave a place that has been your home for generations, the place from which your ancestors derived their sustenance, honored their forbears, and raised their legacies.

I also can't imagine being a person who represents those people and families, having to help them come to grips with the realities of a changing world that we—if we act quickly and assertively—can begin to stabilize.

It means a whole lot to us in Delaware that we take a very careful look at when and how we use the bounty of mineral resources under our public lands. At the very least, that should include—as Secretary Jewell's order envisioned—an assurance that we, as Americans, are paid a price for the coal and other public resources our lands provide that matches the value they represent.

It is the least among us who need our government's help, not those with the most.

We should also, as Secretary Jewell's policy recommended, be aware of and responsible about the climate change implications of the coal sales from public lands. If we humans, as Mr. ZINKE admits, are responsible for our changing climate and the fact that my State is slowly eroding away, then we should embrace—not ignore—the common-sense wisdom of the former Secretary of the Interior. Given the chance to agree with this common sense in his response to questions from my colleagues on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, Mr. ZINKE repeatedly demurred.

Continuing on this theme, Mr. ZINKE, in response to questions from Energy and Natural Resource Committee members, supported the Congressional

Review Act resolution to eliminate the Obama administration's rule to curb wasteful releases of methane from Bureau of Land Management land-based operations—yet another example of willingness to sell the American people short in favor of a handful of energy companies.

Wasted gas is wasted public revenue. Let me say that again. Wasted gas is wasted public revenue. Wasted methane is adding yet more of a very potent greenhouse gas to our atmosphere.

Given the opportunity to reflect some concerns for Americans, our climate, Delaware's and Alaska's shorelines, and our global obligation to put a lid on climate contributions, this nominee demurs.

We have seen this pattern of helping the few at the expense of the most across the board with too many of this President's nominations. I believe this is ultimately un-American, unwise, unfair, and unacceptable.

I am also concerned with Mr. ZINKE's stance toward the use of the Antiquities Act by the President to designate lands as national monuments. Specifically, during his confirmation, we heard a willingness from Congressman ZINKE to take the legally uncertain step of revisiting the use of the Antiquities Act by the President to designate lands and historic sites across the Nation as national monuments.

Undermining the Antiquities Act is—I believe and a lot of people believe—bad for conservation, is bad for historical preservation, and is bad for economic development opportunities associated with national monuments and our national parks.

For those who don't know, the Antiquities Act has been used by Presidents dating back to the early 20th century—roughly 100 years—to preserve and protect our Nation's historic sites and preserve Federal lands for all of us—all of us—to enjoy.

During his time in office, President Obama utilized the Antiquities Act to safeguard and preserve Federal lands and cultural and historic sites. Ultimately, he designated over 550 million acres of land as national monuments, including what we call the Delaware national monument.

Delaware, as it turns out, has a special history with the Antiquities Act, which I will take just a moment to talk about today. Before Delaware saw the establishment of national parks in our borders, we had a national monument for a couple of years.

In 2013, President Obama recognized Delaware's important contributions to the founding of the United States, including its role as the first State to ratify the U.S. Constitution, by creating the First State National Monument, with our urging and support.

Before that designation, Delaware was the only State in the Nation that had neither a national monument or a national park. We were the first State to ratify the Constitution but until a

couple of years ago no national park. We were the only State that was in that situation. Simply put, Delaware was missing out on tourism and economic development that a national monument or park can bring.

The economic opportunities afforded to States with national monuments and national parks, as it turns out, are significant—quite significant. Each State with a park or monument sees economic benefits of at least \$1 million, I am told, if not much more, in tourism and economic development, and every year millions of Americans and countless others from across the world plan their vacations around America's national parks and monuments.

Believe it or not, if someone in some other country—whether it is Europe, Asia, Latin America, or Central America—if they are interested in coming to the United States, they go on the National Park Service website, and they look up all of the national parks and monuments across the country and decide which ones they might want to visit. The single most popular destination within the U.S. borders for tourists from other parts around the world, believe it or not, are our national parks. Isn't that extraordinary. The economic opportunities afforded to States with national monuments and national parks are significant—again, around \$1 million or more.

Delaware's national park celebrates Delaware's rich colonial history as the first State to ratify the U.S. Constitution. As it turns out, the Constitution was first ratified on December 7, 1787.

Many years before that—maybe 150 years before that—the first Finns and Swedes came to America, and they landed in what is now Wilmington, DE. They sailed across the ocean in the Kalmar Nyckel and the Fogel Grip from Sweden and Finland. It was before they even had a Finland, and the Swedes and Finns were one.

They sailed through the Delaware Bay and north to the Delaware River and came to an uncharted, unnamed river that headed off to the west, off of the Delaware River. They went about a mile. When they came, there were a lot of big rocks along the coastline, and they landed there at the rocks. They declared that spot the colony of New Sweden, which later became Wilmington, DE. They built a fort called Fort Christina, and they built a church, the Old Swedes Church. It is the longest continuously operating church in America.

About 15 miles south of that spot on the Delaware River is actually the river they sailed up on and planted their flag, the Christina River. They named it after the 12-year-old child Queen of Sweden, but about 50 miles south of the Christina River, further down the Delaware River, is a town of New Castle. There is a big statue of William Penn in the town of New Castle, and it is because William Penn first landed in America—not in an area

close to Philadelphia where they have Penn's Landing. He landed in New Castle, DE, and he brought with him the deeds to the land that later became Pennsylvania and Delaware.

Further down the coast toward where the Delaware Bay meets the Atlantic Ocean is a town called Lewes, DE. Lewes, DE, was settled by the Dutch, the first time unsuccessfully. The settlers lost their lives. The second time they came back in greater numbers and successfully settled Lewes, DE, and it endures to this day.

The Brits didn't much like the idea that the Dutch had a foothold in that part of Delmarva, in what is now Sussex County, DE, and one night many years ago—several hundred years ago—the British surrounded Lewes, DE, which was then inhabited by the Dutch, and they burned it to the ground. The next morning when the sun came up, there was one house standing in Lewes, DE, and it was Rives Holt House. It is believed to be one of the oldest standing houses in all of North America.

If you drive up from Lewes headed north on Route 1 toward Dover Air Force Base, just before the Dover Air Force Base is a colonial plantation called the Dickinson Plantation, named after John Dickinson who was a penman, an early writer who spoke about and wrote some of the early writings that had been cited and encouraged the colonists in what is now America to rise up against the tyranny of the British Crown.

As you go a little further up Route 1 to Dover and go to downtown Dover, you come across an area where there used to be a tavern called the Golden Fleece Tavern, and that was the place where, on December 7, 1787, after three days and nights of debate and discussion, luckily, 25 early colonists decided to ratify the Constitution, which had come down the week before from Pennsylvania. We were the first State to ratify the Constitution.

A few years before that, a fellow named Caesar Rodney, who had been president of Delaware and later held any number of offices in the State even before it was a State, actually rode his horse right past the area where the Golden Fleece Tavern was—where the Constitution was ratified—and rode his horse all the way up to Philadelphia, PA, in order to cast the tie-breaking vote in favor of the Declaration of Independence. That is a little bit of the history of Delaware.

The National Park Service decided 3 years ago that the early colonial settlement leading up to the ratification of the Constitution is what made Delaware unique, and our national park includes a number of those different components. Think of it almost as a necklace with different stones of value and interest around our State. That is what it is.

That is the national park today. It started off really as a national monument from the Antiquities Act. Given

that kind of history, we need to make sure that future administrations and future Presidents have the ability to utilize the Antiquities Act to safeguard the country's history, protect the outdoors for all of us to experience and to enjoy.

I urge my colleagues in the Senate to send what I think is an important message that we want people in our government who are there to help people. I will be voting no on the Zinke nomination as a result, and I encourage my colleagues to consider doing the same.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. HIRONO. 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. HIRONO. Mr. President, last November, I was in Maui celebrating the 100th anniversary of Haleakala National Park. The weather at the summit of the volcano was terrible. It was raining in sheets, with 40-mile-per-hour wind driving the rain sideways, but I was there with over 40 schoolchildren to plant Haleakala silverswords—a special, threatened plant that only grows in the harsh climate at the summit of Haleakala volcano. The silversword can live for almost 100 years before it flowers, spreads its seeds into the wind, and dies.

Silverswords have dotted the landscape of Haleakala's summit for millennia, but invasive species, human activity, and climate change have pushed the plant to near extinction. In the early 1900s, scientists estimated that as few as 50 plants remained on the volcano, but this changed after Haleakala became a national park in 1916. In the 100 years since, park rangers and visitors have made a concerted effort to protect the silverswords from feral goats and sheep and to make sure hikers don't go off the trail and trample their shallow root systems.

After the passage of the Endangered Species Act, the silversword became listed as a threatened species. Through the law, conservationists have provided resources to help restore the silversword population on Haleakala for the hundreds of thousands of people who visit the park every year. Groups of students, including those whom I joined on that cold November day, have planted over 1,000 silverswords to supplement the population of silverswords. They were there to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Haleakala National Park.

I share this story because it demonstrates many of the reasons the Department of Interior is so important in the role it plays in preserving our public lands.

Business is booming at our national parks. In 2015, our national parks hosted 305 million visitors—a new record—and these visitors generated

\$17 billion in economic activity in nearby communities.

Our national parks are suffering from an overwhelming deferred maintenance backlog of \$12 billion. Our national parks are also understaffed. Because of sequestration and a variety of other factors, 10 percent fewer people work in our national parks today than 5 years ago. This is at a time when visitors to our parks are ever growing. This means fewer rangers and support staff dedicated to maintaining parks like Haleakala and protecting species like the silversword. To add to this, the administration has put a 90-day hiring freeze in place that threatens nearly 2,000 permanent vacancies that are critical to helping our national parks function.

We need an Interior Secretary capable of standing up to the President to make preserving our public lands a priority. But during my meeting with Nominee ZINKE and his confirmation hearing before the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, on which I sit—and his record as a Member of Congress—I did not receive the assurances and commitments I needed to support his confirmation as Interior Secretary. Although he expressed some support for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, or the LWCF—an important program that funds land purchases to add to protective areas like our national parks—he said the program could benefit from some “changes.” The only change I wish to see is to permanently reauthorize and fully fund the LWCF, which has suffered from chronic underfunding throughout its history, and I will continue to work with my colleagues, like Senator MARIA CANTWELL, who is ranking member of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources in the Senate, to accomplish this goal.

We also need an Interior Secretary committed to preserving our public lands, not exploiting them for fossil fuel production. Congressman ZINKE and the Trump administration are too wedded to the fossil fuel industry and fail this test as well.

Supporting alternative and renewable energy development is an issue people in Hawaii and, I would say, a lot of people in the rest of our country care about.

Earlier this year, I received a letter from Michael from Pahoa, who said that Representative ZINKE “has consistently voted for carbon heavy energy sources. His anti-environmental record shows a leaning that could well move exploration and extraction to areas formerly closed to exploitation. With interests in oil pipelines, he has a conflict of interest in moving away from fossil fuels and into alternative and renewable resources. We have destroyed enough of the country for the enrichment of the 1% with little to no benefit to the rest of our citizens. He is a destroyer, not a fixer. Not someone for the environment or the people.”

Congressman ZINKE also does not share a commitment to protecting endangered and threatened species like the silversword. While in the House, Congressman ZINKE voted to block funding for any listed endangered species on which the Fish and Wildlife Service failed to conduct a 5-year review. It didn't seem to matter to Congressman ZINKE that the reason these reviews did not take place was because Republicans in Congress failed to appropriate the necessary funding to conduct these reviews. Cutting funding in this way would devastate conservation and recovery efforts for as many as 850 species across the Nation, 137 of which are in Hawaii and 1 of which is the Haleakala silversword.

During the confirmation process, I asked Congressman ZINKE if as Secretary he would work with Congress to ensure that the Fish and Wildlife Service would receive sufficient funding to conduct these reviews and recover our Nation's endangered species. He responded by saying that he would "work closely with Congress to ensure recovery programs are appropriately funded." I don't know what he means by "appropriate," but I do have a feeling that my view of sufficient funding, which is the question I asked him, and his answer that he would support appropriate funding are probably very different. In fact, I wonder if, under Secretary ZINKE, there would have been the funding necessary to help Maui students plant their 1,000 silverswords on Haleakala's summit. This is wrong.

Congressman ZINKE also does not share a commitment to combating climate change or supporting research that will help in that effort.

Washington, DC—do you notice how warm it is? It is February. It is 60 degrees. Washington, DC, is on track to have experienced the warmest February on record. We have a new administration stocked full of climate deniers. As Secretary of the Interior, Congressman ZINKE will be leading the U.S. Geological Survey, the USGS, an agency that lists climate change as one of its top mission areas.

During his confirmation process, I asked Congressman ZINKE if he would try to limit the USGS's work on climate change in any way. Unfortunately, Congressman ZINKE did not provide a definitive answer—only saying that he would need to learn about the USGS's role in climate change research. His answer did not reassure me that he will allow USGS and other agencies in his Department to continue to make climate change research a priority or to protect the right of these scientists to pursue their research without interference. This is particularly concerning in light of the Trump administration's ongoing efforts to silence our Federal workers, including those within the National Park Service, who are speaking out about the threat of climate change.

We need a Secretary of the Interior who will protect our public lands,

make investments to conserve our endangered and threatened species, and who will continue to confront climate change. His record of past statements demonstrates that Congressman ZINKE is not the right person to lead the Department of Interior at this juncture, at this critical stage. I urge my colleagues to oppose his nomination.

I yield the floor.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to address the nomination of Congressman RYAN ZINKE to lead the Department of Interior.

As Secretary of Interior, Representative ZINKE will be the steward of our Nation's precious public lands, national parks, tribal lands, and historical and cultural resources. These lands not only play an important role in preserving habitat, landscapes, and history, they also create jobs and invigorate nearby communities.

During his confirmation hearing, I was excited to hear Congressman ZINKE refer to himself as a Teddy Roosevelt conservationist.

We all know the important role Teddy Roosevelt played in protecting our natural resources. During his Presidency, Roosevelt established 230 million acres of public lands. In 1901, he created the U.S. Forest Service and established 150 national forests. In 1906, he signed into law the Antiquities Act, legislation that allowed either the President or Congress to set aside "historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, and other objects of historic or scientific interest" in order to stop their destruction. With this act, he designated 18 national monuments, including several iconic areas.

A modern version of Teddy Roosevelt would be a wonderful selection to head the Department of Interior. But, after closely examining Representative ZINKE's record, he doesn't appear to be a Teddy Roosevelt conservationist.

Last Congress, Representative ZINKE voted in favor of an amendment to the House Interior appropriations bill that would have rolled back the authority of the President to use the Antiquities Act in seven Western States. He also supported a bill that would have effectively eliminated public review of hardrock mining activities on Federal lands. And he supported the Keystone XL pipeline.

Conservationist groups seem to have similar concerns about Congressman ZINKE's record.

The League of Conservation Voters gave him a 3 percent rating for 2015 and a 5 percent rating for 2016—hardly what you would expect from a Teddy Roosevelt conservationist. This troubles me, as Representative ZINKE, if confirmed, would be responsible for managing new monuments of great importance—namely, the Pullman National Monument and the Bears Ears National Monument.

The Pullman National Monument was designated by President Obama in

2015 in a Chicago neighborhood that has played a significant role in our country's African-American and labor history.

It represents the culmination of a collaborative effort by businesses, residents, and other organizations seeking to restore and preserve this unique community.

The Pullman neighborhood was originally developed a century ago by rail car magnate George Pullman as a factory town that would help shape our country as we know it today.

It was the birthplace of the Nation's first Black labor union, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, which is credited with helping to create the African-American middle class and making crucial civil rights advancements in this country.

Pullman workers also fought for fair labor conditions in the late 19th century. During the economic depression of the 1890s, the Pullman community was the catalyst for the first industry-wide strike in the United States, which eventually led to the creation of Labor Day as a national holiday.

The Pullman National Monument not only highlights stories from communities that are rarely represented in other national parks, but its location on Chicago's South Side—easily accessible to millions of people by public transportation—also makes it particularly unique. Following its designation, the Pullman neighborhood joined the National Mall and the Statue of Liberty as one of the few DOI-managed lands in an urban area.

But Pullman now needs an Interior Secretary who is committed to dedicating resources that will ensure the monument is a driver of tourism and job creation in the community.

Public lands have certainly been a great economic driver in Utah, and the Bears Ears National Monument will no doubt build on this success.

The 1.35 million acre swath of land, declared a national monument by President Obama, covers forested mesas to redrock canyons and will protect the region's abundant cultural resources, which include well-preserved cliff dwellings, rock and art panels, artifacts, and Native American burials.

Bears Ears is special, as it is the first monument of its kind to be proposed and advocated for by a united coalition of five tribes, who sought its protection because of its important place in all of their respective cultures.

Congressman ZINKE is well aware of the monument and has said his first priority as Secretary would be to go to Utah and make a recommendation regarding the status of the Bears Ears National Monument.

While this monument designation has been met with opposition from Utah politicians, the attacks on the Bears Ears Monument do not reflect the views of all Utahans.

Recently, Utah's paper of record, the Salt Lake Tribune, called the political fervor a "blindness."

"That blindness can be sourced to Utah's one-party political system that has given us leaders who are out of touch with their constituents." It continues, "The Bears Ears monument may be with us forever, and there is no bucket of gold waiting if it does go away. The presidential proclamation bent far toward the same boundaries and shared management [Utah Rep. Rob] Bishop pursued with his Public Lands Initiative."

Sadly, attacks on monument designations are nothing new.

One of our greatest conservation Presidents, Teddy Roosevelt, faced a great deal of opposition to his designation of a national monument you may be familiar with, the Grand Canyon. Most Americans can't imagine an America without the iconic Grand Canyon, a true national treasure.

But, at the time of its 1908 designation, groups were opposed to protecting this area. For years after its designation, oil and gas miners fought against additional protections for the Grand Canyon. In the end, conservationists won out, and by 1919, the Grand Canyon was made into a national park to be protected for future generations.

Roosevelt said, "It is also vandalism wantonly to destroy or to permit the destruction of what is beautiful in nature, whether it be a cliff, a forest, or a species of mammal or bird. Here in the United States we turn our rivers and streams into sewers and dumping-grounds, we pollute the air, we destroy forests, and exterminate fishes, birds and mammals—not to speak of vulgarizing charming landscapes with hideous advertisements. But at last it looks as if our people were awakening."

Since Roosevelt's time, we have made a lot of progress in protecting our lands and waters, but still have a long way to go. That is why the next Interior Secretary needs to take a step forward in protecting more of our public lands, not backwards.

Therefore, I have no choice but to oppose Congressman ZINKE.

Ms. HIRONO. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHATZ. 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. SCHATZ. I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

ANTI-SEMITISM

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, 20 is the number of bomb threats that were called into Jewish institutions in our communities across the country yesterday—in just 1 day. In Alabama, Delaware, Michigan, Maryland, Virginia, and in my home State of Hawaii, in my Temple Emanu-El, where I grew up and was bar mitzvahed. No one

wants to be the parent who picks up the phone and finds out that they need to pick up their child from school because people are threatening violence—and all because of their faith.

Since 2017 began, 100 bomb threats have been called into Jewish schools and Jewish community centers. It sounds like it is from another time, but this is what rising anti-Semitism looks like in our country. Granted, we knew weird stuff was happening: Pepe, David Dukes—this is not normal America. But now the threat of violence is real. It is coming through the phone lines of American schools every day, and it is loud and clear. This rising threat demands leadership. It demands that we regularly and quickly denounce anti-Semitism and do everything we can do to stop it from growing. But that is not what we have seen so far from this administration.

Now, the baseline expectation of an unequivocal, quick and regular disavowal of rising anti-Semitic or anti-Muslim rhetoric from the leader of the free world is no longer being met. Instead, we have to extract it from the administration. We have to ask for it when it doesn't come. We have to ask when it is coming. What is even sadder is that this administration has avoided any opportunity—even the easy ones, even the most obvious ones—to stand against anti-Semitism.

Just over a month ago, the world marked International Holocaust Remembrance Day. The White House put out a statement without a single mention of the 6 million Jews who were killed in the Holocaust. Here is the crazy thing: The first draft mentioned Jews. The State Department drafted the initial statement which mentioned Jews, like every Holocaust Remembrance Day statement before it did. Then it went to the White House where someone thought: Let's make edits. Let's remove mention of Jews from a statement about International Holocaust Remembrance Day. This was someone's decision. It was an intentional decision. Who would decide that, and why would that be done?

Why remove the mention of Jews? It is like mentioning slavery and not mentioning African Americans. It is like mentioning internment and not mentioning Japanese Americans. When you are talking about genocide, it is not irrelevant to talk about who did it and to whom. It is a requirement. But the White House didn't mention Jews, and it didn't apologize when people were rightfully confused. Only now that violence has been unleashed, that Jewish cemeteries are being desecrated, that people's children are being threatened on a daily basis are we seeing the minimum from the White House to recognize the rise of anti-Semitic sentiments and actions.

I am worried.

Local communities have taken it upon themselves to lead the way and stand up together. This is what leadership looks like. It looks like Muslim

Americans showing up to cemeteries to help to restore Jewish headstones. It looks like local police raising money and people taking time to hold a vigil in solidarity with their Jewish neighbors. There have been far too many bystanders to the increasing anti-Semitism across the country. It is long past time to break the silence and to make it utterly clear that the United States is not a place for hate. It is un-American to hate Jews or Muslims or strangers in our midst. That is not who we are or what we stand for. That is not the United States of America.

This week, as Jewish communities are reviewing bomb threat guidance and looking at best practices for security, it is up to all of us to take action and to do everything we can to beat back rising anti-Semitism.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RUSSIA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it has now been almost 5 months since our intelligence community first detailed how Russia launched a cyber act of war on America and our last Presidential election—5 months. In those 5 months, how many times have my Republican colleagues come to the floor of the Senate to discuss this national security threat, this cyber attack by Russia? How many times has the party of Ronald Reagan—who so clearly understood the threat of the Soviet Union—spoken on the Senate floor about this Russian cyber attack on America? Zero. That is right—zero. They have found more than 35 occasions to talk about stripping health care from millions of Americans, and they made time to urgently rush votes dismantling environmental and anticorruption regulation, but to talk about how a former KGB official launched a cyber act of war against America aimed at eroding trust in our historic democracy and electing the candidate seen as more sympathetic to Russia—zero. Not once.

Why would Russian dictator Vladimir Putin favor President Trump in the last election? Well, I just returned from a week visiting our allies in Eastern Europe. I can tell you, they are puzzled by this, too, and they are worried. They are worried that Donald Trump, the new President, is already advancing and will further advance policies sympathetic to Vladimir Putin's dangerous agenda, specifically weakening the Western transatlantic democratic alliance.

Regardless of the partisan leanings of who was in government in the nations

I just visited—populist, social democrat, conservative, liberal—the concerns in each of these nations of Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine were the same. Is the United States' history of championing democracy and collective security in Europe ending? Are we backing away from those values and commitments just as Russia is more aggressively challenging them? Is the American President really using phrases like “enemy of the people” to describe the free press in America?

You see, the countries that I visited were once in the Eastern bloc, Warsaw Pact, or Soviet Union. They are familiar with that term, “enemy of the people.” That was a term used by Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin that was so ominous that the Soviet Premier, Nikita Khrushchev, later demanded that the Communist Party stop using it because it eliminated the possibility of any kind of ideological fight.

Think of that. Here was Khrushchev saying: Stop using the Stalin term “enemy of the people”; it is too divisive. Now it is being used to describe the media, a description that has been offered by the new President of the United States. Are the Trump administration’s bizarre blinders to Vladimir Putin’s aggression and true nature—and the silence of too many of his colleagues on this danger—a harbinger of some kind of Western retreat when it comes to Russian aggression?

It is hard to believe this is happening in 2017. President Trump has called NATO obsolete. That is a stark and completely wrong statement, so bad that it required the Vice President of the United States to travel to Munich, Germany, last week and reassure our allies who have been part of our alliance since World War II that NATO was not obsolete.

When has it happened in history that the President of the United States would make such a sweeping, erroneous, dangerous statement about the most important alliance in the world and then send his Vice President out on a repair job? The President has surrounded himself with people like Steve Bannon, who reportedly once called himself a Leninist and seems bizarrely sympathetic to Putin’s dictatorial model and weakening the European alliance.

It turns out that the just-resigned National Security Advisor, LTG Michael Flynn, the one who was fired by the previous administration, the one who led chants unworthy of a great democracy about locking up Hillary Clinton, was, in fact, speaking to Russian officials before he or Donald Trump had taken office and, suspiciously, just after President Obama imposed sanctions on Russia for its attack on our election.

President Trump still refuses to release his tax returns to clarify what his son said in 2008 regarding Trump’s businesses seeing “a lot of money pouring in from Russia.” President Trump even said yesterday: “I haven’t called

Russia in 10 years.” That is hard to verify. He spoke to Vladimir Putin on the telephone just a month ago, which was followed, incidentally, a day later by renewed fighting by the Russian-backed separatists in Ukraine.

President Trump visited Russia in 2013. He tweeted at the time: “I just got back from Russia—learned lots & lots.”

Clearly, he did not learn enough about Vladimir Putin. As if that were not enough, this President still refuses to acknowledge Russia’s attack or to criticize Vladimir Putin. You see, the President of the United States has trouble, a real habit of lashing out at everyone and anyone involved in a perceived slight, a dangerous and unbecoming behavior when granted the privilege to be President of this great Nation.

In fact, the vast number and range of those attacked or insulted via Twitter is so significant that I need considerably more time here on the floor of the Senate to list all of the targets of President Trump’s attacks on Twitter. So if you make any criticism or joke about President Trump, make any perceived slight, run a department store, lead a labor union, do just about anything, you may be a victim of one of his Twitter attacks, except, of course, if you happen to be a former Communist KGB official who now leads Russia, a nation that recently attacked our election.

How is it possible? How is it sensible? How is this not an abdication of the President’s responsibilities? Russian President Putin launched a cyber attack and war on the United States and its democracy. November 8, 2016, is a day that will live in cyber infamy because of this Russian attack on the United States of America.

President Putin interfered in our election and tried to influence the selection of the American people in choosing their leader. The evidence is overwhelming. It has been available in increasing amounts for almost 5 months. The White House is silent, in denial.

Republican Senators are largely silent, and not one of them has come to the Senate floor to even address this issue. Meanwhile, Vladimir Putin continues his aggressive military cyber disinformation campaign throughout Europe.

Just last week, the Washington Post reported that the White House led an effort to discredit news stories that described contacts between the Trump campaign and Russian Government officials. The House Intelligence Committee chairman, Congressman NUNES of California, a Republican, went so far as to dismiss these claims of Russian interference in the campaign for the President of the United States and to condemn the leaks that have brought this information to the attention of the American people. Rather than doing their part to ensure an impartial, independent investigation of these

chilling facts, the White House has tried to spin it out of existence. In fact, yesterday, it was reported that the White House Press Secretary asked CIA Director Michael Pompeo and the chairmen of the Senate and House Intelligence Committees to help discredit news articles about the Trump campaign aides’ contacts with Russian officials.

John Brennan, who was head of the Central Intelligence Agency under President Obama, was asked in an interview last night if he could imagine being contacted by the White House and asked to spin a story one way or the other. He said it was unthinkable. It just wasn’t done under previous administrations. Here we are, not even 6 weeks into this Presidency, and it is already happening.

Can anyone here—anyone—imagine what would happen if the situation had been reversed? I can just imagine the howls of “treason” and “impeachment.” Not a single nominee would be confirmed until there were answers and accountability if this had happened and there was an effort by the Russians to influence an election in favor of the Democrats.

What has happened to my friends on the other side of the aisle? When will they put the country that they are sworn to represent and to uphold above any partisan consideration? A Polish expert who I ran into during my journey summed all this up wisely when he said: If the United States does not respond to the Russian attack on its own election, Putin will feel he has a free hand to keep taking destabilizing actions in the West.

There was a time in Washington when national security issues were bipartisan. Politics used to stop at the water’s edge. The security of the Nation meant putting aside partisan agendas to face a common threat. It is time to return to that tradition. We need an independent, transparent investigation of this Russian involvement in our Presidential election.

We know the voters list in my home State of Illinois was hacked. We know that some 17 different intelligence agencies have told us unequivocally that Russia did everything in its power to try to change the outcome of this last election. We are told that there could have been up to 1,000 Russian trolls sitting in headquarters in Moscow, trying to hack into the computers of people in the United States to influence the outcome of this election.

We know that, coincidentally, some 2 hours after a very controversial, negative story came out against Donald Trump, the Russians released information that they had hacked from the campaign of Hillary Clinton.

Two hours. A coincidence? Not likely. There is a lot of information that needs to be followed up on. No conclusions can be reached until there is a thorough, independent, credible investigation. I worry about using the Intelligence Committees for this purpose.

These committees and their activities are important, critical, but they are largely invisible and their deliberations are interminable. We are waiting, hoping that they will come up with information to help us spare the United States from a future attack by Russia or any other country on the sovereignty of our Nation.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

HOME HEALTH CARE PLANNING IMPROVEMENT
ACT

MS. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise today to urge my colleagues to support the Home Health Care Planning Improvement Act, which I have introduced with my friend and colleague from Maryland, Senator CARDIN. Our legislation aims to help ensure that our seniors and disabled citizens have timely access to home health services available under the Medicare program.

Nurse practitioners, physician assistants, certified nurse midwives, and clinical nurse specialists are all playing increasingly important roles in the delivery of healthcare services, particularly in rural and medically underserved areas of our country where physicians may be in scarce supply.

In recognition of their growing role, Congress, in 1997, authorized Medicare to begin paying for physician services provided by those health professionals as long as those services are within their scope of practice under State law.

Despite their expanded role, these advanced practice registered nurses and physician assistants are currently unable to order home healthcare services for their Medicare patients. Under current law, only physicians are allowed to certify or initiate home healthcare for Medicare patients, even though they may not be as familiar with the patient's case as the nonphysician provider.

In fact, in many cases, the certifying physician may not even have a relationship with the patient and must rely upon the input of the nurse practitioner, physician assistant, clinical nurse specialist, or certified nurse midwife to order the medically necessary home healthcare. At best, this requirement adds more paperwork and a number of unnecessary steps to the process before home healthcare can be provided. At worst, it can lead to needless delays in getting Medicare patients the home care that they need simply because a doctor is not readily available to sign the requisite form. The inability of these advanced practice registered nurses and physician assistants to order home health care is particularly burdensome for our seniors in medically underserved areas, where these providers may be the only healthcare professionals who are readily available.

For example, needed home healthcare can be delayed for up to days at a time for Medicare patients in some rural towns in my State of Maine, where nurse practitioners are

the only healthcare professionals and the supervising physicians are far away. A nurse practitioner told me about one of her cases in which her collaborating physician had just lost her father and, therefore, understandably, was not available. But here is what the consequence was. This nurse practitioner's patients experienced a 2-day delay in getting needed care while they waited to get the paperwork signed by another doctor.

Another nurse practitioner pointed out that it is ludicrous that she can order physical and occupational therapy in a subacute facility but cannot order home healthcare. How does that make sense?

One of her patients had to wait 11 days after being discharged before his physical and occupational therapy could continue simply because the home health agency had difficulty finding a physician to certify the continuation of the very same therapy that the nurse practitioner had been able to authorize when the patient was in the facility.

Think about that. Here we have a patient who is in a rehab facility, for example, or a subacute facility or a nursing home—a skilled nursing home—and that patient is ready to go home, but the chances of successful treatment of that patient—of that patient regaining function—is going to be diminished if there is a gap between the physical and occupational therapy and the home healthcare nursing that the patient would receive at home if there is no physician available to do the paperwork.

So that simply does not make sense. I would wager that it leads to additional cost for our healthcare system because, if that essential home healthcare is not available in the patient's home, the tendency is going to be to keep the patient in the facility for a longer period of time to avoid the gap in treatment. Yet we know that it is much more cost effective to treat the patient in his or her home. We also know that for many patients, that is their preference as well. They would rather be in the comfort, security, and privacy of their own home.

The Home Health Care Planning Improvement Act would help ensure that our Medicare beneficiaries get the home health care they need and when they need it, by allowing physician assistants, nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, and certified nurse midwives to order home health services.

It only makes sense. They can order it when the patient is in certain facilities, but then they lose the right to order it when the patient goes home? That just doesn't make sense. These are skilled professionals who know what the patients need, and we should not be burdening the system with unnecessary paperwork.

Our bipartisan legislation is supported by the National Association for Home Care & Hospice, the American

Nurses Association, the American Academy of Physician Assistants, the American College of Nurse Midwives, the American Association of Nurse Practitioners, and the Visiting Nurse Associations of America.

A lot of times we deal with healthcare issues that are extraordinarily complex, and it is difficult for us to figure out what the answer is. This is not one of those cases. This is a commonsense reform that will improve and expedite services to Medicare beneficiaries, whether they are our disabled citizens or our seniors. It will help them get the home health care they need without undue delay.

I urge all of my colleagues to join us as cosponsors of this commonsense bill.

Seeing no one seeking recognition, 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. RUBIO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (MR. JOHNSON). Without objection, it is so ordered.

FOREIGN AID

MR. RUBIO. Mr. President, I know we are working through these nominations, and there is an important one before us now, but as we continue to debate it, I thought it would be a good time to talk about the overall function of the Federal Government and some of the important things it does.

Today I had occasion to meet with individuals on behalf of the ONE organization. It is a fantastic group I learned about for the first time in 2010. I was running for the U.S. Senate, and a group of activists in black shirts with a round white symbol on the shirt that said "ONE"—and I didn't know what it was. I thought it was maybe a protester or someone of that nature. They were very polite, and in the end they approached me and started talking about it. They are a group of supporters of global engagement on behalf of the United States, cofounded by Bono, the front man for the band U2, which I think is familiar to most people at this point. So they are here again today, and we had an opportunity to meet with them early this morning. Many of the Members around here perhaps have seen them visit around the Capitol.

That brought to mind something I want to talk about today, and that is the broader issue of U.S. foreign aid, the State Department, and engagement in the world. Let me back up and tell you what I think I hear—that most people hear around here as well from a lot of people. This has been going on for a long time. I don't blame people because people have real lives, businesses to run, and families to raise so they are not watching the Federal budget, line by line, on a regular basis.

There is a perception out there that the U.S. Government spends an extraordinary percentage of our overall

budget on foreign aid. I saw a poll recently, a legitimate poll conducted, and it asked people: How much of the Federal budget do you think goes out of the country? And the average was 26 percent. That is what people thought. Of course the truth is, it is nothing even close to that.

I want to begin by saying that today foreign aid as a part of our overall budget is less than 1 percent of the total amount the U.S. Government spends—less than 1 percent. The second thing people bring up is: Well, but we have so many problems in America. We do. We have real issues we need to confront. Why do we spend so much money on these other countries when we have so many problems here at home? That is a legitimate question. People should ask that. I think it is important for those of us who believe in global engagement and believe in the function of foreign aid to justify it, to never take it for granted, and to constantly examine it to make sure the money is being spent well and that it is worth spending at all. That is what I wanted to come to the floor to do today for a few minutes.

I know we are soon going to end a budget cycle. There will be debate, and every dollar in the budget should justify itself. I want to explain for a moment why I believe global engagement and foreign aid are so critical.

Here is the first reason. The world has always been interconnected, especially for America. We are not a small, obscure nation. We are the most influential, the most consequential nation on the planet. I can tell you that almost without exception, if there is a major crisis anywhere on this planet, it will eventually have a nexus to life in America in one way or another.

You think about one of the controversial issues that has been debated in Washington and being discussed politically is the Syrian refugees. I remember a couple of years ago that people would tell me: Well, it is very sad what is happening in Syria, but what does that have to do with us? Well, 2 or 3 years later, I think we all know the answer; that is, when refugees are created anywhere in the world, it is natural that a significant percentage of them want to come to the richest, freest, safest nation in the world, and that is the United States of America.

It also impacts our allies. We have seen it in Europe where a tremendous strain has been placed upon our allies in Europe. A significant amount of the budget in Germany, where I was recently just visiting, is being spent on dealing with the refugee crisis and the impact it is having on them. I would tell you that what happens in the world has a direct consequence to the United States.

Here is another fact for why it matters to America. This is a key fact that I was able to pull up today—or my staff was. Twelve of the fifteen top trading partners of the United States were once recipients of U.S. foreign assistance.

I think the best way to justify foreign assistance is to understand the history of it. Let's go back in time. Let's go to the end of the Second World War. Europe was in ruins. Japan was in ruins. The United States, had it behaved like most great powers in history, would have either abandoned those nations itself or the United States would have conquered them and made Japan a colony or made Germany a dependent on the United States. Instead, through the Marshall Plan the United States rebuilt Western Europe and in particular Germany. Through additional assistance, the United States provided aid to rebuild post-war Japan. For the Japanese, between 1946 and 1952, the United States invested \$2.2 billion—or \$18 billion in today's dollars—in Japan's reconstruction efforts. That amounts to more than one-third of the \$65 billion in goods the United States exported to Japan just last year, in 1 year alone.

What is the result of this aid? Here is the result. Today we have a prosperous, unified Germany, which is a strong member of NATO and a strong ally of the United States. We have in Japan the world's third largest economy and one of the most important allies of this great country of ours in the Asia-Pacific region. This would not have been possible without U.S. assistance. Did it help the people of Japan and the people of Germany? Absolutely. Did it help the people of the United States? Without question.

Is the world a better place today because Germany is a free democratic nation involved in trade, involved in alliances with us, deploying troops around the world for NATO missions? Without a doubt. Is the world a better place because Japan is the third largest economy and a strong ally of the United States in the Asia-Pacific region? Without a doubt. That is an example of the fruit of U.S. engagement.

Some would say to me: Well, that was after the Second World War. That was a catastrophic event, but as a matter of course, what else has borne fruit? Isn't this just money we throw down a hole and never see results of? I would tell you that is not the case.

I would point to South Korea. It is hard to believe, but just a few decades ago South Korea was poorer than North Korea. South Korea had less money, less of an economy, less prosperity than North Korea. Today, South Korea is an industrialized, fully developed economy—one of the largest economies in the world. A nation that not long ago was a military dictatorship is now a vibrant, functioning democracy and a strong American ally.

Again, another example—do you want one in our own hemisphere? Look at the country of Colombia. Not long ago, Colombia was basically a failed state. That country had been overrun by drug gangs, the cartels—the Medellin Cartel, the Cali Cartel. The government was on the verge of collapse. Presidential candidates were

being assassinated—an extraordinary source of instability in the Western Hemisphere. Colombia still has challenges, but in helping them move forward with Plan Colombia, today trade between the United States and Colombia is at \$14 billion, and as of last year, it actually was a surplus.

What is more, Colombia is now a force multiplier for our cousins. For example, if you visit Honduras, as I did during the summer, and you see the Honduran police and the Honduran special forces being trained to take on the criminal elements and cartels in that country, do you know who is there training them alongside of our people? The Colombians—the Colombian military units who have the same uniform, the same training, the same weaponry, and the same practices as the Green Berets of the United States, and they are a force multiplier. Today, Colombia is doing the things America once had to do because of the aid we provided them, and they are perhaps our strongest ally in the Western Hemisphere.

It goes on and on from a human perspective. You think about America and America's Feed the Future Initiative. It is an initiative that has trained thousands of farmers in Tanzania over the last decade. Now our country exports to them, and exports to Tanzania from the United States have increased by 500 percent.

An important point, by the way, is that there have been reductions in foreign aid over the last few decades. Today, we spend 50 percent less on foreign aid than we did as a percentage of our gross domestic product when President Reagan was in office, which was near the end of the Cold War. There is rationale for this, as well, for our economy and for our national security.

From an economic perspective, 95 percent of the consumers in the world—95 percent of the people on this planet who buy things—live outside of the United States. Seven of the ten fastest growing economies happen to be in the developing world. So if you are an American company that makes things—and I know we want to make things in America again—you have to sell them to someone. If you can only sell them to 5 percent of the world's population that happens to live in the United States of America, that is one thing, but imagine how much more you could sell, how much more money you could make, how much more value you would have for your shareholders, how many more employees and jobs you would create if you could sell to more of that 95 percent of the people around the world. You cannot sell to people and people cannot be consumers if they are starving. They cannot be consumers if they are dying of HIV/AIDS. They cannot be consumers if they are dying of malaria. They cannot be consumers if they live in an unstable country.

So there is an economic rationale for our investment around the world. We

are helping people to emerge from poverty and to ultimately become members of a global consumer class that buys American goods and services. We are, in essence, planting the seeds for markets to develop that we can trade with and that we can sell to. That is one of the reasons it is so important. That is one of the reasons that today one out of five American jobs is tied to international trade and that one in three manufacturing jobs in America is tied to exports. You cannot export unless there are people on the other end of the deal to buy it from you, and we want as many people in the world as possible to be able to afford to buy things from us. In many places around the world, it begins by ensuring that they are alive and then by ensuring that they have the education they need to develop an economy so that their people can become consumers and trade partners with us.

The list goes on and on in terms of the accomplishments it has had.

Our global anti-malaria program has saved over 6 million lives, primarily those of children under the age of 5. PEPFAR, which is the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, has saved more than 11 million people and has prevented 2 million babies from being born with HIV. The number of school-age children worldwide who are not going to primary school dropped to 57 million children in the year 2015. That is still too many, but the number was nearly twice that—100 million—just 7 years ago. There has been a 99-percent reduction in polio cases thanks to the efforts we have led in the vaccination program. The list goes on and on.

There is a national security component to this, and here it is: Imagine for a moment that you are a child born in Africa, that your parents had HIV, and that they survived because of American assistance. Imagine if you yourself were someone who survived HIV or malaria because of American assistance or that you got to go to school because of American help or that because of American assistance you didn't contract polio the way your relatives used to. Imagine if you were one of these young people around the world whose lives are better because of the help of the American taxpayer. This is never going to be 100 percent for sure, but I promise you it is going to be a lot harder to recruit someone to anti-Americanism and anti-American terrorism if the United States of America is the reason one is even alive today. That is the national security component, apart from allowing countries to become more stable and provide for their people and for themselves.

By the way, when we talk about the international affairs budget, it is not just foreign aid; it is everything—diplomatic relationships with the global community, security assistance with key allies—Israel. As an example, it provides them \$3 billion in military assistance as they are a key ally in a strategic part of the world.

We have talked about the health clinics in the schools and the humanitarian relief efforts. I remember going to the Philippines about 3 or 4 years ago. One of the first things people mentioned to me was that after that horrible storm that killed and hurt so many people, they woke up one morning and saw a U.S. aircraft carrier off the horizon, and they knew things were going to be better because America was on the case. Think about the power and what that means for our Nation and the impact it has on people around the world. This is part of it.

By the way, when we travel abroad—when you are an American and you are in another country and you lose your passport or your wallet gets stolen or you have any sort of an issue—you have to work abroad, as do many people whom I know, and we get the calls in our office from people who have kids who are studying abroad and have an issue and have to go to the consulate or the Embassy—this is the budget that pays for that stuff. This is the budget that pays for that.

If you are a company that decides "I want to do business in this new country. I want to fly to this country and find some customers and maybe come back to America and hire 20 more people so that we can build products to sell. I want to expand our reach," it is our U.S. Embassies and the agencies working within them that are helping to make those connections for American businesses. That is part of this budget.

When we talk about this, I think it is critical for us as leaders to explain to the American people just exactly what it is we are talking about. We always want to put America first. We always want to think about the American people first. That is our obligation. But I think this is part of that. If you really want to help the American people, you have to ensure that the world we live in is a more stable place.

I close by saying that this always gets back to the argument that some make: Why does it have to be us? We have been doing this for so long. We have been involved in this for so long, and we have spent so much money and so much blood and treasure around the world for the cause of freedom, democracy, humanitarianism, and the like. Why does it have to be America?

I think that gets to the fundamental question of, what kind of country do we want to be? The choice before us is that it has to be America because there is no alternative. That is the point I hope people remember and understand. There is no alternative for America in the world today. If America decides to withdraw from the world, if America decides to step back, if America declines and our influence around the world becomes less palpable, what will replace it?

There are only two things that can replace it—not the U.N. There are only two things that can step into whatever America leaves if it steps back. No. 1 is

totalitarianism. For the growing movement around the world led by China and Russia and North Korea and Iran, it is the totalitarian regimes. That is the first thing that can step in and fill the vacuum. The other is nothing. The other alternative to America is nothing. It is a vacuum, and that vacuum leads to instability, and that instability will lead to violence, and that violence will lead to war. That will ultimately come back and impact us whether we want it to or not. This is the choice before us.

Without a doubt, I am the sponsor of a law that we passed last year, foreign aid accountability. I want to make sure that every dollar of American taxpayer money that is invested abroad for these purposes is spent well and is not going to line the pockets of corrupt dictators. I 100 percent agree with that. Yet this idea that somehow we can just retreat from our engagement in the world is bad for national security, it is bad for our economy, and it isn't good for policymakers who want to put the American people first. By the way, it doesn't live up to the standards of who we are as a people.

I have said this many times before, and in this I am guided by my faith. I believe that to whom much is given, much is expected. That is what the ancient words and Scripture teach us. I think that principle is true for people, and I think that principle is true for nations. I believe in the depth of my heart that our Creator has honored America's willingness to step forward and help those around the world, and I believe He will continue to do so as long as we use our blessings not just for our good but for the good of mankind.

I hope that in the weeks to come, as we debate the proper role of government and the proper way to fund it, we understand what a critical component foreign aid and the international affairs budget is to our national security, our economic interests, and our very identity as a people and as a nation.

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.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. 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. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, we have the nomination of Representative RYAN Zinke to be the Secretary of the Interior as the business before the body today, and I wish to spend a few moments this afternoon speaking about him, his qualifications, and why I believe he will be a strong Secretary of the Interior.

Of all the Cabinet-level nominations that have an impact on my home State of Alaska, the Secretary of the Interior is almost certainly the most important and the most consequential. Two-

thirds of Alaska—nearly 224 million acres—is under Federal management. To put that into perspective, that is more land than is occupied by the entire State of Texas, and it is an area about 177 times larger than the State of Delaware. The vast majority of that land is controlled by agencies within the Department of the Interior, from the Bureau of Land Management, to the National Park Service, to the Fish and Wildlife Service. Again, significant parts of Alaska—more land than is occupied by the State of Texas—are held under Federal management. It is for this reason we in Alaska call the Interior Secretary our “landlord.” He might not necessarily like that fact, but that is what he is effectively.

While it might sound strange if you are from an Eastern State such as Massachusetts or New York, which have hardly any Federal lands within their borders, the decisions that are made by the Department of the Interior literally determine the livelihoods of thousands of Alaskans, as well as the stability and the success of our State. When the Department of the Interior chooses to work with us, Alaska is able to grow and prosper, even as our lands and our waters remain protected under the most stringent environmental standards in the world. When the Department chooses not to work with us, as was all too often the case in the last administration, the people of Alaska suffered. Our State's economy, our budget, and our future are all threatened at the same time. I start with that context to help the Senate understand why I take this confirmation process so seriously whenever a new Interior Secretary is nominated.

I consider whether the nominee is right for the job and whether he or she will do right by the people of Alaska, as well as other western states. I talk with the nominee and ask him or her questions about everything from ANCSA and ANILCA to wilderness and wildlife management. When I make a decision, I am making it as a Senator for Alaska and as the chairman of both the authorizing committee and the Appropriations subcommittee for the Department of Interior.

Today, after a great deal of review and careful consideration, I am very pleased to be here to speak in strong support of our new President's nominee for this position, Representative RYAN ZINKE. I believe Representative ZINKE is an excellent choice to be our next Secretary of the Interior. Maybe I am a little bit partial here, but the fact that he is a fellow westerner, hailing from the Treasure State of Montana—that helps with my decision. He is a lifelong sportsman. He loves to hunt and fish. That also resonates with me. I also understand he is a pretty good downhill skier, and I like that too. He is a trained geologist. He has worked as an energy consultant. Even more notably, he has dedicated his life to the service of our Nation, including more than two decades as a Navy SEAL, a term in the

Montana Senate, and most recently as the sole U.S. Congressman for his home State.

Representative ZINKE's life and career have prepared him well to serve as Secretary of the Interior. He was born in the West. He lives in the West. He understands it. He understands its people. He has substantive knowledge of the challenges facing the Department and truly a firsthand experience in trying to solve them. He has also shown that he understands the need for the Department to be a partner for Alaska and other western states, which contain the vast majority of our nation's Federal lands.

We had an opportunity in the Energy and Natural Resources Committee to hold a hearing to consider Representative ZINKE's nomination on January 17. It seems like an eternity ago now, but what I remember very clearly from that morning is the positive and very compelling vision he shared with us.

Representative ZINKE told us he grew up in a “small timber and railroad town next to Glacier National Park.” He explained that he believes the Secretary is responsible for being “the steward of majestic public lands, the champion of our great Indian nations, and the manager and voice of our diverse wildlife.” He did show us—and spoke to it in the committee hearing—that he understands the purpose and the value of Federal lands, invoking Teddy Roosevelt and pledging to follow the multiple-use doctrine.

As other colleagues have come to the floor today to speak about Representative ZINKE's nomination, several have spoken to the issue of the Antiquities Act, speaking more directly than to the issue of multiple-use as it relates to our public lands. Yet, in outlining the concept of multiple-use that Representative ZINKE believes and follows, it is probably best to look to his own words that he said when he was before us in the committee. On multiple-use, Representative ZINKE said the following:

In multiple-use, in the spirit of Roosevelt, it means you can use it for multiple purposes. I am particularly concerned about public access. I am a hunter, a fisherman. But multiple uses are also making sure what you're going to do, you know, and you go in with both eyes open, that means sustainability. That means that it doesn't have to be in conflict if you have recreation over mining.

You just have to make sure that you understand what the consequences of each of those uses are. It's our public land. What I have seen most recently is our access is being shut off, roads are being shut off, and we're all getting older. And when you don't have access to hunting areas, traditional fishing areas, it makes it an elite sport.

And I'm particularly concerned about the elitism of our traditional hunting, fishing, and snowmobiling. Making our public lands accessible in the spirit of multiple-use. Single use, if you look at the Muir model of some of our national parks and some of our areas, I agree. There are some areas that need to be set aside that are absolutely appropriate for man to be an observer.

There are special places in our country that deserve that recognition. But a lot of it

is traditional uses of what we find in North Dakota and Montana where you can hunt and fish, you can drill an oil well. Make sure there is a reclamation project. Make sure there is a permit, make sure there's NEPA. If you are doing something that's more intrusive, make sure you monitor the water. Everyone enjoys clean water and we should. I don't think necessarily they are in conflict. I think you have to do it right.

I think it is important to put those comments of Representative ZINKE on the record because it is clear that, again, he recognizes the multiple uses of our public lands—recognizing there are certain places that are special but ensuring, again, that the doctrine of multiple-use is respected as initially intended.

Representative ZINKE also told us that he would have three main tasks if he is confirmed as Secretary of the Interior. The first, he said, is to “restore trust by working with rather than against local communities and states.” The second is to address the multibillion dollar maintenance backlog at the National Park Service so that we preserve the crown jewels of our public lands for future generations. And the third is to “ensure the professionals on the front line, our rangers and field managers, have the right tools, right resources, and flexibility to make the right decisions that give a voice to the people they serve.”

So those were the three priorities as outlined by Representative ZINKE, and I believe all three of those missions are necessary. I am hardly alone in supporting Representative ZINKE as the right choice to fulfill them. Within the committee, he drew bipartisan support when we reported his nomination to the full Senate on January 31. He has drawn widespread support from dozens and dozens of stakeholder groups all across the country: from the Alaska Federation of Natives, the Blackfeet Tribe, the Choctaw Nation, the National Congress of American Indians, Safari Club International, Ducks Unlimited, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, the National Rifle Association, the Public Lands Council, and the American Exploration & Mining Association. These are just a few of the many stakeholders that have praised or endorsed Representative ZINKE to be our next Secretary of the Interior.

I am glad we are finally here today on the verge of confirming Representative ZINKE to this position. I would remind the Senate that despite many substantive differences, we confirmed President Obama's first nominee for Interior Secretary on inauguration day back in 2009—not so with Representative ZINKE. It has now been 6 weeks since we held his nomination hearing and almost a full month since we reported his nomination from our committee—again on a strong bipartisan basis. I am disappointed, of course, that it has taken this long to get to this point, particularly with regard to a nominee who I think, by all accounts, is not controversial or unqualified.

Now we need to confirm Representative ZINKE without any further delay,

so that he can select his team and get to work addressing the range of issues that he will inherit. From the maintenance backlog of the National Park Service, to the need for greater balance in Federal land management, to life-and-death issues in remote Alaska communities, and from the Bureau of Indian Affairs to U.S.-affiliated islands, Representative ZINKE really has his work cut out for him, and he needs to be allowed to get started as soon as he can.

Again, I will repeat that I believe Representative ZINKE is a solid choice for this demanding and critical position. While we may not agree on every issue, I believe he will work with us in a thoughtful manner that is reflective of a true partnership. I believe he understands what the job requires, he has the experience necessary to succeed in it, and he will show that the Department of the Interior can still work with local stakeholders to achieve positive results.

I thank Representative ZINKE for his willingness to continue his service to our Nation and for his patience during this process. On behalf of Alaskans, I look forward to working with him after he is confirmed with bipartisan support, and I urge every Member of the Senate to support his nomination.

With that, I see the other Senator from the great State of Alaska is here with us today.

I yield the floor.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, like my colleague from the great State of Alaska, I also rise in support of the confirmation of Congressman RYAN ZINKE to be our Nation's next Secretary of the Interior.

There has been a lot of discussion about Congressman ZINKE, and he comes to this job with great qualifications. He is a patriotic and ethical man, from a patriotic and ethical part of America: the American West. He is a Navy SEAL who has dedicated decades of his life to protecting our great Nation. He is a lifelong sportsman. He is a trained geologist. He is a strong advocate for energy independence. He has a keen interest in protecting our environment, while not stymying much needed economic growth.

There is probably no position more important to the future of our great State of Alaska than the Secretary of the Interior, and I think it is great that we will have a new Secretary—in addition to the chairman of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, my colleague Senator MURKOWSKI, from our great State. There are no more important positions than those positions. The Federal government owns more than 60 percent of Alaska, and we are a big State. I don't have to come here and talk about how big we are, but we are the biggest by far. Sorry, Texas.

In my State, as with many States in the West, our land is our lifeblood. It feeds us. It is what drives our economy and our culture. Congressman ZINKE understands this. He hails from Montana, which has a similar view of how

important the land is. He understands that responsible energy development goes hand in hand with robust environmental protections, and he understands the very important point that we as Americans can do both. We can responsibly develop our resources and protect the environment. No country has a better record of doing that than the United States of America.

Congressman ZINKE has committed to working with Alaska as a partner in opportunity, rather than acting as a roadblock to success. Why is this so important? This would be an enormously welcome change from the past administration. I served as Alaska's attorney general, as commissioner of natural resources in my great State, and now as a U.S. Senator, and I witnessed, unfortunately, how the former Obama administration tried to stop, stymie, and slow roll literally every economic project in Alaska—every one.

Alaska and so many States across our country have tremendous resources to be developed right now. America is undergoing an energy renaissance. We are once again the world's energy superpower, yet our Federal Government was not helpful in that renaissance at all. It can be now, and we are looking toward a bright future when we have a Federal Government that is going to be a partner in opportunity, not an obstacle. I am hopeful that we are going to see a new renaissance of economic growth and job creation in Alaska and across the country, buoyed by Federal agencies like the Department of the Interior under Congressman ZINKE's leadership that want to help us seize opportunities, not undermine them.

Like my colleague Senator MURKOWSKI, I encourage all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to vote for Congressman ZINKE to be our next Secretary of the Interior. He is a man of integrity, a man of patriotism, a man of experience, who in my view, is going to make a great Secretary of the Interior.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

TRIBUTE TO BRIAN AND JOANNE LEBER

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to recognize my constituents, Brian and Joanne Leber, of Leber Jeweler Inc. in Chicago, IL. A third-generation, family-owned business first established in 1921, Brian and his wife, Joanne, are dedicated to socially conscious and eco-friendly fine jewelry. Leber Jeweler Inc. has been instrumental in not only serving as a model for responsible and ethical sourcing in the jewelry industry, but Brian and Joanne also have a deep history of activism and philanthropy, advocating for important policies that support human rights.

In 1999, Brian and Joanne developed and launched Earthwise Jewelry. Leber Jeweler Inc. was the first company in the United States to use conflict-free Canadian diamonds, and the landmark collection also utilizes fairly traded gemstones and recycled precious metals, all sourced, mined, designed, and produced with concerns for both the environment and fair-labor standards.

Brian and Joanne also have been notable advocates for laws related to the responsible sourcing of precious stones and metals, including of rubies and jadeite from Burma and gold and tungsten from the Democratic Republic of Congo. In 2007, Brian testified before Congress in support of the Tom Lantos Block Burmese JADE Act, and in 2009, he advocated for the suspension of Zimbabwe from the Kimberley Process for its human rights abuses in the Marange diamond fields. Then, in 2010, Brian supported efforts to pass bipartisan legislation that would create a mechanism to enhance transparency in the sourcing of conflict minerals and help American consumers and investors make informed decisions.

I have had the privilege of traveling to the Democratic Republic of Congo twice, in 2005 and 2010. It is a nation of breathtaking natural beauty, but like too many others, it has suffered from the paradox of the resource curse. Despite being rich in natural resources that should seemingly promote growth and development, the Democratic Republic of Congo has faced decades of weak governance, poverty, and incomprehensible violence. And fueling much of the violence, at least in part, has been the contest for control of these resources and their trading routes. Sadly, this violence had coined a dubious distinction for eastern Congo, known as the Rape Capital of the World.

I have seen firsthand the efforts of people like Dr. Jo Lusi and Dr. Denis Mukwege, who founded the HEAL Africa Hospital and the Panzi Hospital, respectively, restoring health and dignity to the survivors of sexual violence. When I chaired the first-ever hearing in the U.S. Senate about the uses of rape as a weapon of war in 2008, Dr. Mukwege stressed the importance of not just treating the consequences of sexual violence in the Congo, but addressing the root causes.