

stripped 24 million Americans of healthcare, a cruel bill that would have disproportionately hurt those who voted for President Trump.

This is a dereliction of our responsibility here in the Congress. Not one of these issues is more important than getting to the bottom of possible collusion with the Russians or of the possibility that some in the White House have been compromised by a foreign government.

I want to praise the few on the majority side who have spoken out on the need for an investigation, including Senator GRAHAM and Senator MCCAIN. They noted early on the need for an independent investigation.

Today a majority of Americans also want an independent commission. I am again calling for the same. We need an independent commission, one led by American statesmen or women of unquestioned reputation, say Sandra Day O'Connor or Colin Powell.

We did this after the attack of September 11, and this attack and its unanswered questions demand nothing less again today.

JUSTICE AND THE RULE OF LAW IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, last week I spoke about the importance of the rule of law in Guatemala and praised the work of Attorney General Thelma Aldana and the commissioner of the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala, Ivan Velasquez. These two individuals have helped to create hope among the Guatemalan people in the possibility of justice in a country where the justice system has too often been used to perpetuate corruption, impunity, and inequality.

The International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala, or CICIG, has been strongly supported by the United States. I commended President Morales when, shortly after taking office last January, he extended CICIG's mandate. He has affirmed that he supports CICIG's mandate through September 2019, for which, again, I commend him.

Last week, I expressed a concern that had been conveyed to me by several individuals that President Morales might recommend against renewal of Mr. Velasquez as commissioner beyond September 2017, when Mr. Velasquez's current term expires. In response, according to press reports, President Morales denied this and said he supports Mr. Velasquez for as long as Mr. Velasquez does the job he is supposed to do.

Ivan Velasquez is a respected former judge from Colombia who has carried out his responsibilities as the commissioner of CICIG with professionalism. He and Attorney General Aldana have collaborated on sensitive, complex cases, which until recently would never have been prosecuted in Guatemala, given its history of impunity. It is important that their collaboration continue for as long as possible.

I welcome President Morales's public statement of support for CICIG and for Mr. Velasquez, particularly at a time when the U.S. Congress is again being asked to provide hundreds of millions of dollars to support the Alliance for Prosperity Plan. That plan, which is in its early stages, has the potential to make progress in combating the poverty, lack of opportunity, inequality, violence, and impunity that are among the key contributors to migration from Central America to the United States. These are deeply rooted problems that the Central American countries and the United States have a strong interest in working together to address.

For the Alliance for Prosperity Plan to succeed, each of the Central American governments needs to take steps that their predecessors were unwilling or unable to take. Those steps include ensuring that senior government officials and their advisers are people of integrity; redefining the antagonistic relationship between government and civil society, to one of mutual respect for each other's legitimate role; fully supporting efforts to combat corruption by CICIG and by the Mission to Support the Fight Against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras—El Salvador should also recognize the important role these entities are playing and support the establishment of a similar commission to combat corruption and impunity in that country—increasing the budget of the Office of the Attorney General, so they have the necessary personnel, training, equipment, and protection to carry out their responsibilities throughout the country, especially in areas where they have never had the resources to operate; supporting the independence of the judiciary, including the selection of judges based on their qualifications and the principle of equal access to justice; and building transparent and accountable institutions of democracy that can withstand attempts to subvert the rights of the people, including demilitarizing law enforcement and building professional, civilian police forces.

It is the responsibility of the Central American governments to take these steps and, by doing so, create the conditions for building more prosperous, equitable, and just societies. If they do that and they meet the other conditions in U.S. law, the United States should support them.

CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW ACT RESOLUTIONS

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, today I wish to express my disappointment in today's vote on H.J. Res. 67 and my strong opposition to H.J. Res. 66. These resolutions overturn rules issued by the Department of Labor that are essential to providing increased access to retirement savings programs at the city and State levels.

Among all working families in America ages 32 to 61, the median family in

America had only \$5,000 saved in 2013. This indicates to me that we are clearly facing a retirement savings crisis.

In California, 7.5 million workers don't have access to a retirement savings plan through their jobs, including 3.4 million women. Of those without a workplace retirement savings plan, almost 5 million are individuals of Color, and over 3.5 million are Latino.

The good news is that, when a person has access to a retirement savings program through their workplace, they are 15 times more likely to save for retirement.

In California, legislators have been working for more than 4 years to create the Secure Choice program as a way of addressing the retirement crisis we face. This program allows workers to easily save for retirement through a deduction made directly from their paycheck.

Those who need access to a workplace retirement program the most, individuals with lower incomes, are far less likely to have that access. These are the people who stand to gain the most from the Secure Choice program and lose the most by Congress halting its progress.

Let me share some examples of the people who would be impacted. Most eligible employees work for small businesses that might not be able to offer retirement savings plans on their own, and nearly half of eligible workers work in the retail, hospitality, healthcare, and manufacturing industries.

This program supports lower- and middle-class workers by providing access to the tools they need to control their financial future. The average wage of workers eligible for this program is \$35,000, and 80 percent of eligible workers earn less than \$50,000.

We are facing a time of deep income inequality and must stand up for programs that support the middle class, like Secure Choice. Nationwide, the bottom 90 percent of households have seen their income drop compared to what it was in 1970. Meanwhile, the top 1 percent has seen their household income triple.

As workers struggle to make ends meet, it is appalling to me that Congress would actively take away a key resource for financial planning.

Californians want to ensure that all employees have access to a retirement savings program. The Department of Labor's State rule clears the way for California to set up programs like Secure Choice by clarifying employers' obligations to the accounts.

This rule would also help small businesses compete for qualified workers who expect and deserve access to a workplace retirement savings program. Small Business California supports the Department of Labor's rule paving the way for these programs and opposes this resolution.

Finally, in California, our State chapter of the Chamber of Commerce specifically asked for an opinion from

the Department of Labor on employer obligations. Once the Department of Labor's rule was issued, CalChamber no longer opposed the California bill.

In fact, the legislation that passed in California requires the State board to report a finalized rule from the Department of Labor. Overturning the Department of Labor's rule completely ignores the effort and care taken in California to craft a program that works for both employees and employers.

Nationally, almost half of working-age households do not have retirement savings accounts, and 55 million people don't have access to a workplace retirement plan. This is shocking.

According to the Economic Policy Institute, the median retirement account savings for families ages 56 to 61 was only \$17,000 in 2013. This is only slightly higher than the 2016 poverty threshold for a household of two people aged 65 and older. It is inconceivable that a family could afford to finance their retirement with only \$17,000 in savings.

Supporting retirement savings is not a partisan issue. In fact a bipartisan group of State treasurers oppose this resolution, as does the National Conference of State Legislatures.

We are facing a retirement savings crisis in our country, and the Department of Labor's rule is a simple, commonsense guideline that make it easier for individuals to save for retirement.

While today's vote is a disappointing development for city programs, I will keep fighting to support California's Secure Choice program. I strongly urge my colleagues to stand up for American workers and support their access to retirement savings programs by opposing H.J. Res. 66, should it come up for a vote on the Senate floor.

Thank you.

DISCHARGE PETITION—S.J. RES. 19

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, hereby direct that the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs be discharged from further consideration of S.J. Res. 19, a joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection relating to pre-paid accounts under the Electronic Fund Transfer Act and the Truth in Lending Act.

David Perdue, Mike Crapo, Rob Portman, Steve Daines, Lamar Alexander, Mike Rounds, John Cornyn, Mitch McConnell, Roger Wicker, Ted Cruz, Patrick Toomey, Ron Johnson, Mike Lee, Shelley Moore Capito, John Hoeven, James Lankford, Thom Tillis, John Kennedy, James M. Inhofe, John Boozman, John Thune, Michael B. Enzi, Johnny Isakson, James E. Risch, Tom Cotton, Thad Cochran, Jeff Flake, Luther Strange, Richard Shelby, Pat Roberts, John Barrasso.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO GARY PETERSEN

• Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, today I wish to pay tribute to a dear friend, honorable servicemember, and dedicated public servant. On March 3, Gary Petersen retired from over a half-century career of private and public service supporting scientific achievement and advocacy for the people of my home State of Washington. Gary has worked tirelessly to support the Hanford cleanup and the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, PNNL, and has undoubtedly bolstered our Nation's security during the 52 years that he has lived and worked in the Tri-Cities.

Gary and I have collaborated closely many times over the years on many projects. Most recently, he played a key role in organizing the energy workforce roundtable held at PNNL with Department of Energy Secretary Moniz in August of last year. Gary has been a steadfast advocate for cleaning up the Hanford site, funding for the world-class research and development at PNNL, and for the continued growth of the Volpentest HAMMER Training Center at the Hanford site. I am confident that Washington State, and especially the Tri-Cities, would not be as well positioned to tackle our Nation's future energy challenges if not for over 50 years of Gary Petersen's tireless work.

Originally from Omak, a small city located in Okanogan County, Gary joined the Army and was stationed in the Tri-Cities in January 1960. After a duty station transfer to Korea, Gary returned and graduated with a communications degree from Washington State University. Shortly after graduation, Gary started with Battelle, a company that had a contract for a research and development lab located at Hanford. That lab provided crucial services during the Cold War and is now known as PNNL. Gary went on to work for Westinghouse on the Fast Flux Test Facility, the Washington Public Power Supply System, and spent time with the International Nuclear Safety Program, a cooperative nuclear energy safety effort between the U.S. and Soviet Union. After retiring from Battelle in 2002, Gary served on the Tri-City Development Council, TRIDEC, an organization dedicated to improving the economic health of the Tri-Cities area.

During his 14 years at TRIDEC, Gary has been a relentless supporter for DOE's missions at Hanford and PNNL and a champion for the larger Tri-City community and our State by ensuring important projects received needed Federal resources. Gary is the type of constituent every member hopes to have in their communities back home—a very involved citizen. He has been a strong advocate for the issues that matter to the people of Washington while also understanding the importance of communicating with his

political representatives. My relationship with Gary has been invaluable, and he has been instrumental in many of my proudest career accomplishments.

Gary shares my vision for why establishing the Manhattan Project National Historical Park was so important. We worked together for many years to champion and ultimately see the creation of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park. The legislation I authored preserved the central landmark of the Hanford site and the park, the B Reactor, the first full-scale plutonium production nuclear reactor ever built and a tremendous technological achievement for its time. The park also includes the Bruggemann Agricultural Warehouse, the White Bluffs Bank, the historic Hanford High School, and the Hanford Irrigation District's Allard Pump House. Visitors from 70 countries have already visited the B Reactor, demonstrating the uniqueness of the park and the curiosity people have about this chapter of American and world history. We all owe Gary a debt of gratitude for the establishment of this park.

Today the Tri-Cities is home to a vibrant agricultural industry, some of the best healthcare available, two colleges that are training workers to meet the varied needs of the region's businesses, increasing wine tourism, and a newly expanded airport. Gary has touched all of these projects and many more.

I am incredibly proud to have worked with Gary and to call him a friend. Gary, thank you for all of your years of advocacy for the Tri-Cities. I join Washingtonians in thanking him for his longstanding service and wish him and his wife, Margaret, all the best in the future.●

TRIBUTE TO JENNY GENDER

• Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, this week, I have the distinct honor of recognizing Jenny Gender of Jefferson County for her selfless commitment to others in her local community. Jenny is a wonderful example of a local leader who is always willing to take on additional responsibility and devote her time and talent to others.

Jenny graduated from the University of Montana with a degree in sociology. At her graduation in Missoula, one of the soldiers in the honor guard escorting the national flag caught her attention. With that chance encounter as the spark, the two were married about a year later. The young couple settled near Helena, in Montana City, where today they are raising their four children. In Helena, Jenny became very active in the Mothers of Preschoolers, also known as MOPS, by serving initially as the director of hospitality, and then after a period of rapid growth, she graciously took on additional duties as the president of a newly formed MOPS group. Jenny served in this capacity for nearly 8 years.