

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

(At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

VOTE EXPLANATION

• Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for the vote on the motion to concur in the House message to accompany H.R. 244.

On vote No. 121, had I been present, I would have voted yea on the motion to concur in the House message to accompany H.R. 244.

I want to take a few minutes to acknowledge today's bipartisan passage of the Omnibus appropriations bill to fund the government through the end of the 2017 fiscal year. While I am disappointed that the bill's passage comes more than halfway through the fiscal year, the bill that was sent to the President today is the product of months of bipartisan work by the appropriations committees on both sides of Capitol Hill and represents how Congress should and can work together to provide the American people with critical investments that will create jobs and grow our Nation's economy. It is my hope that the bipartisan cooperation that made this bill possible will continue as Congress begins its work on appropriations for fiscal year 2018.

This bill includes critical investments in the middle class, our Nation's infrastructure, medical and scientific research, and our national security. I am proud to report that much of the funding in this bill will benefit my home State of Illinois, funding a wide variety of Illinois projects and priorities. Most importantly, it takes the threat of a government shutdown, which would have hurt our economy, off the table.

This bill fully rejects President Trump's proposed assault on medical research and instead includes a \$2 billion increase for the National Institutes of Health, or NIH, bringing the agency's funding level to \$34.1 billion. This 6 percent increase in NIH funding matches the steady, predictable growth called for in legislation I have introduced over the past several years, the American Cures Act.

Thanks to the NIH, we have cut the cancer death rate by 11 percent in women and 19 percent in men. HIV/

AIDS is no longer a death sentence. Polio and smallpox are all but eradicated in this country. We are closer than ever to developing a universal influenza vaccine, to rebuilding parts of the human heart without needing to rely on transplants, and to finding new and effective therapies to delay the onset of neurological diseases like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. These medical breakthroughs will not happen without sustained, robust Federal funding for medical research supported by the NIH.

President Trump's disastrous budget proposals for fiscal years 2017 and 2018 would have slashed NIH's budget by nearly 20 percent, bringing NIH to its lowest funding level in 15 years. I am pleased that Congress came together on a bipartisan basis to protect the NIH, and I want to thank my colleague Senator BLUNT, chairman of the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and Related Agencies Subcommittee, for his efforts to provide this vital funding. I will be working hard to ensure that NIH gets another significant funding increase for fiscal year 2018.

While I am encouraged that this bill includes \$7.3 billion for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or CDC, it is my hope that Congress will find a way to work together on a bipartisan basis to provide the CDC with even greater funding increases in the years to come.

The CDC has so many important responsibilities—from combating prescription drug abuse and fighting infectious disease outbreaks globally to preventing diabetes and protecting patients from antibiotic resistant superbugs. It is imperative that we provide this agency with the funding necessary to protect the public health.

Chairman COLE is a strong champion of CDC funding, and it is my hope that we can work together on a bipartisan, bicameral basis to plus-up overall CDC funding in the coming years.

I am pleased that harmful tobacco riders that would have severely undermined the Food and Drug Administration, or FDA's, ability to protect our Nation's youth from harmful, addictive tobacco products were not included in this bill. By omitting these terrible policy riders, the FDA can continue to regulate cigars and cigarettes. I have said it before and I will say it again: I remain troubled that Big Tobacco continues to market and develop products aimed at getting youth addicted to tobacco.

This bill includes more than \$1 billion to help combat our Nation's prescription opioid and heroin epidemic. This funding will be available to States and local communities to help with prevention, enforcement, treatment, and recovery. In 2015, more than 33,000 people in the United States died from an opioid overdose. To combat this epidemic, we must commit proper funding and resources toward solving the problem. This bill begins to do that.

I am proud that this bill increases funding to support critical transportation infrastructure projects in Illinois, despite President Trump's calls to eliminate funding for some of our most important transportation programs. The capital investment grant program, which President Trump has proposed to eliminate, allows communities to compete for funding to build and improve subway, commuter rail, light rail, bus rapid transit projects through New Starts, Small Starts, and Core Capacity grants. This program was increased by \$236 million in this bill to \$2.4 billion with \$100 million in Core Capacity funds specifically allocated to help fund the Chicago Transit Authority's modernization of the red and purple lines.

The Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery, TIGER, grant program, which Illinois has relied on repeatedly to help fund transit, highway, and bridge projects throughout our State, was also protected from elimination in this bill. As a result of bipartisan support for this program, Illinois will now be able to compete for the \$500 million in TIGER funds included in this bill.

Funding for federal highway and transit formula grants to States was increased in this bill to the full funding levels authorized in the 2015 bipartisan FAST Act. As a result, \$43.2 billion in highway funding, a \$905 million increase, and \$9.3 billion in transit funding, a \$753 million increase, will be provided to States around the country to improve and maintain their roads and public transportation. Federal funding comprises 80 percent of the funds included in the Illinois Department of Transportation's multiyear highway improvement program.

This bill also includes critical funding to improve freight and passenger rail around the country. Nowhere is this more important than in Illinois, our Nation's rail hub. And \$98 million in newly authorized rail safety and state of good repair grants was included in the bill, as well as \$1.495 billion in nationwide funding for Amtrak, which commuters in both Chicago and downstate Illinois rely on every day to get to their schools and jobs. By providing adequate funding to Amtrak, more than 500 communities in 46 States across the country will continue to see improved passenger rail service.

The bill allocates \$150 million in funding to provide rural areas with reliable air service through the Essential Air Service program. This funding supports critical air service in Quincy, Decatur, and Marion, IL.

This agreement provides \$1.3 billion to permanently extend the health benefits of more than 22,000 retired coal miners and widows, including nearly 2,000 in Illinois. Coal mining is difficult and dangerous work, and these men and women who spent decades working in these mines risked their lives, health, and personal safety to ensure that our country had power. I heard

countless heartbreaking stories from Illinois coal miners and their families about the fear and uncertainty they were facing if they lose their health benefits. While this bill does not provide relief for the miners' failing pension fund, they can find comfort in knowing they will have health care for life.

As vice chair of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, I am particularly proud of the bipartisan work that was done in the subcommittee to provide critical equipment and training for our troops, as well as funds to continue the fight against terrorist threats like ISIL. I want to thank Chairman THAD COCHRAN and his staff for working with my staff and me on a bipartisan basis to finalize this section of the bill.

The bill provides a pay raise for military and civilian personnel, including those in Illinois. It continues the subcommittee's track record of providing 5 percent real growth in lifesaving medical research and makes critical boosts in broader science and technology research.

It also provides important defense funding with particular impact in Illinois. It supports well-paying manufacturing jobs by adding \$110 million to extend the Humvee production line at Rock Island Arsenal and \$979 million to extend the F-18 production line in St. Louis for downstate Illinois. It also provides \$140 million to stabilize rates at all three Army arsenals. Finally, it adds \$9.9 million not requested in the budget to ensure National Guard cyber protection teams in Illinois and across the country are fully funded.

The omnibus bill does not include any funding for a wall on our southern border. Mexico will not pay for a border wall as the President promised during last year's campaign, and it is absurd to suggest that the American people should now be stuck with the bill. Texas Republican Congressman WILL HURD, whose district covers 800 miles of the southwest border, has described the wall as "the most expensive and least effective way to secure the border." Senate Democrats on the Homeland Security Committee estimate this wall will cost nearly \$70 billion to build and \$150 million a year to maintain. Even the Trump administration acknowledges the wall will cost \$21.6 billion, not including maintenance.

While the Trump administration demanded \$3 billion in additional funding for immigration enforcement, congressional Democrats succeeded in cutting this amount in half. I am pleased that the omnibus does not include any funding for President Trump's plan to triple the number of immigration agents. This unnecessary and prohibitively expensive goal would help the administration target 8 million undocumented immigrants who are now priorities for deportation under Trump administration policy. This ignores the reality that the vast majority of undocumented immigrants in our country are

law-abiding individuals who make important economic contributions and have deep roots in our country.

Democrats also successfully resisted a rider that would have deprived communities around the country—including Chicago in my home State of Illinois—of billions of dollars in critical Federal funding if they refuse to take part in the Trump administration's mass deportation scheme.

The bill also includes important new oversight measures for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE, detention operations. While some additional detention funding may have been needed to address the surge in border crossings at the end of 2016, it appears that a reduction in ICE's detention budget will be appropriate in fiscal year 2018, given the sharp decline in border crossings this year.

I am disappointed that the bill includes a problematic rider that circumvents regular legislative order to permit the Trump administration to potentially double the number of foreign guest workers who could be admitted to the United States under the H-2B visa program without needed safeguards. I have long advocated for reform of the H-2B program, which in its current form harms both American and foreign workers. We should not increase the size of the H-2B program unless and until the program is reformed to protect workers from exploitation. I am particularly concerned that this rider gives the Trump administration the authority to determine how many additional H-2B visas will be issued since President Trump owns companies that have sought to import more than 900 H-2B guest workers, including 64 in fiscal year 2017 alone, while turning away hundreds of American workers. I will be closely monitoring the administration's implementation of this provision, which only permits additional visas to be issued if the Secretary of Homeland Security, after consultation with the Secretary of Labor, determines that the needs of American businesses cannot be met by qualified American workers.

While not perfect, this bill exemplifies what Congress can do if it puts politics aside to work together and come to a bipartisan consensus for the good of the American people. I support the passage of this Omnibus appropriations bill. While we now face a much shortened timeline to complete the appropriations process for the next fiscal year, I am hopeful that the bipartisan cooperation exemplified by this bill will continue.●

GOVERNMENT FUNDING LEGISLATION

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, while not perfect, this bill includes important provisions that will benefit Florida, strengthen our national security, increase resources for our national defense and the fight against ISIS, and give our military men and women the largest pay raise in 6 years.

Given the threats our Nation faces from the likes of North Korea and radical Islamic terrorists, a government shutdown would send exactly the wrong message to the world at a time when it is counting on America to lead.

I am pleased to see this bill funds the Department of Defense to levels authorized by Congress and includes increases for ship building, operations and maintenance, and military readiness. It also incorporates the fiscal year 2017 Intelligence Authorization Act, IAA, that provides essential guidance and authorities for our intelligence community. This year's IAA requires the President to establish an interagency committee to counter Russia's active measures against the U.S., maintains resources for our intelligence community's counterterrorism capabilities, and requires the Director of National Intelligence to complete declassification reviews of terrorist activities of each individual who has been transferred or released from the U.S. detention facility in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

This bill will ensure Florida can continue combatting the Zika virus and the opioid epidemic that is devastating so many families in our communities. I am committed to continuing to fight against Zika and have begun working with the Senate Appropriations Committee to establish an emergency health fund to provide funds for infectious outbreaks, like Zika.

This appropriations bill will also support Everglades restoration and improvements to the Herbert Hoover Dike and our State's ports. Florida's citrus growers will get the help they need to counter the terrible greening that is hurting their crops.

The bill also includes my legislation to protect public housing residents and reform HUD's broken inspection process. I saw firsthand the appalling conditions at Eureka Gardens in Jacksonville, Windsor Cove Apartments in Orlando, and Stonybrook Apartments in Riviera Beach, so I am glad this bill will help ensure the people at these properties finally see real changes for the better.

These provisions make the bill worthy of my support, but as I have said before, we cannot continue to run our country in this way, with one temporary bill after another. Republicans and Democrats in Congress must work together with the Trump administration to restore fiscal sanity, set a long-term budget, and address our Nation's unsustainable and growing debt.

TURKEY

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, today I wish to express my concerns about the outcome of the April 16 constitutional referendum in Turkey, when more than 50 million Turkish citizens voted on constitutional amendments to convert Turkey's parliamentary government into a Presidential system.

Turkey is a longstanding friend of the United States and a NATO ally.